

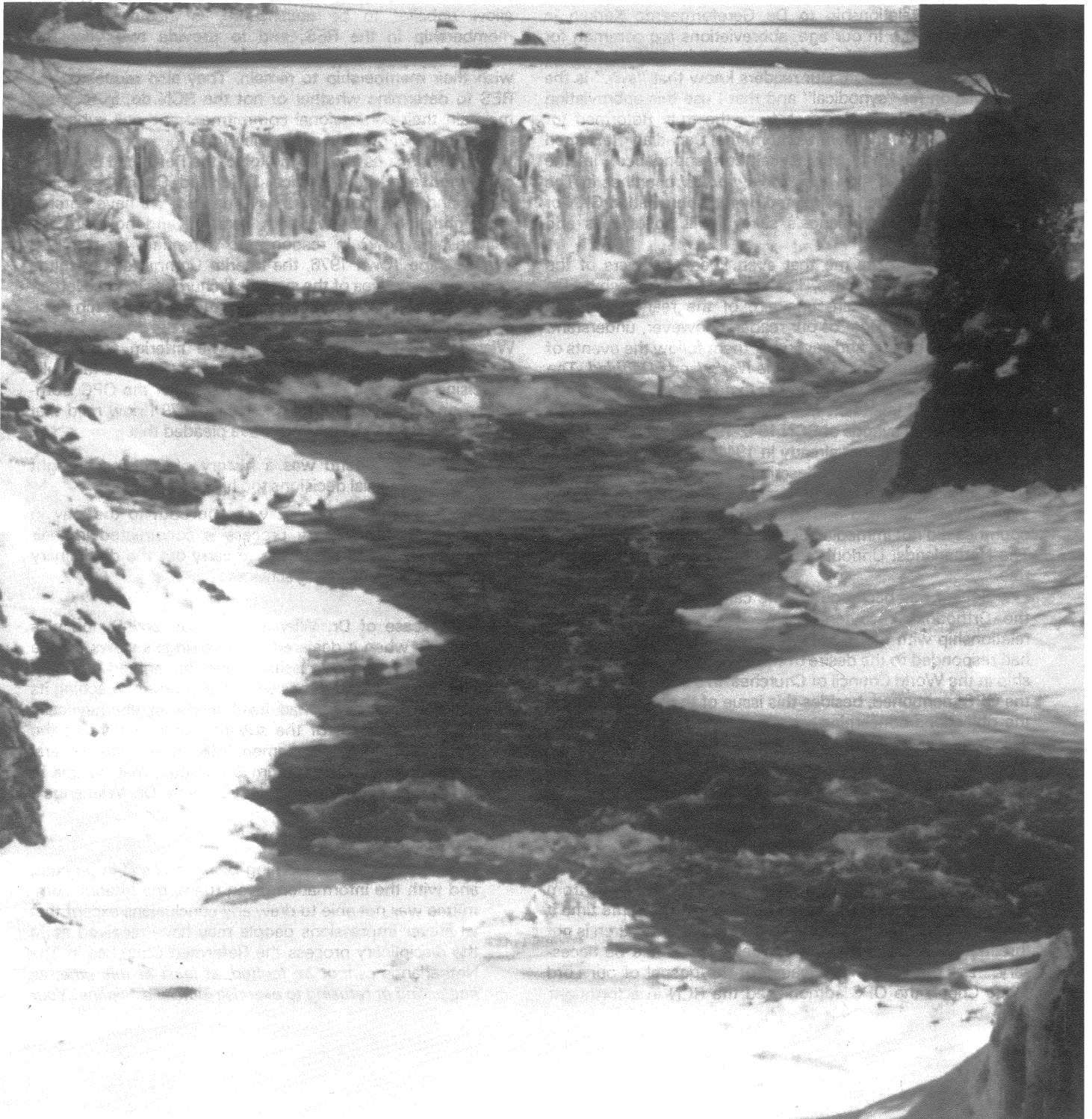


# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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## RES and RCN (syn.)

In my previous editorial I dealt with the minutes of the 46th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and especially with the decision to continue membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES). Connected to this issue is the relationship to De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (syn.). In our age, abbreviations are common for international organizations, and the ecclesiastical world does not make an exception. Our readers know that "syn." is the abbreviation for "synodical" and that I use this abbreviation to distinguish these churches from the truly Reformed (or "liberated") churches with whom the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain ecclesiastical correspondence. In the international world, however, the *synodical* churches in The Netherlands are often designated by the abbreviation GKN or RCN, and, for convenience's sake, I will not always add "syn."

It always strikes me that even keen observers of the development in doctrines, like our Orthodox Presbyterian brothers, sometimes are unaware of the real situation in churches abroad. Most of our readers, however, understand the Dutch language, and several of them follow the events of church life in their old country via *Nederlands Dagblad*. The older generation in our churches consciously followed the narrow path of liberation from the doctrinal and disciplinary decisions of the synods of RCN 1942-1944. They are aware of the saddening fact that already in 1944 the RCN showed the marks of the false church described in Article 29 of our Belgic Confession. One can understand that after the Second World War Reformed and Presbyterian Christians in other countries did not immediately discern the spiritual situation in The Netherlands. Undoubtedly, the language barrier plays a role.

Seeing this background, one can only be thankful that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church terminated the sister relationship with the RCN in 1973. Already in 1965 the OPC had responded to the desire of the RCN to apply for membership in the World Council of Churches. In a letter of April 1971 the OPC mentioned, besides this issue of the World Council, the objections concerning women in the teaching or ruling office and especially the doctrine of Scripture. When the RCN decided that the declaration of the Synod, held in Assen, 1926, with respect to the interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3 was no longer in force, the OPC indicated in 1969 its intention of bringing to an end the sister-church relationship. Then Synod 1970 of the RCN dealt with Dr. H.M. Kuitert's views of Genesis 1-3 and Romans 5. It acknowledged his "denial of the historicity of the fall into sin, as man's turning away from God at the beginning of human history." At the same time it declared "that the unity of the confession of the church is not threatened so much that special decisions would be necessary." For the sake of the cause of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the OPC admonished the RCN in a forthright

and brotherly manner. The Orthodox Presbyterians also brought the issues before the Reformed Ecumenical Synod in 1972. They asked to declare that membership in the World Council of Churches and other religious organizations, which allow unbelief to be uncensured, is incompatible with membership in the RES, and to provide two years for member churches in such fellowships to decide in which they wish their membership to remain. They also requested the RES to determine whether or not the RCN do, in fact, still maintain their confessional commitment and still submit to the authority of Christ through His Word.

This brings us back to the topic, the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and the synodical Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. So many years have passed; we have entered the eighties of this twentieth century, and how are the relationships now? In response to a request by the RES Synod, Cape Town 1976, the Interim Committee consulted with representatives of the synodical churches in The Netherlands concerning theological developments and church discipline. The discussion focused primarily on the views of Dr. H. Wiersinga and Dr. H.M. Kuitert. The Interim Committee sought to assess the question whether the RCN are faithfully exercising discipline or not. In the Report of the OPC Committee on RES matters in the Minutes 1979 I now read that the representatives of the RCN have pleaded that

1. in the background was a history of schisms brought about by judicial decisions too hastily made,
2. the apparent dilatoriness was due both to the way in which the disciplinary process is constructed in their churches and to the desire to carry out the disciplinary process without casing schisms . . . , and
3. in the case of Dr. Wiersinga the General Synod was decisive when it declared Dr. Wiersinga's views (of the atonement) "impermissible" and he agreed to keep silent concerning them; also, in the course of reaching its decision the Synod had itself made an unequivocally biblical statement of the substitutionary nature of the atonement. The Moderamen (officers) of the General Synod informed the Interim Committee that no one in the churches is known to agree with Dr. Wiersinga's view . . . .

The conclusion is as follows:

With the matters concerning Dr. Kuitert still in process, and with the information given them, the Interim Committee was not able to draw any conclusions except that whatever impressions people may have received as to the disciplinary process the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands *cannot be faulted, at least at this time, as neglecting or refusing to exercise judicial discipline. Your*

*committee agrees with this judgment.* At the same time we recognize that the Churches' judicatories face the ever present danger of allowing the need for peace to outweigh the need for discipline . . . .

The latest General Assembly of the OPC decided to express to the RCN its thankfulness for the report of the RES Interim Committee concerning the progress being made in the disciplinary proceedings involving Professor Kuitert and Dr. Wiersinga. The Assembly encourages the RCN to continue this disciplinary process until it is resolved to the mutual satisfaction of all the member churches of the RES in their common commitment to Holy Scripture and the Reformed confessions. In my previous editorial I already mentioned that the OPC will request the RES to continue consultations with the RCN (these consultations are to include office-bearers and members), and to prepare a comprehensive evaluation with recommendations of steps that could be taken to strengthen the confession and life of the RCN.

When I read this, I thought: "Ze hebben zich zand in de ogen laten strooien." The RES Interim Committee and our OPC brothers had the wool pulled over their eyes. Can the RCN not be faulted for neglecting or refusing to exercise judicial discipline? But the first question should be: Who spoke? The representatives of the RCN, the Moderamen. Did they transmit an official decision of a synod of the RCN, or did they ventilate their personal opinions? Is it possible to come to a responsible evaluation of doctrinal and disciplinary developments without analyzing official decisions? Now there is the danger that there are two kinds of statements, namely, of representatives who speak to outsiders abroad and official decisions for internal use. It would not be impossible that even members of the following general synod of the RCN will be a bit amazed and puzzled when they read in an official letter of the OPC about "the *progress* made in the disciplinary proceedings involving Professor Kuitert and Dr. Wiersinga." What is this progress? I remember from RES News — a good source for the Interim Committee, a house publication — the title "Was the Kuitert-affair swept under the rug?" In January 1977 we read of Dr. Klaas Runia — former president of the RES — a suggestion that the response of his synod to Kuitert's book *Zonder Geloof Vaart Niemand Wel* had been inadequate. The synod repudiated, among other things, Kuitert's notion that faithfulness to the confession involves constraint. It also expressed the expectation that Kuitert would heed the synod's *judicium* in carrying out the duties of his office. Dr. Runia suggested that this expectation was hardly realistic in view of the fact that Kuitert explicitly expressed his determination to continue on his chosen course. To refer the matter to the Commission on Church and Theology, as the synod decided, is to remove the matter from the broad arena of the church into specialized circles of endless theological debate. The matter has thus been swept under the rug.

If this was Dr. Runia's opinion in 1977, what is then the progress, not of endless theological talk in committees, but of ecclesiastical discipline? The conclusion of the RES Interim Committee and of the OPC Committee sounds naive.

When I analyze the first plea of the RCN representatives, namely, that in the background was a history of schisms brought about by judicial decisions too hastily made, I would ask first: What are those schisms? 1926 and 1944? But in the first case, the OPC had rightly upbraided the RCN for doing away with the doctrinal decision of Assen 1926 concerning the exegesis of Genesis 2 and 3. The statement as such that

this was a "judicial decision too hastily made" is *evidence* of present doctrinal decay and unfaithfulness. It should not be used as an excuse for the delaying of disciplinary actions in the case of, e.g., Dr. H.M. Kuitert, whose little finger, moreover, is thicker than Dr. J.G. Geelkerken's loins were in 1926. As far as 1944 is concerned, abuse of discipline does not exclude good use of it, although it is true that the abuse of discipline in the church, if there is no true repentance, can open the way for abandoning discipline altogether.

The main point is that for a spiritual judgment the analysis should be refined and the question should be asked: Was this doctrinal decision according to God's Word and in agreement with the Reformed Confessions, or not?

Another element in the first plea is the term "judicial." The representatives spoke about *judicial* decision, and in the conclusion of the Interim Committee's report we read that the RCN cannot be faulted as neglecting to exercise *judicial* discipline. Is the distinction between *judicial* and *justiciary* introduced here again? Judicial discipline would then be the pronouncement of the *judicium* or statement that someone deviates from the doctrine of the church, but the ecclesiastical assembly itself does not draw consequences with respect to the office of the person involved. Justiciary discipline, however, would lead to measures like suspension or deposition from the office. The Interim Committee does not elaborate on this distinction and does not enter upon a discussion whether such a distinction is tenable in the light of Holy Scripture and the Reformed confessions, or not. The OPC stated in 1971 that the synod of the RCN had acknowledged that Dr. Kuitert had denied the apostolic teaching but then took no disciplinary action. "We regard this as a serious failure to follow the Scriptural demand that the church must discipline those who deny the apostolic teaching" (OPC letter to RCN, April 6, 1971). Does the OPC now, following the lead of the Interim Committee of the RES, soften their clear testimony, while almost a decade has gone by in which Dr. Kuitert has further developed his views in complete deviation from Scripture and for which he is therefore hailed by modernists?

In the second argument we read about the specific way in which the disciplinary process is constructed in the RCN, and we wonder if the synod in The Netherlands now suddenly rediscovered the autonomy of the local churches in order to escape the responsibility within a Reformed confederation.

As far as the third defence is concerned, I have never read that Dr. Wiersinga really agreed to keep silent concerning his views of the atonement by our Lord Jesus Christ. And if he did, the question arises if a minister of the gospel can be silent about the heart of it. But apart from these not-unimportant details, the whole consultation by the Interim Committee of the RES was sketchy. It focused on two particular situations, but they did not focus clearly, and the picture remains blurred. The Interim Committee and our OPC brothers should have studied broader and more fundamental issues besides the views of two theologians, however important these views and their toleration may be. A wide angle lens would have picked up the new subscription forms. The new forms of subscription, not only for ministers, but also for elders and deacons, are of paramount significance for the doctrinal development in the RCN. How do these relate to the form of Subscription accepted by the Synod of Dordt 1619? Are the RCN still in the line of Dordt, or are the hearts of the children turned away from their fathers?

J. FABER

# MEDITATION

*If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?*

*John 3:12*

The Lord Jesus presents his listener, Nicodemus, and us all with a puzzling distinction here. Normally we tend to think of earthly things as being our material possessions, our work, our concerns with this day and age, and so on. Heavenly things are in this vein the things the minister talks about and seems to be so concerned about on Sundays. The Lord Jesus then seems to be saying here that as a rabbi He had a careful approach, spending some time on casual small talk about every-day, down-to-earth things before getting into the heavy heavenly stuff.

However, if we approach the text this way, we will have to be more careful in reading our Bible. "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." That is what the Lord Jesus had said, and that does not exactly line up with our view of earthly things. As a matter of fact, these words probably sounded rather strange and mystical to Nicodemus' carefully-tuned, law-trained ears. This language was entirely unfamiliar to him. And we might be so wrapped up in earthly pursuits that they are unfamiliar to us, too. Yet Jesus calls His words "earthly things" and rebukes Nicodemus for not accepting them or being able to understand them. Why?

Basically the Lord Jesus is saying that Nicodemus should have known what He was talking about. The earthly things were not natural things, worldly things. Rather, the earthly things were things that the LORD had brought down from heaven to earth before. The earthly things were things that had been revealed in the past. Nicodemus should have known and believed them

because God had spoken about them before. It had all been *revealed*. It had all been brought to earth.

That was true, wasn't it? Rebirth, faith, heart-felt commitment to the God of the Covenant — didn't the prophets preach and write about all those things? Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees, should have known what the prophetic writings spoke about. Earthly things were not mundane, every-day things, but heavenly things that had already come down to earth, spiritual things that had already been made known. That is what Nicodemus had to see and accept first, before he could get on to heavenly things.

What then are the heavenly things? They are the things that have not been revealed yet, the things "about to take place," Revelation 1:1. Heavenly things were things that had not come down to earth yet, but were on their way. Nicodemus had to get the prophets straight before he could see them. And those things are the things the Lord Jesus speaks about in the following verses: His mission, His death, His resurrection for the salvation of the world.

Those things have become earthly things for us. They have all happened, and no one can undo what God has done. The cross is history. The resurrection is history. And they are things that have been revealed to us, things that can be read about plainly in the Bible. However, we tend to minimize their importance sometimes. We make of them obscure, heavenly things, things that sometimes interfere with *our* earthly things, our every-day interests and pursuits — our vanities.

We should be on guard for that danger. We should not be making earthly things heavenly again. We should be living joyfully with the revealed earthly things every day. Doing that, we may share in a great blessing: we may see more and more heavenly things — that is, we will see more and more heavenly things becoming earthly. Indeed, we will see how God descends fully to set up His dwelling place among us, and reveals Himself as One who will live with us eternally, Revelation 21:22ff.

J. DE JONG

## *Our outer nature wastes away*

Our outer nature wastes away;  
Yet inwardly, from day to day,  
We are in Thee renewed, O Lord.  
Our suffering here is soon endured:  
The harvest it for us prepares  
By far outweighs our woes and cares.

A weight of glory, unsurpassed,  
Will then be ever ours at last,  
For we find no security  
In things that with our eyes we see;  
For what is seen will fade away,  
What is unseen will not decay.

We know that if our earthly tent  
Falls to the ground, all worn and rent,  
Our God as gift to us extends  
A heav'nly house not made with hands,  
A building steadfast and secure  
That will eternally endure.

The Spirit we as pledge possess  
Of everlasting blessedness.  
So let us of good courage be;  
Our God Himself will make us free.  
Let it be here and now our aim  
To please Him and exalt His Name.

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## THE MYTH OF DETENTE

When President Carter of the United States was informed of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, he made a rather naive comment, "My opinion of the Russians has changed most drastically. . . ."

One cannot help but wonder what opinion the President entertained prior to the invasion. Was the Soviet aggression such a stunning revelation that the President had to change his mind? Was the President so blinded by the deception of détente that, in his mind, he had ruled out any possibility of communist military intervention in the affairs of another nation?

No one really needed be surprised at the sudden Soviet action. Politically and militarily the time was right. The United States was deeply involved in the utterly embarrassing Iranian crisis. The Soviet air, ground and naval forces are presently unmatched. Unlike the President, the Soviet leadership has no Congress to contend with. Unlike the United States, the Soviet Union cares relatively little about public esteem and dares to risk the temporary wrath of the nations if significant military gain is made.

Remarkably, no fanatic Muslim nationalists anywhere retaliated by following the "bold" Iranian example of hostaging a complete (Soviet) embassy-staff. You may play games with the Americans, but not with the Russians; even the Ayatollah knows that. The Soviets would welcome even the slightest excuse to move on in conquest.

The move into Afghanistan is another unmistakable illustration of Soviet policy as laid down decades ago by Lenin, "As long as capitalism and socialism exist, we cannot live in peace; in the end one or the other will triumph — a funeral dirge will be sung either over the Soviet Republics or over world capitalism" (V.I. Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. VIII, page 298). Has President Carter neglected to study communist ideology and method? Have Western governments not learned clear lessons, e.g., from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Vietnam and Cambodia?

The Soviet Union has even done us the favour of sending us prominent dissidents to warn us of the communist objective. But somehow the Soviets must have known that these warnings would fall on deaf ears. Alexander

# Circumspection...

Solzhenitsyn has complained more than once that his serious warnings — and those of others — simply go unheeded. It was the same Solzhenitsyn who offered the West some simple yet profound advice, "You have to understand the nature of communism. The very ideology of Communism, all of Lenin's teachings, are that anyone who doesn't take what's lying in front of him is considered a fool. If you can take it, do so. If you can attack, strike. But if there's a wall, then retreat. The Communist leaders respect only firmness and have contempt for persons who continually give in to them" (Warning to the West, 1975, page 41). Solzhenitsyn should know; he fought the communists most of his life.



"If you can attack, strike."

In Soviet eyes we must by now be looking quite contemptible. We have been continually giving in. We butter their bread. Soviet cows munch on Western grain. We feed them our technical knowledge which they proceed to use against us. Indeed, while we are feeding them, they are bleeding us, endangering our very freedom. While we happily continue with financial aid and cultural exchanges, they have us by the throat, increasing the pressure so slightly each time that we hardly notice it. Détente is a myth.

Lenin was so convinced that the West would sell itself that he joked about it. Solzhenitsyn tells how Lenin once remarked, "We will give the bourgeoisie a rope, and the bourgeoisie will hang itself." When asked where the communists would find enough rope to

hang the whole bourgeoisie, Lenin replied, "They will SELL it to us themselves!"

The Communists have sworn to bury us, but they need not exert themselves, for we are digging our own graves. Instead of expressing surprise at Soviet actions, we should become ashamed of our own. And we cannot blame only President Carter. His predecessors were blind as well. And his Allies give him relatively little help. The French pulled out of NATO. The Dutch want no warheads on their land. Turkey is a lame duck. And my country, Canada, ranked among the first to give friendship to the Communists. Philip C. Bom has noted, "the Trudeau government has made communism politically respectable in the world and diplomatically acceptable in the West" (Trudeau's Canada, page 113). In 1972 a far-reaching agreement concerning economic, scientific and cultural cooperation was signed between Canada and the Soviet Union.

Has the "balance of power" now definitely been broken? Are we going to face increasing Soviet influence and dominance? Will the downward trend of the Seventies continue in the Eighties, or can the West still build that wall of which Solzhenitsyn spoke? President Carter is starting to use tough language now. Boycott the Olympics? Re-institute the draft? Stop the Salt-talks? Many top American military advisors feel it is simply too late (You can trust the Communists, Dr. F. Schwarz, page 106).

President Carter's dream of détente suddenly became a nightmare of delusion. For me the myth of détente has not been shattered, for I did not believe it to start with. But the invasion of Afghanistan has done something positive for me. It has reaffirmed my strong convictions concerning the never-ending communist threat. Even more, it has intensified my prayer, "Thy Kingdom come."

Lenin was right. There cannot be peace. Until the Prince of Peace arrives in glory.

Cid



# Red China: Open To God's Word.



For thirty years Red China has been closed to all Western influences, which included being closed to the importation of Bibles for those who still remained Christians. During that time Red China was hidden behind a Bamboo Curtain. Stories of persecution and of the death of thousands of Christians have filtered out now and then.

Now, *officially*, the government says that there will be religious freedom. The country has been opened to the importation of 100,000 Bibles the first year. This is a miracle performed by God Himself.

This miracle has been heralded by Chinese Christians with great joy and with fear. For thirty years Christians have been killed, imprisoned, and persecuted. Bibles and Christian materials have been destroyed. Worship has been secret, often without a Bible or a pastor. There is a great hunger on the part of Chinese Christians for God's Word to help them grow in their faith. But there is still fear that the new freedom is only temporary, and that persecution will return.

Rev. Dennis Mulder visited Red China last November. He is the Asian

Coordinator for the World Home Bible League, which has already sent thousands of Chinese New Testaments to Red China, and is now busy printing thousands of Bibles for immediate distribution. He wrote following his visit:

"We met, by previous arrangement, a Christian contact in Canton. That night, as we walked through the streets of Canton, we could only think of the Christians who were receiving the Bibles. What a joy it must be to have a copy of God's Word *for the very first time!*

"We heard of one Christian man who had begged for just one copy of the Bible. He was an 84-year-old pastor who could no longer walk; his feet had been shot through with bullets as punishment for sharing his Christian faith, and his Bible was taken and burned.

"But over the years he was faithful to the Lord. In secret he told others about Christ. He now pastors a flock of more than 1,000 people who came to know the Lord. He trained forty of those Christians to be lay pastors and to nurture the small groups of Christians meeting in secret.

"The man's faith is unwavering. Through all these years, he still did not have a Bible. When he heard that there might be a possibility of receiving God's Word, he begged for just *one copy* for all the 1,000 people in his congregation. He said that he and the other Christians would copy the Bible by hand; and because he knew how scarce Bibles were, he was willing to return the original copy."

Think of the many Bibles that we have, and how easy it is for us to buy a Bible! Think of the great opportunity we now have to help in sending God's Word to a land where one quarter of the world's entire population lives! Think of bringing God's Word to a country closed to Christianity for thirty years. Imagine, an entire generation has grown up without ever having seen or read a Bible!

The Canadian Home Bible League has agreed to underwrite the cost of this great project. But this can not be done unless God's people in Canada respond by giving financial help to the League. At the moment, the League is already running a severe financial shortage. Yet the people who run the League feel that God is calling them to do this work in China, and that this opportunity may *in no wise* be turned down.

Please consider whether every Canadian Reformed family should not support this wonderful work in God's Kingdom. Please pray for this work, for the Chinese Christians who will benefit so greatly, and for Christians in the West, who still live in freedom.

Your donations may be sent to:

*The Canadian Home Bible League*  
Box 524, Station A,  
Weston, Ontario, Canada M9N 3N3  
(Mrs.) F.J. VANDERBOOM

## The Blessings of the Socialistic Welfare State

### UTRECHT

What is a physician to do with a patient who, heavily impaired, almost drove himself to pieces a little over a year ago, whereby he is now mainly confined to a wheelchair, when it appears to his doctor that, according to his own information, he drinks a crate of beer every day — according to his wife it is two cases — and that Social Welfare has promised him a car?

The patient in question had drunk one hundred glasses of beer — his daily ration — and drove into a hydro-pole at high speed, whereby he suffered compound fractures of pelvis, legs, and feet.

Because he could not get around too well as a result of the various fractures, after some time he consulted a specialist for special footwear.

There it was established that the

patient's drinking habits are still voluminous, and that he received word from Social Welfare that, within the framework of the Law on Disability, he will receive a car, because it is hard for him to move around.

So says the astonished specialist. (DNC)

Your not-so-astonished  
vO

### OUR COVER

*Grand River frozen over in the Town of Fergus, Ontario. (Photo courtesy Leo Lodder.)*



*News items are published with a view to their importance for the Reformed Churches. Selection of an item does not necessarily imply agreement with its contents.*

### CHICAGO (RNS)

Fifty-three percent of churches surveyed by *U.S. Catholic*, a monthly magazine published here by the Clarentian order, participate in communion in other churches and 83 percent agree that participation would be as beneficial as that received in their own denominations.

These were the findings of a survey conducted by the Roman Catholic magazine in cooperation with nine other religious journals. Editors of the 10 periodicals sent 1,000 copies of a questionnaire to a random sampling of subscribers. Approximately 2,200 persons completed the four-page form.

Other findings in the survey were these:

Only four percent agreed that no one should receive communion from a church other than his or her own.

Roman Catholics feel most at home with the Orthodox-Anglican-Lutheran nexus.

Many Protestants who supported open communion for all "baptized Christians" drew the line against communion with Hare Krishnas, Mormons, Scientologists, Moonies, and members of cults.

Couples in mixed marriages found the question of intercommunion most crucial. One respondent wrote, "Not only would it serve to bring the churches closer together, but it would bring marriage partners closer."

Fifty-four percent of the respondents viewed intercommunion as a step toward church unity while 32 percent held it to be a sign of unity. Only two percent saw intercommunion as destructive of ecumenism. (CN)

### WASHINGTON (AP)

Women took up widespread use of cigarettes about 25 years after men, but the surgeon general says projected lung-cancer death rates indicate that they are catching up rapidly.

In a report that echoes an American Cancer Society study made public in November, Surgeon General Julius B. Richmond predicts that female deaths of lung cancer will surpass those of breast cancer within three years, suggesting an "epidemic of smoking-related disease among women."

Cigarette smoking already contributes to one-fifth of the newly diagnosed cases of cancer and one-fourth of all cancer deaths among women — higher rates than for any other agent, Richmond says.

Smoking is described as "a major threat to the outcome of pregnancy and well-being of the newborn baby." Babies of women who smoke during pregnancy are an average of 200 grams lighter at birth. Risks are greater of spontaneous abortions and fetal and neonatal deaths.

Later, the children lag in growth and their behaviour and intellectual development may be affected. (CN)

### UTRECHT

On Sunday, January 27, Mrs. N.M.D. Nieuwenhuijze was ordained in The Netherlands Reformed Nicolai Church in Utrecht. Mrs. Nieuwenhuijze formerly belonged to the Christian Reformed Churches (Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken). She was ordained as a minister for special tasks in The Netherlands Reformed Church there. The father of the new minister, the Rev. M.W. Nieuwenhuijze, is a Christian Reformed minister, and was scheduled to deliver the sermon on that occasion. He was not the one to ordain his daughter. That would be done, it was said, by The Netherlands Reformed Rev. M.G.L. den Boer who, incidentally, himself also comes from a Christian Reformed ministerial family. (N.D.)

### SOLLEFTEAA (Sweden)

A Lutheran minister who in a sermon declared himself in favour of atomic energy has been forbidden by his bishop to preach for the time being.


The minister, Jan-Erik Jarlaas, is not allowed to be in the pulpit until after the Swedish referendum on nuclear energy has been held on March 23rd.

"According to me," the minister said, "the Bible encourages research. When that research has given us something like nuclear energy, which is a blessing, why should we then not use that?" (N.D.)

### VATICAN CITY (DPA)

Some progressive Roman Catholic theologians — among whom Hans Küng and Edward Schillebeeckx — held a meeting in Münster to consider what steps should be taken with the Vatican. They desire to see the procedure of investigation and examination of points of doctrine changed. Among others, they want the opportunity to consult documents and to choose their own defenders. (N.D.)

vO



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# Pro Pre-Confession Class

## DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

One cannot easily exaggerate the importance of catechetical instruction in general and the so-called "pre-confession class" in particular. This class is meant to prepare young believers for the profession of their faith before the elders, and then in public; that means: to prepare them, not only for that "exam" in the meeting of the elders of the church, and for standing up in front of the congregation, but also to prepare and equip them for taking full and responsible part as a living member in the body of Christ, His Church. It means to give contents to their commitment to their Saviour by teaching them the doctrine and life of the covenant of the LORD, so that they may serve Him in their whole life.

Yet, opinions are divided as to whether we (and they!) need a special pre-confession class, following the "regular classes" which they have attended since their youth; a special class consisting only of "candidates" for public profession. Some are strongly in favour of such a special class; others deny with equal fervour that such a special class is necessary.

## AGREEMENT

Let's first mention the things on which there is full agreement among us.

1. "All classes are pre-confession classes." True! From the very start, whether we begin at the age of twelve, or much earlier, the purpose of catechetical instruction is to bring the children of the covenant "from the first sacrament (baptism) to the second (holy supper)."

2. We also agree that at any time, any young person who feels the desire to be admitted to the Lord's table and thinks he is ready for it, may knock at the consistory door, and say, "Brethren, will you examine me? I want to make profession of faith." There is no particular age prescribed, nor a certain time in the year, like Easter. This open door is there before every Lord's Supper, even for those who never attended a pre-confession class in the

special sense, but have the knowledge of faith and live a godly life.

3. We can also easily agree that, if there is a special pre-confession class, some who do not yet deem themselves ready for profession are allowed to attend, if they have special reasons for that (such as: "I am too old for the regular class"; or, "I have heard that this class offers more than the regular classes and I would like to benefit," etc).

## WHAT DO THE "EXPERTS" SAY?

Let no "pastor and teacher" feel offended by the term "experts." Many ministers may be greater experts than professors in Catechetics and authors of books on this discipline. Yet, a minister is willing to listen to what those men, who have made the teaching of the youth of the church their special study, have to say on the subject of a special, separate, pre-confession class.

There is near-unanimity among them in favour of such a class. M. REU, in *Catechetics*, assigns a major part of this teaching to the schools (he is a Lutheran, and writes within the context of a complete system of Lutheran "church-schools"). Yet, to the pastor he assigns the task of teaching the class for (as they call it) "confirmation." "Never neglect that!" is his warning. It should take three hours per week for six months (and for those who did not attend Lutheran schools, four hours per week for two years!). Reu, here, comes close to the system of teaching the "catechumens" (candidates for profession and baptism) in the Early Church. R. BIJLSMA, in *Kleine Katechetik*, is of the same opinion, and stresses, as a necessity for such a class, repetition of previous material, close ties with the pastor, discussions with fellow-candidates, etc. D.S.A. HAGENBEEK, in *De Moderne Leerkerk*, respectfully mentions that, according to "official opinion," there should be no need for such a special class, but he hastens to add that he himself cannot and will not do without it: "it is the most beautiful part of a minister's work and life." K. DIJK, in *Dienst aan de Kerkjeugd*, speaks in favour of it, and gives guidelines, one of which is what we would call "pre-

marital counselling," be it then as "going steady," "getting engaged," etc. H. GRAFFMANN (a German) writes about a "confirmation-year," and provides an extensive and detailed program. A. VAN VELDHUIZEN, in *Catechetik*, mentions as his first argument in favour that the so-called *Kort Begrip*, or Compendium, was prepared in 1611 already!, for the specific purpose of being used in the pre-confession class. And so we could go on. We would, of course, find some, like C. TRIMP, in his curriculum for catechesis, who "combine" the highest age-group, 18 and older, with the pre-confession class: "this is the last class before profession." Yet, it seems that the majority favours, even deems necessary, a special and separate class for those who in principle have decided to make profession of faith "next spring."

The present writer, who shares that opinion (or conviction) has, in addition to the "pros" one finds or hears regularly, some to add which, to him, are convincing.

## PROS FOR PRE-CONFESSION CLASS

1. Being history-conscious, we mention first that Van Veldhuizen also refers to: the Compendium. The official title is, *Compendium of the Christian religion for those who desire to go to the table of the Lord*. It also has an *Appendix*, too long to quote here in full, containing the essence of what we now have in the four questions asked at the occasion of Public Profession. Although the Synod of Dort, 1618/19, did not adopt this Compendium as an official Creed, it recommended the use of it to all pastors for this purpose.

2. Another important consideration is that such a pre-confession class is *the first Catechism class to which the "students" are not "sent"!* This element is often overlooked. The parents, at the baptism of their children, before the LORD and His church, have solemnly promised (also) "to have them instructed in the Christian doctrine." Consequently, faithful Reformed parents *send* their children "to the minister," whether these children like it or not. They check that their children attend classes faithfully, learn their homework, and will ask the minister now and then how their children are doing. For the children it is simply a "must," although we hope and pray that this burden is light, even a pleasure to them. But no parent is supposed to "send" his child(ren), when of age,



to the pre-confession class, and thus “chase” them, or force them to public profession and thus to holy supper! To this class the young adults come, *have* to come *of their own choice!* I for one would refuse those who, against or without their will, are more or less forced by their parents to attend this class. They are covenant children, and precisely for that reason, having come to the years of distinction, they must now *freely decide* to receive Jesus Christ as their Saviour and commit their lives to Him. Even the LORD does not “force” them, as little as He forced Adam and his wife to love Him. He put them to the test, because He accepts our love and faith and trust only when it is *freely given*. This decisive element of pre-confession teaching has to stand out clearly, by starting a special class, open to those who have ripened to the decision, “I want to confess publicly that I am a sinner and that I cannot live without Jesus Christ.”

3. Previously the remark was made that one author came “close to the system of the Early Church.” We do not put our Catechism classes for the covenant children on the same level as the instruction of those who came “from the outside” and wanted to become Christians. Still, one element of those early years should — if it has been forgotten — be re-instated. This element is that candidates for public profession, or members of the pre-confession class, during their preparation, have to go through a period of special supervision. We readily agree that all covenant children, via family visitation and/or otherwise, are under the supervision of the overseers. Yet, as soon as the pastor has written down the names of those who, by their own choice, have joined the pre-confession class, he passes the list on to the ward elders or the consistory, so that these elders not only know who are going to make profession of faith, but that they also pay special attention to them. That is especially necessary in our day and age. Among young people there is — why deny it? — a number who seem to love the world, seek worldly amusements, take part in boozing, even drugs. Others, or the same, start relationships with either an unbeliever or one who is a member of an apostate church. When you know what is going on, you will also know that some of them see nothing wrong with something like that. They even speak idealistically about “winning her/him

for the church . . . .” Elders should speak personally with them, with all “candidates,” and make clear that a commitment to the Lord has to be total, that there is no communion between Christ and Belial (II Cor. 6). Here we may repeat another element mentioned above. The minister in class and the elders by supervision should not neglect their task of “pre-marital” counselling, warning the young brother or sister that not even the first step should be taken on a road that leads to a relationship which the LORD does not favour and cannot bless. In one word: during the time of the pre-confession class the “candidates” should be able to “suffer”(!) close scrutiny, even by the whole congregation. That’s why I would be in favour of publishing the list of names in the bulletin. Then the whole congregation knows: these are going to join us in the near future at the Lord’s table! The New Testament clearly teaches that all members of the body have a responsibility towards each other.

Finally, under this heading, we should ask, “How large is the number of those who made profession during the last decade, and who since became a disappointment to the Lord and His church?” Add to this those who, after some years, in a moment of honesty, admit that they did not really know what they did when they made profession of faith, that they did it because others of their age-group did it, and so forth. This is not pleasing to the Lord. That’s why, as a rule (there are the exceptions mentioned in the first paragraph) a pre-confession class should not simply be the last-in-the-row of classes to which the parent “send” their children.

4. Another aspect of the special character of the pre-confession class is to be noted. In all previous classes the pastor/teacher has been *sowing the seed*. We think here not only of letting the students learn the Catechism “by heart” (let’s maintain that by all means, no matter what modern pedagogy and educational philosophy propagate). We think rather of what Peter calls “you have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding *Word of God* . . . . That Word is the good news which was preached to you” (I Peter 1:23). Now, while he keeps sowing, the pastor concentrates his attention on whether the seed has *borne fruit*. He will stress the absolute need that the

fruits must come. He did not neglect that during the previous classes, but in the pre-confession class this stress becomes dominant. We do not consider it wrong to let young children learn by rote what they do not yet (fully) understand. In the pre-confession class, however, there is no longer an excuse. Now they must understand, appropriate, and say “Amen” to God’s covenant promises.

5. This article should not become too long, so we will not elaborate on various aspects of this concluding catechetical training, such as: “it is more intimate”; “it goes ‘deeper’ into certain aspects, such as prayer-life, self-examination in the biblical sense”; “extensive discussion of the Form for Public Profession and for Holy Supper” — it all stands to reason — and further, that this class will never be forgotten by those who attended it, and who often declare that they would not have minded if it had lasted much longer.

Let’s conclude with another “agreement”: these factors or aspects should be present in all classes, because the pastor wants “to move his students to faith.” But no one can with good conscience deny that in a pre-confession class all these elements become, *must* become, stronger, deeper, more personal, for the simple reason that the students have “made up their mind” and by their own free choice of love, as a fruit of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, have joined this special class. After all, in order to profess your faith you must be born again! And show it! At your baptism we did not “*presume*” that you were already born again; when you profess your faith we *assume* you are!

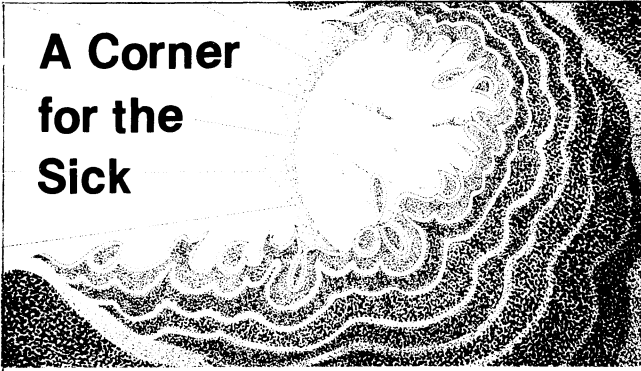
G. VANDOOREN

**P.S.** 1. The above expression “concluding catechetical training” does not mean that a “*post-confession class*” is a luxury. We believe it is a must.

2. Our arguments for such a “pre-confession class” within the context of special supervision by elders as well as the whole congregation also means that those will be “sifted out” who are not yet ready for profession, or who do it “out of custom.” If we open the door for such “easy” admission, we also become responsible for later disappointment. A strong “warning sign” above the door of the pre-confession class will prevent much heartache, and strengthen the commitment of those who gave their heart, themselves, to the Lord.

vD.

## A Corner for the Sick



And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.  
*Luke 24:27*

\* \* \* \* \*

On the same day the women went to the tomb, wherein the Lord Jesus had been laid, two men were travelling to Emmaus. They were in deep conversation about all the things that had happened. They had expected something from the great prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, who was mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. They were so involved in the discussion that they did not recognize the Lord Jesus when He came to walk with them.

It was a fact that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified! Moreover, another thing was bothering them, which they could not understand. They had hoped that this Jesus would be the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it was now the third day since He was crucified. Moreover, some women of their company had amazed them by telling them that the tomb was empty, and that they had seen a vision of angels. They were so confused! Then Jesus speaks to them as we read in Luke 24, "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

Still, they did not recognize the Lord Jesus, although they felt their hearts burning within them when the Lord Jesus spoke to them explaining the Scriptures to them. Until the LORD opened their eyes, they were blind.

We may notice the same thing with the eleven disciples. Even when the Lord Jesus appeared to them physically, they still disbelieved for joy! Then the Lord said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about Me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." HE THEN OPENED THEIR MINDS TO UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES.

The Lord gave them insight, in order that they might be witnesses. This is something for us to meditate on! We are not privileged to SEE for our own benefit, but for the benefit of others! We are privileged, for to us the Scriptures are explained every Sunday.

In Matthew 5, the Lord Jesus teaches His disciples that they are the light of the world. We also profess to be His disciples, and the same words apply to us, "You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and give glory to your Father Who is in heaven."

Thank you brothers and sisters for all the cards JANINE SMID received for her birthday! Many of them came from the West, Australia, and Holland. She liked them very much, and she was also very happy with the enclosed letters. She is going to put them into a scrapbook again.

\* \* \* \* \*

We have received a request from an Ontario sister.

Last summer a family from Holland visited several congregations in Ontario. Their three children, between 20 and 30 years of age, are confined to wheelchairs. One of their children has died already from this same disease that struck the others. It attacks them when they are about 15 years old and slowly but surely cripples them. They generally do not get very old.

Leo, the oldest son, will be celebrating his birthday on February 14th. To be fair to them all, shall we send EACH of them a picture postcard of the town, city or country we are living in, and write a little bit about this place?

They are not able to write, but will be thrilled to receive many cards.

Brothers and sisters, and this includes our young people, shall we make it a very long and happy birthday for all of them? The whole family will be able to celebrate.

Their address is as follows:

**FAMILIE VROEGOP**  
205 MGR Bekkerslaan,  
2286 CH Rijswijk, Z.H.  
The Netherlands.

If you know of anyone sick or lonely who would benefit from some extra attention, please send your request (with some information) to:

**Mrs. J.K. Riemersma**  
380 St. Andrew Street East,  
Fergus, Ontario N1M 1R1

# BOOK REVIEW

Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: A Biblical Study*, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill. 249 pp., \$4.95.

Here and there I have noticed that this book has been getting a fair amount of attention, and I thought a word of introduction would not be out of place. It purports to be a Biblical study, and as such is worth our attention. And many good points are raised with regard to the teaching of the Bible concerning wealth and poverty. Yet on the whole the presentation is loose, filled with careless statements, and written in a very unappealing tone. Therefore it may be in place to warn against some features of this book.

Sider (a Mennonite name?) is very angry with Christians in the Western world because of their guilt in causing and failing to alleviate world hunger. The first chapters contain a bitter criticism against the United States, backed up by a number of statistical tables, which, of course, are interpreted in a particular way. I am not in a position to judge this material. The crunch of the matter comes later in the book, where Sider states that *we* are implicated in all this structural evil just by living in the Western world (pp. 148, 158-8). We are responsible for the hunger of millions.

To back up this argument, Sider introduces a Biblical study which is meant to prove basically one point. Although riches are not condemned outright in the Bible, God is a God of the poor, and more than anyone, chooses the poor as His special instruments. God is on the side of the poor, and seeks to curtail the wealth of the rich. God has a special aim, and that is that wealth is to be shared, and that there may be equality of wealth. Several Biblical elements are brought forward: the redemption laws in Leviticus, and the Jubilee; the prophecies against the rich, particularly in Amos; the psalms which side with the poor and needy; the model of the first Christian Church in Jerusalem; and finally, the collection Paul had gathered from the Gentile Churches for the Jerusalem Church. This material leads Sider to make the following charge against believers today: "Present economic relationships in the world-wide body of Christ

are unbiblical, sinful, a hindrance to evangelism and a desecration of the body and blood of Jesus Christ . . . . It is a sinful abomination for a small fraction of the world's Christians living in the Northern Hemisphere to grow richer year by year while our brothers and sisters in the Third World ache and suffer for lack of minimal health care, minimal education, and even — in millions of cases — just enough food to escape starvation" (pp. 110-111).

There are a great number of comments and criticisms one could make here, but that would be out of order in a small review. Basically, I think that Sider has missed the point completely in his Biblical study. I miss the central truth that the law and prophets point to Jesus Christ, and the Kingdom He brings. I miss the central truth that all redemption laws and laws concerning the poor point to the redeeming work of Christ on the cross, and that real redemption and a lasting inheritance can only be found by faith in Him. The *cross* is missing here, and that makes it difficult to endorse this book as a Christian book.

Sider's excessive concern with economic relations and economic realities has led him effectively to remove the message of the gospel from his approach. He admits this, when quoting Luke 4:18-19; he says that the mission of the Incarnate One was to free the oppressed and heal the blind. It was also to preach, he says in brackets, but that is beyond the scope of this book. In effect, the *heart* of Christ's work is beyond the scope of this book; indeed, it is ignored. And the point of the matter is that Sider should have made this his chief concern, rather than incorrectly isolate economic aspects of the gospel.

It is true that one may not completely "spiritualize" the references to the poor and needy in the Bible, and especially in the Sermon on the Mount. I do not doubt that most of the new believers were indeed poor, suffering under the huge economic burdens of the Judaism of their day. But the main thrust of the ministry of Christ is to free the covenant people from the *total* bondage of sin, sin in all its aspects.

So, too, the apostle Paul is not

concerned with economic equality in II Corinthians 8. He is speaking about a mutual sharing of both spiritual and material gifts, for the edification of the Church. Reading the text as Sider reads it is just propagating the age-old religious socialism of the libertines and sectarian groups that have twisted the gospel for centuries. Reading the Bible as Sider reads it brings us to the social gospel, in which the principal message of redemption is ignored.

The totally libertine and unspiritual colour of Sider's viewpoint is perhaps best to be seen in some of the practical suggestions he gives for improving the situation:

- \* fasting regularly
- \* laughing at T.V. commercials (why not get rid of the T.V. instead?)
- \* Have one or two "home-made" babies and then adopt.
- \* Share appliances, etc. with others.

Sider also states that communes are faithful forms of fellowship today. (p. 193).

I would be the first to admit that we as Christians can do more to share our abundance with others. And perhaps we must look for ways in which we can help the needs of the brotherhood. But if it is to be done as this author chooses to propagate it, leave me out of it. Besides all the other distortions, the whole view of the Church bears no resemblance to what our confession teaches.

I do not deny that this book has its good points. There is plenty of food for thought and discussion. But I make these comments for those who, in reading the book, are left with a sense of loss and doubt as to its conclusions. Let us not — particularly in this day and age with its events — exchange the truth for a lie.

J. DEJONG

## Luke 4:18-19

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

# news medley

Let's begin with the personalia.

That means that we begin with offering congratulations. Unless I forgot one, I am to mention no fewer than three couples who celebrated or will celebrate that fortieth wedding anniversary which is the line one has to cross in order to receive honourable mention in our medley.

From the Burlington West bulletin I learned that brother and sister B. Douwsma were spared by the Lord for that many years and were permitted to celebrate their feast. A little closer to home we find brother and sister J. Groen in Orangeville, whose date is February 15th. And then we travel all the way to Edmonton where we visit brother and sister J. VanderWoude, for whom February 26th is the memorable day. These brethren and sisters may be assured that we all are grateful with them. I know that I say this every time, and that it may begin to sound like a cliché, but I do hope that for all of us it may remain a living truth that when a blessing such as a fortieth wedding anniversary is bestowed upon two members of the Family, we all feel some of the joy which is given to them and is experienced by them, their children, and their grandchildren.

Of some of the above couples I could tell you something, for I have known the Groen family for many, many years. Brother Groen's parents lived right beside one of my uncles, and I was in their house many a time when I was visiting and playing with my cousins (or fighting with my cousins, one might mischievously remark). In 1968 I conducted an afternoon service in Orangeville "in between" the two Burlington services, and it was brother Groen who transported me back and forth. When, on Sunday February 21, 1971, we got stuck in a blizzard on our way to Orangeville, we were "rescued" by the Groen boys with the cooperation of some others, and spent the night at their place. These are — as I admit — only personal things and may have little value in the eyes of some. Yet I mention them, if only to show that behind words that may sound the same all the time there is more than meets the eye.

I could also speak of my contacts with brother and sister VanderWoude, but I shall not do so. May it suffice to repeat: we all rejoice with you.

Regarding the Rev. W. Loopstra, I was told that he has been discharged from the hospital, but no firm decision seems to have been taken as yet whether he will have to be operated on or could regain his ability to move around without too much trouble by exercise and other therapy. The Hamilton bulletin did not contain too much pertinent information.

For a while we stay in Ontario, although not for too long. The news from Ontario was not all that abundant this time.

In Chatham efforts are made to join the growing number of Churches that are engaged in broadcasting the Gospel. The report on the Consistory meeting of January 14 tells us, Home Mission Committee . . . reported that we are on a waiting list with CFCO which also broadcasts in Kitchener. They've contacted London and Watford re this. London was the first to contact us re cooperation in Home Mission with them. Cost \$45/15 min. air time. It will mean a new budget item for the to-be-proposed budget for 1980.

Gratifying development, isn't it?

That is then all the news that I am going to quote from

the Ontario bulletins. And that brings us to the Province of Manitoba.

For the first time I read in a bulletin that a brother was not quite satisfied with having only one service on December 25. Mind you, that applies only in case that 25th of December is a weekday. There is no controversy when it is a Sunday: then there are two services anyway, unless weather conditions prevent it. Let me first quote from the bulletin.

A brother from the congregation has made objections that we had *one* service on Christmas Day. He attended the meeting to express these objections. The consistory felt that this should be discussed at the next annual meeting to see what the feeling of the congregation is on this point.

It is always wise, when there are matters which regard the services and the number of services, to discuss those matters with all whom it concerns. That is in this case: the congregation.

Perhaps it became clear to the Consistory that only one brother came but that the same thoughts which he expressed are also found with many more members of the Congregation. I cannot judge whether that was and is the case in Carman.

The above passage, however, gives me an opportunity to say something in general about matters being brought to a Consistory by only one or two members, either directly by letter or personal appearance at the Consistory meeting, or via family visit, via the office-bearers.

It oftentimes happens that the visiting elders are requested to bring a certain matter to the attention of the Consistory. They duly report the visit and they dutifully mention that the brother and sister requested them to raise the following point at the Consistory meeting . . . . In many instances that point, that question, that "proposal" becomes then a topic for discussion at the Consistory meeting, even though the Consistory has dealt with it many times before and even though no "new" arguments are brought to the fore by the brother and sister who were visited. Our Consistories should see to it here that they are not going to discuss "old" topics — which have been finished more than once in the past — while no new arguments have been brought to its attention. Consistories are no discussion groups or debating societies. The brethren have better things to do than that. Consistories should have the courage and the insight to say, "This question has been discussed and has been finished by the Consistory in the past; we are not going to discuss it again."

The very same thing happens sometimes when "new" office-bearers are ordained and begin to attend the Consistory meetings. Then it can happen that one of the new office-bearers raises a point which was amply discussed in the past and which has been concluded. The brother should be given to understand that that matter is finished and that only if he can bring new aspects or grounds or arguments to the Consistory's attention, can the Consistory enter into a new discussion.

If that is not done, the Consistory meetings will be multiplied and the amount of business conducted drastically reduced. The fact that "new" office-bearers enter the picture is no sufficient reason to "re-open" a case and the very fact that the "new" office-bearers did not yet have their say in the matter does not give a Consistory the right to "re-open a case."

Similarly generally speaking, I do not deem it wise to bring a matter to a Congregational meeting when some-

one has suggested something. I would be in favour of bringing a matter to a Congregational meeting only when the Consistory itself has taken a decision regarding the matter, or when the Consistory is convinced that the matter is worth being reconsidered but first wishes to hear the Congregation. If that is not the case, one moves so easily into the direction of Congregationalism and even if one himself does not move into that direction, ideas promoting it are fostered perhaps unwittingly.

Other points which will be discussed at the Congregational meeting — which in the meantime is a thing of the past — are:

First whether we should continue the Dutch service once a month. Is there still a definite need for it? Or can we go all English?

Second item is about the collections for the church. Some feel we should only have the one collection for needy, Mission Aid, etc. and that the offering for church be made through monthly donations.

I'm very curious to know what the reaction to these two matters were. No doubt, the next bulletin will tell us. Then I can tell you.

British Columbia is our only source of information left for today.

We first visit the northern part, although we are still far from the "true north" of our most western province. Let us start at the end.

That is Smithers.

"Permission is asked to use the Church building and the organ for an organ recital on March 4th, 1980, by the organist Dirk Jansz. Zwart from the Netherlands. Request granted.

I do not know whether this will be the first time that our brother Zwart visits that region. I do know that the brothers and sisters there will enjoy it.

There is another item in the Smithers bulletin which I did not find in any other bulletin. I mean the following passage.

The question is asked whether according to the Church Order the new Hymn Section can be used in the Church Services. According to Article 60 of the Acts of Synod 1977 this is allowed.

The article which the Church at Smithers refers to is too long to insert in our medley. Besides, the Churches have received those Acts and the families in the Churches have also received them, so that every one can look it up.

What I wish to pay attention to now is the fact that the Consistory of Smithers has taken the trouble of going into the question whether the Churches are permitted to use that hymn section. That is the basic question which has to be answered. The Churches are not allowed — we have agreed in our Church Order — to use any other songs than those which have been designated as such by a General Synod. It is, therefore, the proper procedure that a Church investigates whether a General Synod has indeed made such a decision.

Such investigation would also result, I'm convinced, in the decision to use those songs indeed in the services instead of considering them to be sort of an appendix which is good enough for those who are interested in it and care to stay after the service.

We continue our trip and stop over in Houston.

From the brief report on the Consistory meeting we quote:

Meeting of Canadian Reformed and Christian Reformed ministers in the Bulkley Valley result was that the three Christian Reformed Churches in the Bulkley Valley will

request their Synod 1980 to give a point-by-point reply to the appeal that was addressed to the Christian Reformed Church by our Churches.

I am happy with the activity which my colleagues in the Bulkley Valley have shown and also for the result which their activity has had thus far. I hope sincerely that we shall receive a point-by-point reply to our Appeal 1977. Thereby the eyes of at least some will be opened in my opinion, and, besides, it will clarify not a few points.

But what I do not understand is how a report on that meeting of private persons can be made at a Consistory meeting and can find a place in a press release issued by that Consistory. Has a meeting of *private* persons, however important their place within their community or within the Church may be, then become an *ecclesiastical* matter which legitimately can be brought to and dealt with at the Consistory meeting?

Let us assume that all the Canadian Reformed ministers in Ontario succeeded in meeting with all the Christian Reformed ministers in Ontario, and that they also succeeded in convincing those Christian Reformed ministers that a point-by-point reply to our Appeal 1977 should be given, would I then have the right to come to a Consistory meeting and report on that meeting, so that it even receives a place in the press release of that meeting?

I could use both coffee intermissions to enlighten the brethren and to fill their hearts with joy by telling them how blest we are in our endeavours; I could also talk to the brethren for a couple of hours after the meeting had been adjourned; but the whole matter, however important it may have been for the Churches in general even, could never become an ecclesiastical matter which rightfully was reported at the Consistory meeting.

We hasten down south to Chilliwack.

After years of researching and months of negotiations the Lord has in His time answered our prayers. Last Sunday it could be announced that the Mennonites had accepted our offer on their church, subject to financing of their own building. . . . It will of course take a while before anything can be finalized. The Mennonites have yet to begin with their own building. However, the possibility is there that we may be sharing the building for church services in the not too distant future.

That is well worth a word of congratulations, I should say. I saw the Church building in question from a few hundred meters distance and cannot give a description of it right now. I'm sure that the Chilliwack readers will serve you in due time with some excellent photographs. We'll hear more from them.

Another project about which we'll hear more is what Abbotsford is considering. The Committee of Administration was at the Consistory meeting to discuss the budget and other matters. "As a result of this discussion, the Committee is asked to look into the possibility of building an annex to the Church building and to report on that at the next combined meeting."

And we conclude our journey in New Westminster, where we are told that "we now have three nursing homes where we are allowed to conduct a short "worship service" every six weeks.

Herewith we stretch our weary legs and rest them on a stool. Our trip was long enough and carried us all the way out west. We expect two weeks from now to learn what has happened in the meantime. For now it is enough. I rest my case.

vO





**BRAZIL**

**REPORT OF MEETING OF MISSION BOARD AND MISSION AID, NOVEMBER 8, 1979**

November 8, 1979 was a rather special day. For the first time since the start of the mission work in Brazil, the members of Mission Aid Brazil and the Mission Board met formally. The meeting, chaired by Rev. Van Dam, had been called to discuss matters of interest common to both groups. Although it would not be worthwhile to report on all subjects discussed, one of broader interest must be shared with the readers of Mission News.

Mission Aid has actively supported the work of the missionaries through the diligent labours of br. and sr. Kuik. With two missionaries now in the field, the thinking of course goes toward a second worker for Mission Aid. The mission workers had in fact written to Mission Aid suggesting that two workers now be sought; one to replace the Kuiks and one for Maragogi, where Rev. Meijer is stationed. Mission Aid had given the proposal much thought and concluded that it would not be wise to take on the responsibility of two new families now in addition to the Kuiks. After ample discussion the consensus was that a replacement for the Kuiks be found first, then some time later the second couple be sought.

Agreement was expressed, however, with the suggestion of the mission workers, that the qualifications for the future Mission Aid workers be carefully considered. The major activity of the Kuiks has been in the medical field. Training in medical sciences therefore would hopefully be one of the qualifications of the Kuiks' replacement. Expertise in agriculture and nutrition would be required of the second person.

The second family would in all likelihood be stationed in Maragogi. Although located in separate towns, each worker with his/her particular responsibility could assist the work in both locations. This would permit closer cooperation and enable more efficient utilization of specialized skills.

Although the Kuiks are not scheduled to return to Canada till the middle of 1981, experience with the

missionaries has taught us that considerable lead time is required for training, visa application, etc. So although we are only just approaching 1980, time to start working on this matter is not far off.

We must commend also this aspect of mission work to our heavenly Father. We pray that visas may soon be granted to Rev. Meijer and Rev. Boersema and their families. Furthermore, we hope that the matter of visa granting will become clearer as the time approaches for mission aid workers to depart for Brazil. This, of course, is based on the assumption that suitably qualified workers will be available.

Although the individual efforts of the Mission Board and the Mission Aid Brazil have been carried on with behind-the-scenes informal consultation, it was felt that the more formal contacts as established by this meeting, would be mutually beneficial.

Respectfully submitted by,  
J. Vanderstoep  
Secretary, Mission Board

**AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 1979 IN MARAGOGI**

This title simply means that I will try to write something about our life during the past months here in Maragogi.

*One more move — the last one?*

On the 16th of August we moved into our house in Maragogi. If I had to describe all that was done before that historical event, I might fill three issues of Mission News. It took us a whole month just to make the house liveable. Let me tell you something about it.

There was no water in the house. Why not? Well, there were some bills which had to be paid. The owner of the house lives in Barreiros (15 km. north of São José, while Maragogi is 18 km. south of São José), so to settle the water problem quickly we decided to pay the bills right away in Maragogi.

There was no electricity, and there were old bills too. This meant that we had to go to Porto Calvo, a bigger city, 30 km. south of Maragogi on the main road to Maceió, capital of the state of Alagoas. The bills had to be paid at the Bank of Alagoas. There was a long

queue . . . , but a very friendly bank employee called me, "Sit down, please, I will settle your payment" and more nice talks followed while another employee offered a "cafezinho" (the typical Brazilian cup of coffee). When I left there was still a long queue . . . . Foreigners first. Brazilians can wait as if it is a crime to be a Brazilian.

More about the house: walls had to be plastered again in certain places and the roof had to be checked. There is no ceiling in the house, so, all the tiles had to be taken away, replaced where necessary, and put back again. For this job we hired dona Albertina's husband (he is not a member of our church) with his men. Some of them stayed in the house, slept and cooked their meals here, which was very funny in our eyes, but funny or not funny, it is smart.

Much more had to be done. New troops came: the Kuik family. Br. Kuik himself, Jacob, Alinda and sr. Kuik. And Delson, a boy of 12 years who comes to church very regularly, came along to assist with painting. Br. Kuik made a bathroom and provided us with a liveable kitchen, days and days of work. Meanwhile we bought some furniture, a refrigerator, and a stove.

Next point: cleaning of the house. It is a narrow house, only 4 meters wide, but very deep. From the front to the back 35 m., including the garage. Enough square meters to clean with real Dutch passion. It appeared that dona Ester, the help of the Kuik family, lived in this same house in the thirties. "In those days," she said "Maragogi was more important. There was more business life."

Finally, after much work (thanks to the Kuik family!) with the help of (a limited number of) ice creams and guaraná, we could start to enjoy a new "manse."

Enjoying the new "manse" we received during the first night a light shower in our bedroom (August was quite windy and rainy). How to solve this problem? We bought a piece of plastic to serve as ceiling above our bed. The bedroom has walls up to about 3 meters; the roof is much higher. Also in the study we made a ceiling of plastic against dust and raindrops.

More minor problems: we couldn't and still cannot use the warm shower together with the fridge. The first time we did it a main fuse outside the house blew. Work for the official technician. We decided to replace the wiring. Br.

Kuik was willing to do it. Now it is much safer.

We enjoy the "manse," really, knowing that many missionaries in this world live in less comfortable circumstances. Come and see this real Brazilian house. Maybe one of the ministers or professors can serve as tourist guide for your group. . . . We already had a visitor from Holland, a young brother who worked for 9 months in Suriname and now is making a trip through South America before returning to Holland. Who is next?

## VISAS

Writing about August and September in Maragogi without mentioning the visa problem is impossible. I suppose Council already told you something about it. As you can understand, it was a great disappointment to all of us that our request was refused. We pray, and we know you are praying, for the reconsideration. We can trust in the LORD whatever He plans for our lives.

Meanwhile I learned at the lawyer's office in Recife that the Federal Police there has accepted our new papers (proof of professional qualification from Kampen, a statement of Council that I am an ordained minister, and a new declaration of the Church at São José). This is the first step, and an important one according to the lawyer, but the Department of Justice takes the final decision, of course.

With regard to the situation in Curitiba I wrote in the last issue of Mission News that their situation is less favourable than ours. By now it's just the opposite. Rev. Simpelaar received a temporary visa for two years and arrived in Brazil. That's a great relief for the Oldenhuis family.

When you read these lines we probably know more about our situation. We can expect word this month according to our lawyer.

Another item: the *Music Evening* on September 29, 1979. It was a nice evening. We spent quite some time preparing this evening, especially at Sunday School and at the societies. During the last weeks we were very busy with it. After the Sunday evening service, for example, we often practised with the Young People's Society.

We also advertised our Music Evening. There is a young man who is a kind of disc jockey and government propagandist together. In the public library at the town square he has his turntable and a microphone to proclaim the government slogans. He was will-

ing to announce our Music Evening, too.

What was the program? After an introductory speech by Rev. Boersema, who conducted the whole evening, and after community singing, sr. Tereza Vieira recited a Christian poem. She did it very well. After prayer, br. Joaquim Gomes read Psalm 117. Rev. Boersema spoke a few words about this Psalm, especially addressing the many unbelievers who were in church that evening. After singing Psalm 100, the children of the Sunday School came forward to the platform to sing a hymn, to recite Ecclesiastes 11:9, 10 and 12:1 and to sing a children's song.

Then the Women's Society came forward to sing a hymn. Also the Youth Club sang hymns accompanied by triangles and tambourines. The next item was a canon sung by our wives. I think this received the best attention of the whole program. It was almost silent for a minute or so. Amazing, because Brazilians do not like silence, but, on the other hand, it is not amazing for those who know the beautiful voices of our wives.

After this trio Pedro Vieira read I Corinthians 15:50-58 and Amaro Barros Lins, who soon will do profession of faith together with his wife, addressed us about those verses. His speech was a bit too long, but fully biblical. He himself came with the idea of holding a speech.

Also the Girls' Choir sang two hymns. Then the Kuik family, or the Kuik ensemble, played their instruments: flutes, melodeon and mouth organ, while br. Kuik sang, too. Alinda Kuik and Aurelene Tenório sang a duet. After that, the Young People's Society sang a hymn and Maria José dos Santos sang a solo, very well done. We, as three couples, sang a hymn in four voices. I have to confess that my admiration for choir members rushed to unprecedented heights.

We finished the evening with thanksgiving to the LORD. Having ended officially, we could enjoy the cakes and the "cocadas" prepared by many women and girls.

Many, many people who never come to our church, attended the Music Evening. Our seating accommodation was far from being sufficient. Among the visitors was a Bolivian doctor with his wife, who lives in São José. He shows much interest in the work of br. and sr. Kuik.

The value of such a Music Evening is, in my opinion, that of a presentation

as Church to the local population, a matter of "public relations." It is good that the people can see church members and regular visitors singing and speaking about the LORD. We certainly will hold more music evenings in the future.

## INDEPENDENCE DAY

A newsletter about September in Brazil without mentioning this day is more or less a crime in Brazilian eyes. It was the first time that we experienced the 7th of September. Weeks before the great day already, we could notice that something great was going to happen. Much practise of a school band was done during the evenings, often right across from our house.

On the morning of the 7th we watched, in São José, the school class and their bands marching past the local authorities (including the Dutch priest). The new slogan for Independence Day was: "Independence is order and progress is you." We also went to Barreiros. There we could hear nice music of the many bands. (In Barreiros there are more schools and of a higher level.)

The most beautiful parade of that day we saw in Maragogi in the afternoon. The school band played much better than the one in São José. The school children were dressed as people of the colonial period. Very nice.

During the evening we had a congregational meeting in São José because of Holy Supper on the next Sunday. In a short speech I emphasized that independence is not the highest value for a country because we have to be dependent on the LORD.

When we came home after the meeting we could enjoy more festivities. We discovered that right in front of our house is a dance hall. And the street is narrow! An underdeveloped beat group played their noisiest repertoire in that dance hall until 3:40 a.m.

## OUR WORK

Maybe you are wondering whether we, missionaries, are doing anything else than watching school bands and having music evenings. Yes, we do. We face bureaucraties, e.g. to get a license for owning a car. I shall not elaborate on this subject since Rev. Boersema did so. Anyway, it took many days before I was the legal owner of Rev. Van Spronsen's car.

My part of the work consists of preparing Sunday School and conducting it while Rev. Boersema and br. Kuik

take care of certain parts of it. Further, I prepare the worship services, including the sermon. Then there is the work for Youth Club and Young People's Society, preparing lessons and explanation. For this work, too, br. Kuik and Rev. Boersema give assistance. On Monday evenings we give catechism lessons to a couple. Rev. Boersema takes care of the Wednesday evening Bible study besides his language study. So, we are doing more than watching school bands.

A joyful Sunday was September the 16th when Elisangela, daughter of sr. Meire Tenório was baptized. Also for this child it applies that God's promises are real. HE is faithful to His Word. That is the basis for our work even in the present situation on the mission field.

"The Word is near you" (Romans 10:8).

P.K.M.

## MISSION AID

### REPORT NO. 83

#### REPORT OVER THE MONTHS OF SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 1979

Last month you did not receive a report from us, so this time we have to make up for it. Hopefully you received all the letters we sent during the last two months. Thank you for the letters which reached us over this period.

Our family is still doing well except for some minor problems now and then, but everybody will have this once in a while, I suppose. We also received good news from our family, including our son Ronald and relatives in Canada and The Netherlands. We are very thankful for that. Hopefully we will meet our oldest son again in December sometime. We are really looking forward to that event when our family will be united again, even though it will be only for a few weeks. You can imagine that we already are making preparations and plans on how to spend those days. You will hear more about this in the future.

The weather is very warm and dry now, as we are now in the middle of the dry season. It is a little harder to do our work now because of the heat. We are still better off than many other regions of this state where it did not rain for about one year. Even in the dry season we will get the odd good shower yet in this coastal region. Reading the daily newspapers we very well can imagine the hardship and suffering

of many. The government is spending millions trying to do something about the ever-returning suffering because of these dry spells, but it seems to be in vain. Many claim that these conditions exist because of the indiscriminate cutting of all the bush over the years. There is undoubtedly a lot of truth in that statement.

Returning to São José, we can say that the work could be done by us without major difficulties. Many people came and went, asking for some kind of assistance. While writing this report I was already called to the gate many times because somebody wanted to talk to me. It upsets your program for the day if you have to leave your job all the time. That is the way it is, and I presume that it will stay this way. It is part of our work.

We just admitted a baby of six months of age. The mother was here before, but we had sent her to the clinic to see the doctor first. For the greater part of the month we had seven children in the nursery. *José Edmilson* came on the 21st of August and left us on the 10th of September. He did well right from the start and could go home in good health again.

*João Ferreira* who suffered from an acute form of anemia went home on the 3rd of October. *Jonatan Romero da Silva* was admitted August 30th and also went home on October 3rd. On September 10th *José Alisteu dos Santos* came, eight months old, a twin. He was suffering from many things and weighed only 3¾ kg. At the time of this writing he is doing very well.

*Veralúcia de Oliveira* was admitted on September 5th. Intestinal parasites were her problem, and she is slowly recuperating after following several treatments. On the 7th of September we admitted *Maria de Fátima*, two years old, badly anemic because of intestinal parasites, and *Jamima Bandeira*, also two years old. The latter had been in the hospital for a week because of pneumonia. That left her in an extremely weak condition so that the mother feared she would die. After she came back from the hospital where she had been on intravenous medication, she refused to eat. She slowly regained strength and is doing very well now.

*Maria Elisangela da Silva* arrived on August 10th, a year and a half old. She stayed for about six weeks and went home on the 19th of September. She took her first steps here. *Nelivaldo Lins Batista*, four months old, came September 13th but already went

home on the 22nd of the same month. On September 19th *Luciane do Nascimento* came, two years old. This girl was very sick. Later it turned out that she had pneumonia. We did everything we possibly could do for her and a doctor who lives here in São José came several times for some days to look at her in the nursery. He decided to bring her to a hospital in Rio Formoso on a Sunday morning. She died there the next day. It makes you extra-careful again when taking care of the other children.

*Rosiane dos Santos*, four months old, was admitted on October 3. Her illness was diarrhea and high fever. She responded well to the treatment and went home again on October 10th. *Djaira de Cassia dos Santos*, four months old: her case was much the same as that of Rosiane mentioned above. She also did well and was discharged on October 11th. *Maria Elizangela da Silva*, six months old and not to be mixed up with the girl of the same name mentioned before in this report, was admitted on October 23rd. This girl is still very sick. Her case: diarrhea, malnutrition, and scabies. *Elinício Severino da Silva*, two months old, was admitted on October 24th. He came down with diarrhea and vomiting but is doing very well now.

This was the end of the list of all the children we had or still have in the nursery. Ardis has promised to write more about the nursery and related things in a separate letter in the near future.

We made a special trip to Recife to bring a lady to the hospital in that city. The doctor in Barreiros had suggested to her to go to Recife for help, but what do you do if you are already in such a shape that you cannot travel by bus anymore (buses are often packed) and besides do not have the means to travel that way? After they called on us we visited her where she lived, and I recognized her right away as being the mother of one of Rev. Van Spronsen's pupils when he gave an illiteracy course in 1972, although that was at a different location. With some help she still could walk, but she was certainly not able to go by bus. I am sure that she will never come home again.

On our regular shopping trips we sometimes brought people to the city for treatment. Rev. Boersema is doing the same when he goes to the city.

With the permission of the Mission Aid Committee in Cloverdale we will now buy a small store here in São

José. There are various reasons for this decision. One of the reasons is that most people are almost forced to buy on Sunday because that is the day the feira (market) is held, and, consequently, they can buy much more cheaply on that day. At several meetings with the members of the church here we dealt with the subject: Sabbath observance and what this means for the New Testament Church observing the Sunday as the day of rest. We have been looking for ways to assist, our people in the first place, keeping this day of rest in accordance with the Word of God, and we came to the conclusion that by buying an existing small store and obtaining a permit in order to buy wholesale we could help the people considerably by selling for a greatly reduced price. Presently we are investigating the possibilities. There are several places for sale in this town. We have not bought anything yet, but a deal is in the making. So, we can help our people observe the Sunday, and at the same time they will be able to buy more cheaply, reason enough to start something like this. You will hear more about it.

The next time I can probably also tell you more about the rice field. It is still too wet to do anything, and it is also considered too early to start planting.

With this I will end this report. May the Lord in His grace give you His blessings according to His promise. Greetings for you all!

Yours in Christ,  
John Kuik

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São José da Coroa Grande,  
November 1979

#### **TO OUR WHOLE BIG "FAMILY"**

It has been a long time since we have written in our Mission News. Sorry that we have neglected you in this respect. We will try to make up for it by sending this letter before the end of this year.

We would like to thank you all for the support you have given us through the year. It is marvellous to know that we have such a strong homefront. Your work at home is very important for our work on the mission field. We need each other also in our prayers. It is through *you* that we are able to do our work. We are always moved by the fact that our boys and girls are gathering so much money throughout the year. Do you realize that with your help we were able to save lives of children?

With the blessing of the Lord it was *you* who made it possible to do this work of mercy. May you continue to do so and see your task here in Brazil where the Lord is gathering His church.

A tropical morning can be very beautiful, when everything in nature again comes to life, with the birds singing in chorus, although often this peace is disturbed when the children start to cry in the nursery. Around 5:00 o'clock they have no more patience, and the formula has to be made right away, while John is giving the medicines. In the meantime Dona Ester has arrived and together we finish the work, bathing and feeding so that by 7 o'clock we are sitting around the breakfast table. Dona Ester starts another wash-day again. The wash has to be done in cold water, but in this climate the water isn't that cold. The whole day she is busy with the wash, and this is quite a job at her age. We are thankful that for so many years already we have such a responsible person in Ester. In the rainy season the dryer proved to be indispensable. How we managed without a dryer before is a question for us now.

Around 6 o'clock our domestic girl, Devanize, starts too. She is fourteen years old and has already worked for one year for us. Her first job in the morning is to do the verandas and the two rooms of the nursery which every day have to be cleaned with water. After that she starts to go through the house. Some days it takes her more than two hours to do the dishes, but in general she is very good for such a young girl. I hope that she will stay for several years yet and not run away with a man as our previous girls have done.

Right now it is the time of the big red ants to visit us in the evening. They must have big nests underneath our house. What we don't mind are our house friends, the lizards. You can find their eggs regularly in certain places in the house; they look like small moth balls.

This week I was called to an older member of the Church who was bitten by a scorpion the evening before. All night she had terrible pain. I gave her an aspirin and put some ice cubes on her feet which relieved the pain. Even the Bible tells us how painful it is to be bitten by a scorpion.

Lately it has been very busy in the nursery and all the cribs have been occupied. Most cases are: malnutrition, diarrhea, vomiting, dehydration, ane-

mia, worms, and pneumonia. You often feel very sorry that the mothers can't give their little ones what they need. If you can't buy the milk powder, or not enough, what are you then going to do? A girl of two years of age, who stayed with us for two months, lost another fifty worms during the second treatment. Some of them you could find in the morning on the floor, covered by ants. Needless to say, this girl must have felt miserable for a long time. As a happy girl she went home this week with her mother, but I was surprised to see the mother and the girl after half an hour sitting at our door step again. The girl had cried when she came home and the mother thought she could solve the problem by leaving her here again for some weeks. We convinced her that she soon would get used to the place, but then . . . you can always try.

A little boy, who came two months ago, nine months old, weighing only 3½ kg., is now doing fine. He was just a skeleton when we admitted him, and he couldn't swallow any longer. He was more or less dying already. Seeing this child again now, it is hard to believe that he was so sick before. It is a miracle in our eyes and in the eyes of others. May through this work more people come to see the mercy of the Lord Who is doing those wondrous things.

A doctor, also a Christian, who lives here in town, came to visit us to see the rooms of the nursery. He was very interested and enthusiastic to see this set-up. He asked us to call him anytime, without pay, if we needed help. His intention is to work more together, so that we also can give intravenous medical treatment in the nursery. You will hear more about this in the future.

Last week I had an opportunity to go to Barreiros with John to bring a lady to the maternity ward. When entering such a place I always have to think about our spotless and clean hospitals back home. A "nurse" helped the mother, just with her everyday clothes on, without using gloves, etc. or washing her hands. The mothers have to take their own linen along so that the dirty ones can be taken home again. After 30 minutes we saw the mother again with a healthy baby laying with her in a room packed with beds and people because it was visiting hour. The mother didn't have a bath after the baby was born. If she wants one she can do that herself later. Anyway, many believe that you should not

take a warm bath until eight days after the baby is born and a cold one after 30 days.

Did you also know that you shouldn't cut your nails on a Friday or else they will crack; but if you cut your nails on Monday, you avoid toothache.

I will take you back to the hospital for a minute again, because you haven't seen it all yet. The babies are laying in bed with the mothers and most of them have bonnets on and . . . little mittens. Many a baby is carried around in the arms of visiting relatives or friends. After 24 hours, or even before that, the mother is walking out of the hospital again.

The Laubach course is a special system to teach adults to read and write. I have again started a course with two ladies, members of the church, three times a week in the evening. They are making good progress, and it is a pleasure to teach them. Besides Jacob and Alinda, who have been taking piano lessons for some

years already, I have started with three more students who are going to church for years already. Hopefully they can play the piano in the future. So far so good.

Jacob and Alinda are doing fine. They have grown a lot over the last few years. They both passed with good marks from the correspondence lessons from B.C. Their holidays from this school will be from December until February. We are really looking forward to when Ronald will stay with us for a few months. He will come in December, the Lord willing.

Several times the Women's Society received a card from your Societies. This was really appreciated and they felt the bond which we have in Christ. The members come faithfully; we are still studying Genesis. To understand the subject better, we are now working with a short summary and with some questions and answers from the chapter dealt with. They can always find somebody to read it for them if

they are illiterate themselves. After the meeting we have coffee and cake, which is enjoyed by all of us.

Life has changed a lot on the mission field since we are now here with three families. It is most enjoyable, and we are very thankful for this fellowship. May the Lord grant our missionaries permanent visas in Brazil, so that they may continue to preach the gospel here in São José and in the future in Maragogi.

It was heartwarming to receive so many cards and letters for our birthdays from many of you. We received a flow of mail. Many thanks for your thoughtfulness.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May the Lord bless and keep you in the coming year.

Many greetings from all of us.

Yours,  
Ardis Kuik

## MINUTES

*of the Office-Bearers' Conference held on November 3, 1979 in the Rehoboth Church Building, Burlington-West.*

1. The chairman, Prof. L. Selles, calls the meeting to order. He requests the brethren to sing Psalm 145:1, reads Ephesians 4:17-32 and leads in prayer.

2. A special welcome is extended to Rev. W. Pouwelse of The Netherlands, who is visiting the Church at Burlington-West in view of the call he received.

3. The speaker of the day, Rev. J. DeJong, receives the floor to address the Conference on "Our Cultural Mandate."

4. Rev. DeJong begins to point out why this subject is important: it concerns the basic thrust of the Gospel in the world. The question is: where should the thrust of the Gospel lie? On evangelism or on all fields? Should the stress be on the preaching and witnessing or on our daily work? In the debate that is going on in The Netherlands today the discussion centers on the question whether Genesis 1:28 is a mandate or more of a blessing. The former view was emphasized by Dr. K. Schilder, the latter view is held by Dr. J. Douma and Dr. W.H. Velema.

After having discussed Scripture passages from Genesis 1, 2, 3, and 4 the speaker concludes that after the fall of sin the Cultural Mandate is still in force. In the New Testament the thrust is: use your money for the preaching of the Gospel; we have to give up everything for the Kingdom of God.

According to the speaker there are no major differences between the two views mentioned above; it is more a matter of different emphasis. Referring to Dr. Schilder's *Christ and Culture* which emphasizes that while Jesus Christ is the perfect office-bearer, we have to be office-bearers in all relations, Rev. DeJong is of the opinion that what is missing in Dr. Schilder's work is stressed by the others, namely, the impending return of Jesus Christ and the thankfulness for the deliverance. That gives more depth to the Cultural Mandate. Concluding, the speaker states that we may speak of our Cultural Mandate as long as it includes prayerful support of the Church as chief part of the mandate. The core of the Cultural Mandate is the hearing of the Gospel and passing it on but also showing it in word and deed wherever God places us. We are strangers on earth, indeed. Yet, not as to our task but with respect to sin. We are not all called to be ministers. We are called to serve the Lord with the talents received and to labour

in the world in order to show the reality of the Gospel.

5. The afternoon part of the meeting is filled by the discussion of the speech. The chairman expresses to Rev. DeJong the appreciation of the Conference for the work done.

6. The next Conference is scheduled for Saturday, March 22, 1980 to begin at 10:00 a.m. in the Ebenezer Church, Burlington-East. Rev. M.C. Werkman is willing to address the meeting.

7. The chairman requests the brethren to sing Hymn 43:2. Rev. J. DeJong leads in thanksgiving.

Secretary,  
M. VAN BEVEREN

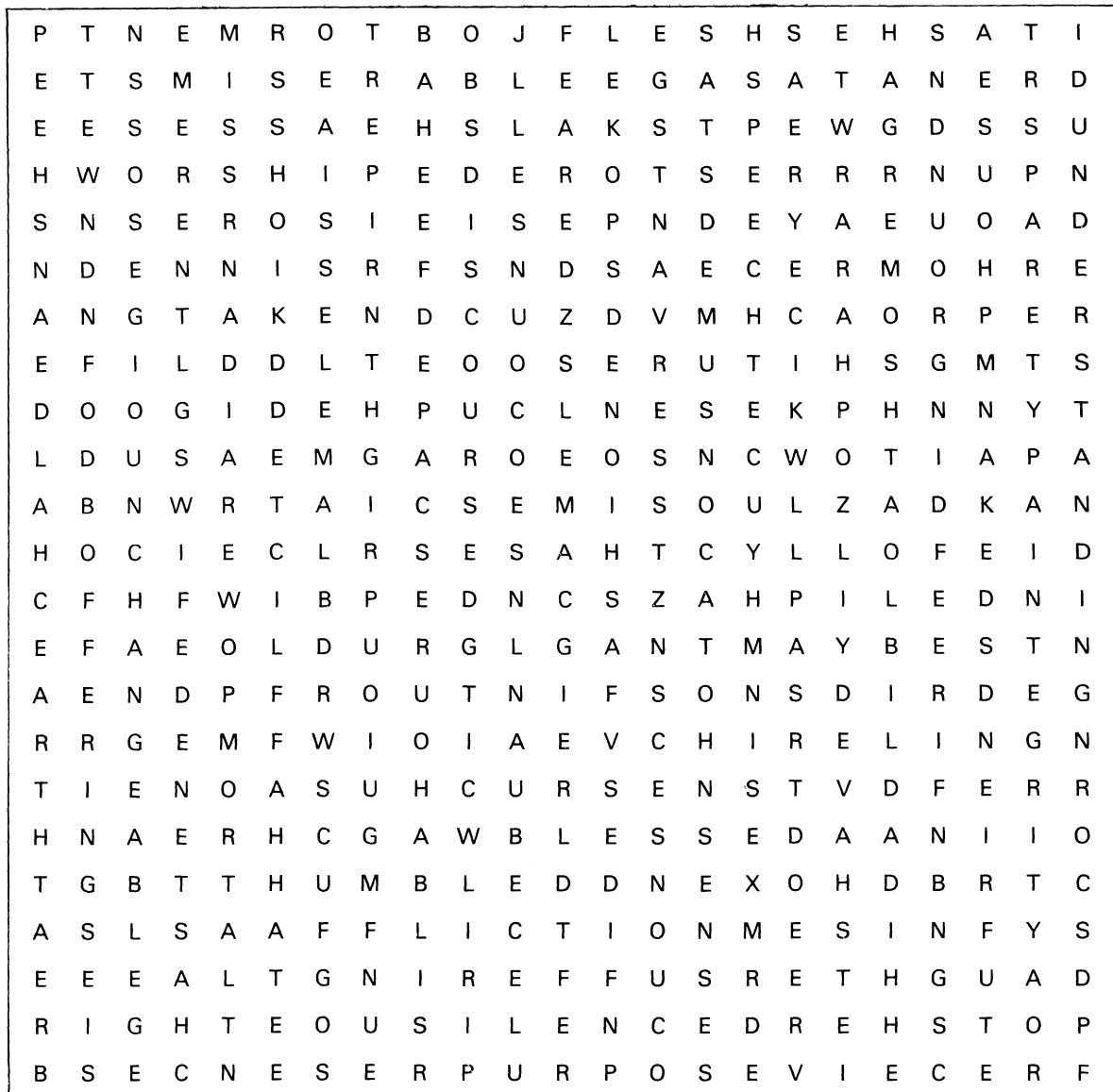
### Genesis 1:28

And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."



# Word Search — Puzzle No. 61

## JOB



- |            |           |             |               |           |           |               |
|------------|-----------|-------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| afflicted  | consumed  | flesh       | Job           | pain      | shaved    | torment       |
| affliction | counsel   | folly       |               | potsherd  | she-asses | touch         |
| angry      | curse     | foundations | laughingstock | power     | sheep     | unchangeable  |
| anguish    |           | friends     | life          | presence  | silence   | understanding |
| ashes      | daughters | fro         | loathsome     | purpose   | sin       | upright       |
|            | day       |             |               |           | sinned    | Uz            |
| Bildad     | discourse | good        | may           | raid      | sons      |               |
| blameless  |           | ground      | messenger     | receive   | sores     | wept          |
| blessed    | earth     |             | miserable     | reproach  | soul      | whirlwind     |
| breath     | Eliphaz   | hear        | mortal        | restored  | spare     | wife          |
|            | escaped   | hireling    |               | righteous | speech    | words         |
| camels     | evil      | house       | naked         |           | spoke     | worshiped     |
| Chaldeans  |           | humbled     |               | sat       | suffering |               |
| chastened  | fashioned |             | offerings     | Satan     |           | Zophar        |
| complaint  | feared    | if          | old           | scorn     | taken     |               |
| considered | fire      | integrity   | oxen          | servants  | to        | W. DIEK       |

# our little magazine

Hello Busy Beavers,

One of the Busy Beavers asked me about a story.

You love stories, I know.

I like a good story, too!

So why don't we write some?

You Busy Beavers are good at writing your own stories.

And the other Busy Beavers will enjoy reading them!

I will give you the start.

And I will send out a reward, too, to all of you who send in a story.

Here's the beginning. You write the rest of the story.

### *The Secret Place*

Chris' friend was on the step ringing the doorbell. Down the stairs flew Chris, coat still half open.

"Bye, Mom."

And before Mom could ask where they were going the friends were gone down the sidewalk, heads together.

"Let's go . . ."

\* \* \* \* \*

Time for birthday wishes. To all the Busy Beavers celebrating a March birthday we all join in wishing you the happiest birthday ever! We hope you have a really good time celebrating with your family and friends. And may the Lord guide and keep you in the new year ahead. Those are the same wishes as always, but they are very well meant and, besides, what better could we wish you? Happy birthday!

Lorraine Heres	March 2	Margaret Tenhage	March 17
Stephanie Louwerse	2	Pat Kamstra	20
Janet Veenendaal	2	Henriette Bosscher	21
Lyndon Kok	4	Jolette Moeliker	21
Anne-Marie Jonker	6	Marjorie Smouter	22
Gerald Schoon	7	Debbie Aikema	23
Joanne Oostdijk	9	Heather Bergsma	24
J-Anne Vander Ploeg	9	Irene Hoeksema	27
Angela Wiersema	9	Charles Slaa	27
Carolin Boeringa	10	Gordon Van Woudenberg	28
Hilda Jongsma	11	Carolyn Irene Hoeksema	29
Jacqueline Riemersma	13	Marianne Hart	30
Joanne Doekes	15	Mary Van Woudenberg	31
Valerie Kleefman	15	Jane Wiegers	31
Michael Bosch	17	Henrietta Beukema	31

I wonder if some of these Busy Beavers will get a new Bible for their birthday. And I'll tell you why. Just yesterday I was reading about a Russian minister who had no Bible. Can you imagine that? A minister without a Bible! Thankfully a visitor from outside Russia brought him one. Just one.

How thankful we should be for our Bibles! And how careful we should be to read them every day. Some of you

Busy Beavers will be grown up enough to read the Bible for yourself each evening before you go to bed. Did you know that some boys and girls in Canada and the U.S. belong to a Bible Readers League just as you belong to the Busy Beaver Club?

Why don't you write me about this and tell me what you think?

I'd be very interested!



## From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Richard Lof*. We are happy to have you join us. We hope you'll really enjoy being a Busy Beaver and joining in all our Busy Beaver activities. Did you have lots of fun on your birthday, Richard? Write again soon.

Hello *John Paul Van Amerongen*. How are you doing? It was nice to hear from you again. Thanks for sharing your jokes. I liked them, and I know the Busy Beavers will, too. Write again soon.

Congratulations on a good report card, *Jolette Moeliker*. I looked in vain for your poem, Jolette. Do you still have it at home? Save it for the next poetry contest. Or maybe you'll let us have it now? We sent the College our birthday gift by money order along with your letter last year, Jolette. The letter was even published in Rev. VanOene's report in *Clarion*. Maybe you remember now? You could look it up in last fall's issues. Try it and let me know, all right?

And what happened to your poem, *Rosalinde Moeliker*? I'm looking forward to receiving it! I'm glad you had so much fun in the snow and having company. How are your puppies doing, Rosa?

I think you had lots of fun eating out, *Arno Moeliker*. And were you helping lots painting in the kitchen? Did you get it finished before you went back to school? I'm glad you had good marks on your report, Arno. I think all the Busy Beavers do, don't you? At least nobody ever writes to tell me they had bad marks!

Hello, *Eileen Salomons*. It was nice to hear from you again. I'm curious to know how your hockey team did, Eileen. Will you let me know? Thanks for writing and for the poem. What do you think about your poem, Eileen?

Sounds as if you had a really good time at Christmas, *Helena Onderwater*. Thanks for your quiz and for your letter. The Busy Beavers will enjoy the word search. Bye for now, Helena. Write again soon.

How is your brother doing after his operation, *Karen Stam*? And how are the plans for your birthday coming along? Thanks for your letter and your puzzle, Karen. It was nice to hear from you, and I hope you'll write again soon.

### QUIZ TIME

First of all here are Busy Beaver *John Paul Van Amerongen's* best riddles for you. Think hard.

1. What is yellow, purple, yellow, purple, etc.?
2. How do skunks pay taxes?
3. What do martians who talk metric say?

Answers: 1. a banana working nights as a grape; 2. in dollars and cents; 3. "Take me to your litre."