

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE



Vol. 29, No. 12

June 14, 1980



## OPC and Ecumenicity

Again it is that time of the year; assemblies and synods follow one another in rapid succession. The Forty-seventh General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church convened May 15-22 in Geneva College, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. Because the editor of *Clarion* was also the first delegate of the Canadian Reformed Churches ever to attend a general assembly of the OPC, we do not have to wait till the appearing of the official minutes in order to report on certain developments that are of interest for our readers.

In line of previous editorials about the OPC we pay special attention to the topic of ecumenicity and interchurch relations. Although the Canadian Reformed delegate was greeted in a brotherly manner and received the opportunity to address the assembly, our relationship was not mentioned in the Report of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations. The intra-presbyterian movements are completely in the foreground and this is understandable. Our readers know of the secession in the Presbyterian Church in the Southern parts of the United States which led to the formation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). At the Seventh General Assembly of this Church, held last year, it was reported that in five years this denomination grew from 260 to 440 churches, from 196 to 584 ministers, while overseas missionaries will soon number over 200. This tremendous growth has given to the PCA at least the numerical lead in the interchurch relations. There have been consultations between the PCA, OPC, and RPCES (the Reformed Presbyterians Evangelical Synod). The last two are denominations in the northern part of the States that want to maintain historic Presbyterianism in faithfulness to Holy Scripture and in agreement with the Westminster standards. But these consultations with a view to a plan of merger came to a sudden halt because of a rigid rule in the PCA, the requirement of a  $\frac{3}{4}$  vote. Seventy-five percent of those voting in the general assembly had to favour continuation of even these consultations and this requirement was not met in 1979. Then a remarkable thing happened. One gets the impression that the committees of the separate Presbyterian denominations became impatient. They came to the idea: If merger is difficult, what would happen when the largest body — the PCA — simply invites the others to join it? Also in that way a united church comes about. Let the church order of the PCA be simply accepted by all, and let us discuss our divergencies after we have become united. Those divergencies are related to the doctrine of the last things, masonry, Christian liberty, the number of offices (two or three?), the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, theological training, etc. It is clear that since the civic war in 1865 the Presbyterians in the North underwent other influences than the Presbyterians in the South. Although the struggle against liberalism in the twentieth century was mainly the same,

there has been a different development and the question arises: In how far should this be taken into consideration?

The discussions among the Presbyterian brothers remind me of the debates between the brothers of the "Afscheiding" and the "Doleantie" in The Netherlands in the period between 1886 and 1892. Should there first be agreement in all points, or is common acceptance of confessional standards and church order sufficient? Professor E. Clowney of Westminster Seminary made in the Orthodox Presbyterian assembly in Beaver Falls an urgent appeal on the basis of Ephesians 4, the apostolic exhortation, to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: Let us inform the PCA that the OPC would be receptive to an invitation to join the PCA and let the union come about by 1982, if desired by at least a two-thirds majority of the OPC. His colleague, Prof. N. Shepherd, was more cautious. He fears that the Scriptural insight that the OPC has gained by blending Presbyterianism and the Reformational movement of the European continent, would easily be lost in a United Presbyterian Church. The majority of the commissioners shared his caution. It was heartwarming to hear older Orthodox Presbyterian ministers speak of the blessing they had received after the Reformation of the church in 1936. Nevertheless, it was generally accepted that this assembly affirm its desire to achieve biblical unity and union with the Presbyterian Church in America, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, as soon as possible. The OPC, however, is in favour of first discussing the divergencies and drawing up a statement that exhibits the understanding of the compatibility of the churches involved. The PCA as the largest body would convene a joint meeting of the representatives of the participating churches. The standards of government, discipline and worship of the respective churches should be provided for each session and minister. The OPC Committee is further instructed to inform the sessions and ministers about the differences between the Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechism in the participating churches. So the OPC has held in abeyance formal consideration of merger until the major assembly meetings of 1981. For our Canadian Reformed Churches it means that our discussion partner in ecclesiastical contact remains the same for the time being.

In the meantime the cautions and responsible manner in which this 47th General Assembly dealt with this important issue is encouraging. Sometimes I had the feeling as if I were in a Canadian Reformed meeting: the debate gulfed back and forth between those who stressed the dynamics in the continual work of the Church gathering Christ and those who underlined the significance of the inheritance to be preserved. It will be interesting to see how the upcoming general assembly of the PCA will deal with the proposal of

their Interchurch Relations Committee to send out "an invitation to participate in steps designed to effect one Church among us,"

"whereas we hold to and desire to promote a common testimony of the inerrancy of Scripture, the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and the doctrine of the purity of the visible Church; and

whereas we feel constrained by our commitments to seek a more perfect unity among us as members of Christ's body . . . ."

It is not impossible that the caution of the OPC will reflect itself in the actions of the PCA.

#### OPC — RCN — RES

Among the divergencies between the OPC and the other "conservative" Presbyterian denominations (the RPCES and the PCA) is also the difference with respect to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. The Orthodox Presbyterians have played an active role in the RES and have formed a counterweight there against the influence of the Synodical Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (RCN). Our readers will remember, however, that in my opinion the OPC had been too optimistic when in 1979 it 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. Now the Committee on RES matters reported that no reply had been received. The Committee had endeavoured to keep abreast of developments in the RCN during the year and had reluctantly to conclude that the RCN is persisting in an unbiblical course from which it gives no evidence of turning. The report sums up the various matters, e.g., membership in the World Council of Churches, ordination of women to ruling and teaching office, permissiveness with regard to theological views held by Drs. Kuitert and Wiersinga.

Meanwhile the fruits of false doctrine are borne in a moral decline so intensive that by an almost unanimous vote their most recent Synod, as reported in *Officiele Mededelingen* (Official Information) for December 1979, voted that people who are actively homosexual are both to be free to experience "the mutual bond of faith . . . by participation in the Lord's Supper" and to be allowed to exercise "the gifts for service given to all, heterosexuals and homosexuals, even for office . . . ." And although the action in itself was significant, it was admitted on the floor of Synod that "the startingpoint had not been the biblical data on homosexuality" (*RES News Exchange*, January 1980, p. 1518); no Scripture was used in the report that presented the matter to the Synod.

The statement of the RCN (syn.) with respect to those who are actively homosexual had a shock-effect on the OPC. It will now inform the RCN and the RES Nimes 1980 that it views the action of the RCN Synod on homosexuality as "a not unexpected outcome of a failure to discern unsound doctrine with resultant departures from Reformed (biblical) doctrine over a period of years . . . ." It is clearly an established pattern of departure from the commitment of the RES to Reformed doctrine and life, a consistent failure to hold to purposes of the RES as stated in its Constitution. For the Constitution of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod speaks about the unity of those churches which profess and maintain the Reformed faith.

The previous General Assembly of the OPC requested RES 1980 to continue consultations with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland and to declare that membership in the World Council constitutes a demonstrated unfaithfulness to the Reformed Confession which is contrary to the requirements for membership in the RES. In *Clarion* of January 26, 1980, I expressed my disappointment about this decision: This would leave the situation as it is, at least until the following quadrennial synod after Nimes 1980, that is, until 1984.

But now the OPC calls for more prompt and forthright action by the RES concerning the doctrinal views of office-holders in the RCN and the membership in the World Council of Churches. The RES should advise the synodical churches in The Netherlands to condemn the sign of homosexual thought and deeds, to make clear that men like Dr. Wiersinga and Dr. Kuitert are not permitted to hold office, to withdraw its membership from the World Council without delay, to make a new study of the question of women in teaching and ruling office, and to report to the Interim Committee at least once each year, beginning in March 1981, as to the response being made on the above advice.

If the RCN would not heed this advice, the Interim Committee would be instructed to recommend in 1984 termination of the membership of the RCN in the RES.

One can be thankful that the OPC report is now more realistic with respect to the synodical churches in The Netherlands and that it spells out a strict procedure for the coming years. Nevertheless, also in this proposal membership of the RCN in the RES remains continued at least until 1984. In spite of several strong statements, the report fails to discern the danger that the RCN influence the other members of the RES. In the spring of this year during a discussion in the synod of the RCN the remark was made that the synodical churches should endure the constant exhortations of some in the RES and stay there in order to influence the others. Is then the course of the Free Church of Scotland not better? It wrote to all the RES churches "to inquire if you will support a motion in the RES Nimes this year to terminate the GKN (RCN) membership in the RES. In the event of such a motion not being successful the Free Church of Scotland will feel duty bound to sever their connection with the RES." The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland was even more radical. It has withdrawn from the RES until such time as the synod will fulfill properly its original purpose, to promote the unity of the churches which profess and maintain the Reformed faith. Nevertheless, one can have understanding for the Free Church of Scotland; they will not immediately leave themselves, but first bring a motion to terminate the membership of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (syn.). They also try to save the RES. But what will the OPC delegates then do? Vote against this motion of the Free Church of Scotland and let them eventually depart from the RES, in order to help maintain membership of the RCN at least until 1984?

I expressed again my doubts about a too lenient action of the OPC. But I am fully convinced of their honest and Christian endeavour to call the synodical churches back to the obedience of Christ. Hear them plead with and for these Dutch churches, bone of our bones:

. . . it is with great sorrow that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has felt compelled to take the above actions; the physical heritage of no small number of us lies in your church and the spiritual heritage of all of us has deep

roots in your history. Yet though we had anticipated a rich and growing fellowship with you in the RES when we joined it in 1949 the ensuing years have found you increasingly at odds with the vast majority of the member churches on issues crucial to Reformed life and witness; anticipated fellowship has been stunted and marred, unity has become discord, and some have felt their witness compromised both before the world and before

those churches that we should like to join with us in the RES. We long that the RES be a place for joyful, productive fellowship in the gospel so needed by the world; that is why, after long pleading with you to follow a biblical path that we have come with sore regret to place before you and the RES the proposals herein contained. May God help you. May God help us all.

J. FABER

---

## Tentative Report on the Matter of Women's Voting Rights<sup>(4)</sup>

### IX. Church History

We now turn our attention to another aspect of our mandate, namely the evidence of church history as it relates to women in general and to women voting in particular.

To begin with it may be stated that not many of the early Church Fathers considered women in an ecclesiastical context. The subjection of women was frequently alluded to, but both Clement of Alexandria and Chrysostom considered this to be due not to any "created weakness" but because she abused her privilege. Writing on Genesis 1-3, Augustine makes clear that woman was made so that man should rule over her. He also states that this servitude is the direct result of sin.

Yet spiritually the Church Fathers considered women to be equal to men. Gregory of Nyssa, preaching on Genesis 1:26, bases this on the fact that both are created in the divine image. Earlier, Clement of Alexandria made clear that women were equal to men "in excellence of character" and in their capacity for spiritual progress.

As for women and church office, we find very little mention made of this in the writings of the early Fathers. Tertullian said, "it is not permitted of women to speak in church, or to teach, or to baptise or to offer, or to lay claim to a man's function or to the priestly office." Furthermore, he characterizes such behaviour as that of heretics. Irenaeus also refers to the iniquities of the Magus Marcus who led astray silly women, encouraging them to make "their own thank-offering in his presence" and to prophesy, as well as behave immorally with them. Chrysostom

says that when the question is the care of the church and of souls "let the whole female sex retreat from such an office . . . and similarly the majority of men." Epiphanius says "never anywhere has any woman, not even Eve, acted as priest from the beginning of the world." In the *Apostolic Constitutions* women are barred from teaching and priestly functions, but the deaconesses has special tasks.

Needless to say the testimony of the early Fathers is solidly opposed to women in office. As for the matter of woman having the right to vote for those nominated to office, no reference has been found by your Committee.

Later church history indicates that the Reformers followed in this tradition of opposition to women in office. Luther declared himself solidly against a female ministry. Calvin does likewise. In commenting on I Corinthians 14:34, he says,

"For how unsuitable it would be for a woman, who is in subjection to one of the members, to be in an authoritative position over the whole body! It is therefore an argument based on incompatibilities; because, if the woman is under subjection, she is therefore debarred from having authority to teach in public."<sup>36</sup>

Other reformers can be cited as well showing that they opposed the possibility of having women in office.

As for the matter of women's voting rights, the Reformers — as far as we are aware — say nothing on this subject, although it is an established fact that Reformed churches in different countries have taken different approaches to the matter. In Scotland, Switzerland, Germany, Hungary, and The Netherlands certain churches in

the Reformed tradition have later adopted women's voting rights. Yet that practice is by no means universal; exceptions exist.<sup>37</sup> The main exception that we are interested in is the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.

At its Synod of Utrecht 1923 the churches were warned not to introduce women voting so long as the matter had not been approved by Synod. It also appointed a committee of five members to bring out a report in this matter.

This committee submitted its report to the Synod of Groningen 1927; however it included a majority and minority report. No consensus could be reached with the result that the Synod appointed another committee which was charged to pay special attention to the question of whether voting was "een daad van regeermacht of niet."<sup>38</sup>

The following Synod of Arnhem 1930 finally took a stand on the matter. It considered,

"dat de verkiezing tot het ambt door de leden der gemeente niet het karakter draagt van advies, maar een daad van algemeene regeermacht is, wel te onderscheiden van de bijzondere regeermacht, welke door Christus aan het bijzondere ambt der opzieners is opgedragen; dat weliswaar ook de approbatie, waarvan de vrouwen niet zijn uitgesloten, tot deze algemeene regeermacht der gelovigen behoort, maar dan dit onderling verschil in karakter, dat de gemeente bij de verkiezing uitspreekt, wie zij als ambtsdragers begeert, terwijl de approbatie bestaat in het al of niet goedkeuren der gekozen personen; dat daarom uit het feit, dat het ambt der geloovigen aan de vrouw in de kerk evenzeer toekomt als aan den man, niet volgt dat zij ook aan de verkiezing tot het ambt mag deelnemen; dat voorts het

overtuigend bewijs, dat de Schrift het vrouwenkiesrecht eischt, niet is geleverd, maar de gegevens, welke zij ons biedt, veeleer daartegen dan daarvoor schijnen te pleiten."<sup>39</sup>

It *concluded* by saying, "aan de vrouwelijke lidmaten der gemeente het kiesrecht in de kerk niet toe te kennen."<sup>40</sup>

The next Synod of Middelburg, 1933 received a number of appeals against the above-mentioned decision, but it decided that they did not contain sufficient grounds for revising or rejecting the decision of Arnhem.

The Synod of Bunschoten-Spakenburg 1958 was requested by the Churches at Amsterdam and Beverwijk to declare that the decision of Arnhem was no longer binding on the churches in the matter of choosing office-bearers. This Synod pronounced that (a) one of the appealing Churches had not proven that active women voting rights also belongs to the women in the church in their capacity of belonging to the office of all believers; (b) the Synod of Arnhem 1930 did not restrict the freedom of exegesis since she admitted that Scripture gives no clear witness in these matters.

Thereafter, the Synod of Rotterdam-Delfshaven 1964 was asked to declare;

"dat het doen deelnemen aan de verkiezing van ambtsdragers door vrouwelijke belijdende leden reeds in de vrijheid der kerken *staat*, aangezien de *wijze waarop* de gemeente haar ambtsdragers verkiest niet nader in de Heilige Schrift, de belijdenis, of de kerkorde wordt aangegeven en geheel afhankelijk is van de variërende plaats, tijd en omstandigheden, welke door de plaatselijke ambtsdragers, onder opzien tot de Here in de wijsheid des Geestes, dienen te worden onderkend, eventueel met advies van de meerder vergadering."<sup>41</sup>

Synod responded by stating that "de verkiezing tot het ambt gelijk voorheen als een zaak van de kerken in het gemeen beschouwd moet worden." It also declared that "er geen genoegzame reden is, om bij zulke stand van zaken te komen tot herziening van hetgeen in dezen besloten is."<sup>42</sup>

The Synod of Hattem 1972, in response to an overture of the Church at Delft, decided to appoint a committee to study the matter of women voting. In this regard it stated that "het zeer gewenst is, dat de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland alsnog komen tot een met goede argumentatie uit de Schrift gefundeerd besluit inzake het vrouwenkiesrecht in de kerk."<sup>43</sup>

The Synod of Kampen 1975 decided "opnieuw deputaten te benoemen om de materie van het vrouwenkiesrecht vanuit de Schrift nader te bezien en daarby tevens aandacht te schenken aan het karakter van de verkiezing van ambtsdragers in al zijn facetten."<sup>44</sup>

The Synod of Groningen-Zuid 1978 decided that "de regel die onder meer door de generale synode van Arnhem 1930 (Acta art. 200, besluit 1) is gehandhaafd, niet gewijzigd dient te worden."<sup>45</sup>

In conclusion, it may be stated that our Dutch sister churches continue to maintain that women may not vote, since that would involve them in an unscriptural activity, namely governing the church.

#### X. Church Polity

With regard to our report, we now come to the matter of church polity. In other words, what does the Church Order say about the matter under discussion and to the principles that operate in the government of the church allow for the possibility of extending voting rights (privileges, responsibilities, etc.) to women. The article in the Church Order that has direct bearing on this point is Article 22 which states,

"The Elders shall be chosen by the judgment of the Consistory and the Deacons, according to the regulations that are in use locally or that are for that purpose established by the Consistory. In pursuance of these regulations every Church shall be at liberty, according to its circumstances, to give the members of the Congregation an opportunity to direct attention to suitable persons; and further to present to the Congregation for election as many Elders as are needed, in order that they, after being approved and agreed upon by the Congregation (and unless any obstacle arise) be installed with public prayers and stipulations; or present a double number to the Congregation and thereupon install the one-half chosen by it, in the aforesaid manner, agreeably to the Form in use for this purpose."

According to this article the following steps should be adhered to:

- (1) In every Congregation there shall exist regulations which govern the election of office bearers;
- (2) The members of the Congregation are requested to submit the names of suitable candidates for office;
- (3) The Consistory and the Deacons shall nominate for the offices available certain suitable persons;
- (4) The Congregation (as presently represented by the male communi-

cant members) elects as many office-bearers as are needed;

- (5) The Consistory with the Deacons appoints the brothers elected;
- (6) The approbation of the brothers who have been elected and appointed is held;
- (7) If no lawful objection arises, the brothers shall be ordained into office.

Now it is within the context of the entire procedure that the question arises as to whether female communicant members may also participate in the electing of office-bearers. On the one side (let us call this *position 1*) you have those who say "YES." Why? Basically because they contend that;

- a) electing is not governing, but indicating your preference or giving advice to the Consistory;



THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE  
Published bi-weekly by Premier Printing Ltd.  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Second class mail registration number 1025.

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.  
1249 Plessis Road,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2C 3L9  
Phone: (204) 222-5218

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION  
P.O. Box 54,  
Fergus, Ontario, Canada N1M 2W7

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Faber  
Managing Editor: W.W.J. VanOene  
Co-Editors: J. Geertsema, Cl. Stam,  
D. VanderBoom

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

\$19.50 per year (to be paid in advance).  
Foreign Countries: Seamail — \$30.00  
Airmail — \$39.00

ISSN 0383-0438

#### IN THIS ISSUE:

Editorial — J. Faber .....	270
Tentative Report on the Matter of Women's Voting Rights(4) .....	272
The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy(4) — G. VanDooren .....	275
Press Review — J. Geertsema .....	276
The Story of a Broken Leg — Cl. Stam ..	279
News Medley — W.W.J. VanOene .....	280
Consulate General of The Netherlands ..	283
Books — G. VanDooren .....	283,288
International — W.W.J. VanOene .....	284
Build a Wall — Analysis of Current Events — A. Gunnink .....	286
I'm Getting Old — C.W. Anderson .....	287
A Corner for the Sack — Mrs. J.K. Riemersma .....	289

- b) the election is completely, from start to finish, under the supervision and leading of the Consistory which also appoints the brothers decided upon;
- c) to allow women to take part in the approbation and then to deny them electing responsibilities is inconsistent with these practices.

On the other side (let us call this *position II*) you have those who say "No." Why? For some of the following reasons:

- a) electing office-bearers is a matter of governing and governing in the church is forbidden to women by Scripture itself;
- b) although the Consistory supervises the election, to vote is a matter of government;
- c) approbation is a different activity than voting, hence they cannot be placed on the same line;
- d) it will lead to other things such as women in office.

In evaluating these points made by both sides, and others that are made as well, we offer the following for your consideration: Position II(d) is an assumption that may or may not be borne out. If one looks at the way of things in the *world* one will say "this step will undoubtedly open the door to other more extreme things that are sure to follow." Whether that is also the case or trend in the church will continue to be a matter of debate. In so far as we sense "fear" as the motivating force behind II(d), we would state that Scripture, not fear, determines what practices are to be followed in the church. As such II(d) remains an unproven assumption.

With regard to the matter of points I(c) and II(c) which relate to the relationship between approbation on the one hand and election on the other, we would state that it is indeed true that these activities are to be carefully distinguished from each other. To charge that it is inconsistent that women can be involved in approbation but not election is to ignore the precise character of these two matters. In the procedure of approbation it is not the *source* of the objection that is fundamental, rather it is the truth or falsehood of the objection. Hence the emphasis is not on *who* brings the charge but on the *validity* of the charge or charges brought. As such it is even possible for a non-communicant member or for an outsider to bring a charge to the attention of the Consistory. Needless to say to bring certain

accusations against an appointed office-bearer-to-be is an activity that differs quite fundamentally from making a choice as to which of the nominated brothers is best qualified to rule and govern the church. The first act is an act of *transmitting* material or certain information that might render a person unfit to serve in the church. The second act is an act of evaluation in which a person's abilities are assessed.

Closely related to the above is also the matter of nomination by members of the Congregation. Here too there are some who see an inconsistency. They allege that allowing a woman to nominate but not to vote is to some extent a contradiction. But is it? We would state that here also the various elements in the election process have to be more carefully distinguished. To nominate someone for office is an act whereby a person suggests to a Consistory that the following person (or persons) has certain qualities that make him worthy of serious consideration by that body. Yet the act is of a *suggestive* character. And here again it is the suggestion and the grounds given for it that take precedence over the person making the suggestion. Besides, the act is of a completely advisory nature. The Consistory is free to accept or reject whatever suggestions are received. Neither does it have to justify to the Congregation or members of the Congregation when a particular suggestion (nomination) does not appear on final list of candidates.

So it is that we come to position I(a) and II(a) in which an evaluation is given as to the *character* of voting. Here the question must be faced as to whether or not voting is governing. The one side says "yes" and the other side says "no."

Your Committee is of the opinion that in a sense both positions are extremes and that the truth of the matter lies somewhere in between. To say that electing is not governing but rather indicating a preference or giving advice to the Consistory is to devalue the true character of the vote. It is true that the election of office-bearers, of which voting is a part, is under the leadership of the Consistory from start to finish. But then to allege that the voting is merely expressing a preference or giving advice is to ignore the fact that the Consistory has agreed to *bind* itself to the results of the election. The majority preference is binding. Ordinarily they will be ordained into office.

Naturally this does not mean that

the word "binding" has to be taken in an absolute sense. No vote is ever absolutely binding. Irregularities in the voting or proof of unfitness to serve can nullify the vote and call for a repetition of the election process or lead the Consistory to appoint another brother. However, these possibilities are extraordinary. In normal cases the Consistory is legally and morally bound to respect the outcome of the vote since it has set the rules of the election and has allowed the vote to become determinative. Article 22 states that the Consistory shall "present to the Congregation for election as many elders as are needed, in order that they, after being approved and agreed upon by the Congregation (and unless any obstacle arise) be installed with public prayer and stipulations." These words indicate that the Consistory agrees to respect the outcome of the voting by the Congregation "unless any obstacle arise." Surely this indicates that the vote is more than simply expressing a preference. If anything, the vote is expressing a preference of which the majority is ordinarily binding and determinative on the Consistory. It may not wilfully and without good cause overturn the results or ignore the results altogether. At the same time to regard the vote as being in a sense advisory is also neglecting the fact that the Church Order gives to the vote a determining character. Thus far our rejoinder to position I(a).

We now turn to position II(a) which asserts that election is a matter of governing (and hence forbidden to women since Scripture states that women may not govern in the church). We assess this viewpoint to be to a certain extent an exaggeration. It should be remembered that under the rules of Reformed church polity, it is quite clearly the Consistory — the gathering of the elders — which rules the church. In addition it is also a fact that those who elect someone to office are not, by that very fact, in the office themselves. To assert position II(a) is to assert too much.

How then must one look at the character of voting for office-bearers? The Committee presents the following observations and considerations to you: When the Consistory announces the candidates for election to the Congregation then it is stating that each one of the candidates is capable and worthy of entering into the office. It is never a question of asking the Con-

*Continued on page 282.*

# The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy 4

In the third instalment in this series we defended the thesis that the New Testament liturgy must be understood against the background of the Old Testament "pattern" as revealed to Moses by the LORD Himself on the mountain. According to the redemptive-historical interpretation of the Scriptures (in *all* their parts, not only in the so-called "historical texts"), the New Testament must be seen as the fulfillment of the Old. Regarding the liturgy in its broadest sense this means that the "horizontal" tabernacle was set on its end, when Jesus Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary. The curtains have gone; we have now free access to the mercy seat.

But the covenantal character has remained: in Reformed Liturgy there is still that two-way traffic, in which the LORD addresses His people and they address their God.

## *Principles of the Order of Worship*

Before we can consider the various "elements" of our order of worship, we must first consider the "corporate worship" as a whole, a harmonious and beautiful whole. In the first article the history around this order was described: how, in the Dutch churches, attempts were made to restore the original and proper order. We also had to conclude that these attempts failed to the greater extent. The present writer is convinced that we must keep as closely as possible to our Liturgical Forms and our Creeds. He trusts that this stand will not meet with contradiction.

What do these official documents offer for the proper order in our meetings on the Lord's Day? There are, first, the Forms of Prayers. The first prayer, *Book of Praise*, pp. 475/6, bears the name, "A General Confession of Sins, and Prayer before the Sermon." As we hope to see later, this prayer is a combination of two prayers (as the word "and" indicates). Originally the service started, after the opening phrases, with a confession of sins (and some more; see later). Separated from this was a brief Prayer right before the sermon, starting with the words, "Open now the mouth of Thy servant . . ." Conclusion: in order to "be together" with the LORD our sins must be confessed and removed first, before we may continue, so that we may dwell in gracious presence. Then comes the public reading of the Scriptures and the sermon, introduced by a brief prayer. The second prayer, pp. 476-480, is called,

"A Prayer for All the Needs of Christendom, to be used on the Sabbath after the First Sermon," i.e., the morning sermon. The words "after the first sermon" clearly indicate its proper place in the order of worship, whatever else may be brought forward as "psychological reasons" (for which the period 1920-1933 was so well-known, see first instalment), to put this prayer before the sermon. There is more to this than meets the eye, but also here we say: see later.

We have more prayers in our *Book of Praise*, such as a second "Public Confession of Sins and Prayer before the Sermon," p. 480ff.; also Prayers before and after the explanation of the Catechism. The latter clearly put Catechism preaching in the p.m. service, in distinction from the "First Sermon" in the morning.

Thus these five prayers (in fact seven because two are "twins") set a general pattern for both services, be it, however, incomplete. The completion comes when we hold to our confession in Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day

38. There we have agreed as churches that on the day of rest "we diligently attend the church of God" in obedience to the fourth commandment. The Catechism, answer 103, continues with mentioning the four "blocks" of liturgical elements in this order:

1. "to learn God's Word;
2. "to use the sacraments;
3. "to call publicly upon the Lord;
4. "to give Christian alms."

This order is not accidental, so that everyone has the right to throw them around in a pell-mell fashion. FESTUS HOMMIUS, who translated and combined what Ursinus and others had written in explanations of the Catechism, stresses the order, when he speaks about the four parts as "first, second, third, fourth," in that order. It is the logical order, as we hope to see when we deal with the various elements.

Combining both official documents, prayers, and Catechism, we conclude that there should not be all kinds of things in between the public reading of the Scriptures and the sermon, like prayer (even the "long prayer" . . .), offertory, singing. Paul's advice to Timothy was, "Attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching,

---

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

### 1. *Opening*

- (B) Votum (Psalm 124:8)
- (A) Benediction (I Corinthians 1:3 or Revelation 1:4, 5)
- (N.B. In many churches this is preceded by (A) Call to Worship.)
- (B) Song of Praise.

### 2. *Public Confession of Sins*

- (A) The Ten Words (Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5) and Summary.
- (B) Public Confession of Sins (cf. First Form of Prayer).
- (A) Proclamation of Forgiving Grace.
- (B) Song of Thanksgiving.

### 3. *Ministry of the Word*

- (B) Brief Prayer for the Opening of Scripture.
- (A) Public Reading of the Scriptures.
- (B) Prayer-song for a blessing.
- (A) Sermon.
- (B) Amen-song by congregation.

### 4. *Administration of the Sacraments*

- (N.B. This part is optional [there are services without sacraments, although not in the Early Church]; it should also be noted — and explained later — that to a certain extent the sacraments belong to both groups (A) and (B).
- (A) (B) Baptism, when called for.
- (A) (B) the Lord's Supper "as often as you do it."

### 5. *Prayers and Intercessions*

- (B) in A.M. service "for all the needs of the Christendom."
- (N.B. in P.M. (B) "Prayer after the Catechism sermon.")

### 6. *Ministry of Mercy*

- (B) "to give Christian alms."
- (N.B. In many churches: (B) presenting our sacrifice of love to the Lord.)

### 7. *Closing*

- (B) Closing Psalm or Hymn.
- (A) Benediction (from Numbers 6:24-26 or II Corinthians 13:14).

# press review

to teaching," I Timothy 4:13. Also that public confession of sins, with what belongs to it, should come first; that the prayers of intercession and the giving of Christian alms come after the sermon; and, of course, that the proper order also is "Word and Sacraments."

This leads, "automatically," to the order of liturgy as it was adopted by Synod Kampen 1975 of our Dutch sister churches, which good example our churches should follow.

## THE REFORMED ORDER OF LITURGY

The word "Reformed" should first be understood in its historical sense: thus it was done since the Reformation; only *then* should it be understood as a plea that we — in case we do it differently — restore that original order.

What follows now is only a "skeleton"; the "meat" will come when each element is considered in some more detail. Secondly, it is the order for the A.M. service (although we plan to discuss also the second service). In the third place, the various elements are to be divided into two groups, as previously mentioned: those that come from the LORD to His people (A), and those that come, via the minister or without him, from the people and are directed to their God in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit (B).

See: *Order of Worship on previous page.*

## MORE DETAILED DISCUSSION

In some following articles we plan to discuss these elements and their proper place in the liturgy in some more detail. In the process some questions will be dealt with, like, "Should we not have more participation by the congregation?" "Why not a choir?" "Who recite(s) the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Amen?" etc. It may also be beneficial to compare, now and then, our Reformed order with other liturgies and then say a word on the pros and cons. All this is done because we agree with the book reviewed in this magazine, ROBERT G. RAYBURN, *O Come, Let Us Worship*, that a better understanding of "corporate worship," as he calls it, is no luxury for those who "diligently attend the church of God." We would "get much more out of it" if we would more strongly realize that our worship is to be to the glory of God, and if all who attend church take conscious part in every single element of what is going on during the service. Going to church is more than "going to listen to a public speaker!" Much more!

G. VANDOOREN

(To be continued.)

## MOVIES AND MATURITY II

In my previous article I showed that the Church has always fought against the attendance of profane theaters. I would like to continue here with some more interesting data in the Dissertation of Dr. Rittersma. He also points out that, although the early Christian Church already fought against the profane theater, nevertheless this early Church took over from the world, for its own purposes, the form of play and of drama, namely, as means to teach and instruct the people all kinds of Bible lessons and stories.

Already since approximately A.D. 350, but more and more in following centuries, parts of the Bible were not only preached, but also acted out, in the Church, and received a place in the liturgy. That the Church took over this didactic medium from the pagan culture is seen by some scholars as a cultural progress of the Church: a spiritual deepening and cultural gain. But Dr. Rittersma says:

The Church was not concerned about cultural gain as such. First came the basic motive: to educate the church people and to bring outsiders to the Church. Very early already the Church sought to win the crowds. Was it not good, then, to look for a method which spoke much better to the people than "abstract" preaching?

Dr. Rittersma also gives a summary of his book in the English language. From it I now take the following:

Just as ancient classical drama has developed from the religion of the Greeks, Christian drama arose from the liturgy of the Roman Catholic church. Similar to what was going on outside the church in the way of dramatic performances, the church itself very early proceeded to perform liturgical and semi-liturgical plays. At the outset dressed-up priests were the actors and they made use of liturgical dialogues. All important is the intrusion of the troupe. To the original text of the Bible such additions were made as to produce a really topical, lively conversation. Here lie the beginnings of the liturgical drama or play which, first inside the church, later extra-mural, played such an important part in the religious education of the masses:

At first the liturgical plays took as their basis the Redemption of the world as accomplished by the Nativity, the Passion and the Resurrection. These crucial facts

of sacred history were *repeated* as a dramatic play. The basic pattern of this *repetitional* character is to be found in the Mass or in the sacrifice of the Mass. This repetitional character is contrary to the Word of God. In this connection we would refer to, e.g., the redemptive-historical testimony of the Epistle of the Hebrews.

As the centuries passed by, the number and size of the liturgical plays increased. Dramatic practices were increasingly secularized. Dramatization was taken to be an excellent illustrative method of teaching people. We are here dealing with a motive for conversion tactics.<sup>8</sup> [Italics mine, J.G.]

Do we not have here in practice in the early Church what is expressed in the *Basic Principles*, sub 2: "Whatever lawful human endeavour shapes the culture of a people is in principle open to the Christian and should either be entirely claimed for Christ or selectively utilized to advance His cause"? And must we not say that this principle has to be true all the more when it appears that Luther and the Lutherans have also made such use of this medium and recommended its use for the promotion of the cause of the Reformation?

However, in general, from Reformed side all drama and play was not really appreciated, but rather, with a few exceptions, was rejected. I would like to say a little more here, following the distinctions made in the *Basic Principles*, sub 3, 4, and 5. In *Basic Principle* 3 it was stated that "a meaningful distinction may be made between Christian, non-Christian, and anti-Christian films and plays." *Principle* 4 says that anti-Christian films which contravene the Gospel, undermine authentic human values, and offend Christian sensibilities should be denounced." I will come back to this point later. But I would like to make the remark here that this Principle not only should be a matter of course, but also that this Principle is not worded strongly and biblically enough. One could say that it sounds almost humanistic, at least partly. It does not speak of God's law and His commandments; it speaks only of those vague "Christian sensibilities." The Churches always, throughout the ages, have rejected the pagan, worldly play, as we have seen in the previous article.



As for the non-Christian and the Christian play, one could ask first of all how these terms are to be defined. What, exactly, is meant by "a Christian play"? Is that a play of Biblical truths, or of Bible stories? Does that also include plays of events of the history of the Church? Does that include plays based on Christian novels or for evangelization purposes? And what, then, is "a non-Christian play or film"? Is that a so-called neutral play that shows common human virtues? Whatever the answer may be, I also take this "non-Christian" play or film to mean the play as such, in itself.

But also with respect to the play as such (including today's play-film) we must say that many Reformed leaders have rejected it. Not only has all theater play been denounced in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands at Classes and Synods in the 16th and the 17th centuries, but books and booklets against it have been written as well. Prof. G. Voetius, for instance, wrote a booklet against all theater play, *Disputation on Comedies*, which was published again in 1955. In his foreword the publisher writes that Dr. Abraham Kuyper wrote that "*Gijsbertus Voetius once for all had erected a wall separating the Reformed part of the nation from drama and play; and that only selfish lust dares to climb over this wall.*"<sup>9</sup>

Voetius did not only reject all theater play as it was performed in his days, he was also against all play as such, following many others. He points to many authors in and before his days, one of them the English scholar of Law William Prynne who wrote an extensive book against the immoral stage plays: *Histriomastix* (1632), of which a summary was published in the Dutch language.

Now Voetius is also against all play on stage, the play as such. This becomes clear from what he writes about the historical plays which are used to show how in the course of history strong and just leaders lived a righteous, good life and so can be examples for the viewers. Voetius writes that such historical plays are not illegal as such, "*if the form of showing is charged*, so that disguises are avoided, and women are not mixed with men, men do not play the role of women, God's Name is not misused. . . ." and so on. The only kind of play which is allowed is the kind in which two or more persons, in their normal clothes, read or say by heart, but

definitely not play, what is written, so that it all becomes a matter of eloquence: the art of speaking or reading well. And Voetius continues: Even though it could be said that such a historical play, which complies with the conditions mentioned above,

is not unlawful in itself, nevertheless, it must be seriously considered: 1. whether it is useful, 2. whether it is dangerous, 3. whether there seems to be any semblance of the art of playing drama, and 4. whether this does not become a motive for defending stage plays and for more easily accepting them. The advice of the practical authors is: that one has to abstain also from things and actions which, although not evil in themselves, are positioned right alongside evil, in order that we may not come to doing that evil . . . . He who abstains or advises to abstain does not commit sin.<sup>10</sup>

When Dr. Rittersma deals with the point of the identification of the player on stage with the person whose role he plays, he quotes the following from the above mentioned book of W. Prynne (in the Dutch version): "It is impossible to think . . . how a person will not be defiled when playing another person and hereby doing the sin of that person . . . . Can a Christian hear this with pleasure without sinning? Not only is it not lawful to commit the sins in the role of that other person; but it is also sin to take on (the role of) another person . . . . And that they express those accursed things [= sins, J.G.] in their persons is the sin of the players." Dr. Rittersma further points out that Prynne writes that even if these things are done as a joke, for fun, that makes no difference. Sin is and remains sin. And God's Word does not allow us to sin or to play sin.<sup>11</sup>

I shall conclude this part about the play as such, or the non-Christian play, with a quotation from the booklet of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, *Publiek Vermaak (Public Entertainment)*, which I found in the foreword of the booklet with the disputation of Voetius. Dr. Kuyper wrote:

And this entering into the role of another person; imitating what the other person is considered to have done; acting as if one had a passion in himself which is only pretended; swearing an oath about love which remains fully imaginary; entering into a hatred which one does not know; in short, shortly this being systematically untrue, is, according to our conviction, harmful for a Christian's life, and therefore unlawful for a Christian.<sup>12</sup>

Coming to a conclusion on the point of the play-on-stage as such or the non-

Christian play, we can and must say that there have been people in the Reformed Churches who were against this human and cultural phenomenon of the theater play as such and who thought that it could not be used by a Christian, and therefore that it could not be claimed for Christ, as the *Basic Principles* would have us believe, even on the basis of what the very Dr. A. Kuyper so strongly emphasized: Christ is Lord not only of the soul and in the Church. Christ is redeemer of the whole of our created life. He redeems creation and is Lord of all life. However, this same Kuyper did not claim plays and playing on stage for Christ. No, he rejected it. And that is remarkable.

Now we first have to deal yet with the Christian play. Let me take that here as acting out parts of the Bible. We saw that in the early Church this was adopted as a form of teaching and evangelizing. Luther, as we said, used it too. But on this point as well most of the Reformed leaders, Classes, and Synods which dealt with the matter, rejected it. Dr. Rittersma quotes from Prynne's *Histriomastix*:

Would comedies not be allowed if they were taken from the Word of God? No, they would not. Why not? Because the LORD does not want the mysteries of salvation to be presented and performed in plays, but wants His Word to be taught and preached with earnestness by His Pastors and Teachers, whom He therefore sends to His congregation; also because no one is allowed to represent [= play the role of, J.G.] the Lord Christ, or any other godly person or angel or prophet or apostle or devil, or an ungodly person like Cain, Pharaoh, the wife of Potiphar, Jezebel, Ahab, Rab-Shakeh, Haman, Herod, Caiaphas, etc., to speak their words in the "I" form;" and "What is more sinful, to play from God's Word or other worldly things and histories? To play the Word of God.<sup>13</sup>

The dangers involved in playing the Word of God were also dealt with already in the first part of his book. Pointing to what happened in the biblical liturgical and semi-liturgical plays in the early Church and the Church in the Middle Ages, Dr. Rittersma writes:

The suffering of Christ is no longer preached, biblically proclaimed, but is presented in a way which moves the viewers . . . . A strong element of entertainment came into those plays.<sup>14</sup>

And further we read:

Dramatic enrichment of the liturgy or of the semi-liturgical play activities brought along a *change of contents* . . . . To make the play lively and give it the character of

real life, the conversations were extended, so that what the Bible says was not maintained . . . . With the changing of the biblical text we see additions and supplementations out of profane works of the theatrical arts, as well as an alteration of the biblical message. The mixing of the classical-pagan contents with the Christian free revisions of Bible passages to make them suitable for performances, brought increasing world-conformity.

And so the conclusion of the author is that the intention of the Church to make the Bible more readily understandable for the people both in and outside the Church by using the didactic principle of visualizing and enlivening the religious subject-matter promoted the profanation of the Bible and the world-conformation and de-christianization of the Church.<sup>15</sup>

Dealing with the fact that this biblical drama for educational purposes flourished especially in the schools of the 16th and the 17th centuries, and also with the fact that stronger and stronger resistance arose against it in the Calvinist camp, the author writes:

The fight against biblical plays in Calvinist circles was born out of great reverence for the Word of God . . . . [There was] great fear for profanation and the awareness that the theater, in view of the experience of centuries, is not morally upbuilding . . . . The pulpit was central . . . . The emphasis was on homiletics, not on dramatics . . . . Also here [in The Netherlands, J.G.] it was feared that the dramatic re-forming for the performance on stage would break down the contents of the infallible Word of God.<sup>16</sup>

The reader who knows his Heidelberg Catechism will have recalled long ago what we confess in Lord's Day 35 as explanation and application of the second commandment: "But may not images be tolerated in the churches as books for the laity? No. For we must not be wiser than God, Who will not have His people taught by dumb images, but by the living preaching of His Word." What counts for images in this respect, counts also for plays. Not the play, but the living preaching of His Word must remain the form for the education and instruction in the truth of God's people as well as for those outside. I may refer you here to Deuteronomy 4 again and further to the places in the New Testament where the words "preaching" and "proclaiming" are used. A concordance can help. I may mention here Romans 10:14-17, James 1:18, and I Peter 1:23-25. God's Word is too holy to be played and to be

played with, and to be wrested in and for a play.

And so we come to a conclusion now with respect to the statements in the *Basic Principles* about anti-Christian, non-Christian, and Christian movies. From the above it is clear that these statements are debatable, to say the least. Can we really "claim for Christ or selectively utilize to advance His cause" the movie, that play on film? I am strongly convinced that Tertullian, Augustine, Prynne, Voetius, Kuyper, and so many others, as well as ecclesiastical assemblies, Councils, Classes, and Synods (which means the people who made the decisions at these assemblies) would maintain what they said about the play or the play film, the movie. There are matters, things, forms, in this sinful world which cannot be claimed for Christ or utilized for His cause because of the holiness of the LORD and of His Word, and because of the unholiness involved in, and connected so much with, these matters, things, or forms.

In *Basic Principle 3* it is admitted that "there is a deep-seated antithesis between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the World." And it is said therefore, that a "meaningful distinction" can be made not only between Christian and anti-Christian films and plays, but also between these two and the non-Christian kind. The *Basic Principles* do not speak any further about Christian movies. But about non-Christian films *Basic Principle 5* states: "Non-Christian films are by the common grace of God often serviceable to the ends of God's Kingdom." I can imagine that the Protestant Reformed brotherhood will say: Look, there you have that evil concept of common grace again, against which we have fought for so many years now already; the concept of "common grace" which is used here to make a completely worldly thing — the movie or play-film — into something good and to introduce it into the Church, resulting in the de-christianization of the Church and promoting world-conformity in and of the Church.

It may be good to remind ourselves of what happened in The Netherlands with respect to this movie business. After the second World War the same sort of thinking as we find expressed in the *Basic Principles* was strong especially in the Reformed Churches that followed the Synods of 1942-and-so-on, where wrong ideas of

Kuyper were made binding for all. Then, also, it was said that we must claim the film — and that also meant the movie, the play-film — for Christ. A Christian Film Action was set up. The idea to make and show Christian movies. But that was a distant and expensive goal. In the beginning it was "to try to come to a Christian film action, in order to offer the good that one can get in the field of the film in a building and surroundings [sphere, J.G.] of their own." And as long as films of their own could not be realized they would try "to offer that which complies with the test of Christian criticism." Hereby norms will be used "which are established in obedience to the Holy Scriptures."<sup>17</sup> The practice was that the C.F.A. showed play films that had served before in the worldly theaters, or it came with a biblical film that was not biblical at all. And after a while the whole so-called Christian Film Action was dropped and died out.<sup>18</sup> But the result was that the theater with the movies was accepted by the people in the (Reformed, synodical) churches as well as in others. The world had conquered the Church.

The book from which I gave the quotation about the C.F.A., is *Woord and Wandel* (Word and Walk of Life.), is written by the well-known P. Jongeling, published in 1958. I took this quotation from the chapter "Film and Theater," from which I hope to quote more in a next article. For this chapter shows a remarkable parallel between what now is written in *The Banner's* editorial and what happened some twenty-five years ago in the synodical Churches in The Netherlands.

J. GEERTSEMA

(To be continued.)

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Z. Rittersma, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>9</sup> Gijsbertus Voetius, *Twistrede over het Toneel*, according to the edition in the Dutch language of 1650, re-published by Jac. Boeder, Enkhuizen, no year given, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Rittersma, *op. cit.*, p. 125ff.

<sup>12</sup> Voetius, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Rittersma, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 24, 26.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 53.

<sup>17</sup> P. Jongeling, *Woord en Wandel*, Stichting Gereformeerd Gezinsblad, Groningen 1958, pp. 129, 130.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134 - 138.

# The Story of a Broken Leg

From recent discussions on the topic, "The Church and the Communion of Saints," I concluded three major opinions. Perhaps, for clarity's sake, I may list these numerically.

1. There are only "saints" *within* our own Canadian Reformed Churches (and sister Churches, of course) and it is therefore utterly impossible to speak of "communion of saints" with those of other denominations.

2. There are "saints" *outside* of our own Churches, and we *do* have communion with them, be it that this communion is rather a *broken* communion. Yet the fact of that communion must be recognized, and we are even commanded to work from out of that principle.

3. There are "saints" *outside* of our own Churches, but we do *not* have communion with them until the unity of faith has been realized concretely at the table of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I hope that you notice the fine distinctions between the three viewpoints. Yet it is not merely a matter of minor or subtle differences. These differences can be of great consequence especially in the manner in which they are worked out and applied.

You might be interested to know that I personally favour the viewpoint expressed under 3, which means that I have difficulty with the first two views expressed under 1 and 2. I am quite prepared to accept that there may be saints (or believers, which to me is one and the same) in churches besides our own. This viewpoint I expressed clearly in my book(let) *Everything in Christ*, page 85, "No Church ought to hold the pretense that only within itself are found the true believers." The fact, however, that believers do exist elsewhere, does not imply that we have "communion" with them. The word "communion" indicates a real and close bond, a real *unity*, a being-together in the one service of the Lord. The Apostle Paul uses the word "communion" very clearly with respect to the Lord's Supper. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a *communion* in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a *communion* in the body of Christ?" (I Cor. 10:16). And speaking of this communion, concretely visible at the

table of the Lord, the Apostle speaks of being "one Body." I must conclude then that the communion of saints finds its only basis and its most intimate expression in the mutual celebration of this supper.

For this reason we can *appeal* to believers outside of our Churches that they *maintain* "the unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3; Art. 28, B.C.). Christ will gather His Church and one day present this Church unblemished and fully united before His Father, but we are called actively to seek and maintain the unity of true faith from out of the table of the Lord. Until such unity is there, how can we speak of "communion." If we are not wholly *one* in matters of doctrine, sacraments, and discipline, how can we speak of "communion"; how can we then employ our gifts readily and cheerfully for the advantage and salvation of other *members* (L.D. 21)?

What about this "broken communion" expressed under 2? I feel that this is a contradiction in terms, for communion that is broken cannot rightly be called communion. I read recently the example that we should compare it to a "broken leg." A broken leg, it was argued, is still a leg, *one* leg even if it is broken. Of course, any example can be criticized. But let me ask a few questions. How far can you walk on a

broken leg? Do we not set the bones, put a cast around the leg, and seek *healing*? A broken leg cannot function as a leg until such healing has taken place. Bones that are broken and not treated result in malformation and further handicap. Similarly, a communion that is broken must be healed in mutual acceptance of God's Word and command, otherwise the parties grow apart more and more. We cannot embark on mutual ventures with an appeal to a broken communion. The appeal must be: to heal the communion and then to commence cooperation in all fields of life, e.g., education!

The viewpoint under 1 restricts the *gathering* work of Christ (the *Congregatio*). The viewpoint under 2 neglects the calling to maintain true unity (*coetus*). The viewpoint under 3 recognizes both the work of Christ (which goes also beyond our Churches) and the calling of each and every believer to maintain the unity of the true Church.

You cannot walk on a broken leg. You cannot have communion with saints who will not unite themselves with the true Church. Even "having something in common" does not yet constitute the "communion" of which the Bible speaks. The communion which we have by the blood of Christ is experienced under one preaching and at one table, and is expressed in the love and service which the members have for one another.

CI. STAM

Taken from *FAMILY POST*, May 11, 1980.

## Question and Answer 55

Q. What do you understand by the *communion of saints*?

A. First, that believers, all and every one, as members of Christ, are partakers of Him and of all His treasures and gifts; second, that every one must know himself bound to employ his gifts readily and cheerfully for the advantage and salvation of other members.

# news medley

Sometimes I do not remember whether I offered our congratulations to a couple that celebrated a fortieth or more wedding anniversary. I hope not that there is ever such a couple that is looking in our medley for their name in vain. The possibility is there, of course, but if there is ever such a couple, be assured that it was not done on purpose.

The picture of brother and sister L. Lodder of Guelph should have been published a few issues ago, but there must have been a mistake somewhere in this house or in this study because of which expectations were not fulfilled. Sorry about that. I am certain that the printer will make sure that they are "in" this time.

As for "new" congratulations, we have to visit Burlington and Edmonton.

In Burlington brother and sister Karel Orsel celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary on June 14th. Although they both have had to struggle with ill health for quite a few years by now, the Lord has yet spared them for each other and for their children so that they are permitted to remember the fact that they got married fifty years ago. We do not know how long they will be allowed to continue life's pathway together, but we wish them the nearness of our Father also in their illness. When the twilight comes, may the Light of the redemption shine through in all its glory.

In Edmonton the fiftieth wedding anniversary is the one of brother and sister J. Werkman. With them, too, the infirmities of old age are present, but when we look back, we marvel at the goodness and mercy of our God Who has kept and preserved them also through illnesses and operations. Years ago, during one of the classical appointments in Barrhead, I visited brother Werkman in the hospital, and at that time we certainly could not expect those many years which he and sister Werkman have received together since from our gracious God. There we saw anew that prayers are heard and that we cannot foretell the number of our days and years. Our heartfelt congratulations to you as well.

Let us return to the East for a while and cross the border to visit Grand Rapids. The bulletin of the Church there tells us that "On Memorial Day, your minister will be engaged in speaking to people attending a short memorial service at four cemeteries, the one in Dutton, and in Caledonia, and two others." When such opportunities are offered, we certainly are to use them. Twice already during our ten years here in Fergus, I was asked to do the invocation at the Graduation Exercises of the Public High School. Both times I gladly used the opportunity, as the Rev. Kingma used the opportunity to speak about God's Word at civic celebrations. That shows that we are not an alien element in society, that we are not withdrawing from this world and that we are not isolating ourselves from our fellow-citizens, but that we wish to share the treasures which we have received from our God. In this manner we can bring the glad tidings of redemption to our neighbours and at the same time show them the proper way of remembering. When we hear some reactions later on, we come to the conclusion that our words are appreciated and that they find a favourable reception especially with the older people.

Recently one of our members told me that a relative attended one of our services and said afterwards that this was the usual preaching some thirty or forty years ago, but that they had not heard this for years and years. Then you notice a longing in such remarks, a longing for the "good old truth" which is still preached among us.

I mention this because sometimes we need an encouragement in order to proceed in the same old path. People are clamouring for "renewal" and for change, but when we pay a little closer attention to what is being said and who says it, we come to the conclusion that there are not all that many who shout for change. The vast majority does not want it but . . . fails to make itself be heard and thus gives a vociferous minority the opportunity to present itself as the spokesman for all.

Recently I read an article which pointed out that there are many, many ministers who are still bringing the old truth and who are opposed to the new theology and to modernizing trends. Unfortunately, it is the ones who come with controversial statements and with deviating doctrines that provide the front page news, the others are hardly mentioned, if ever.

From Grand Rapids a brother sent me a clipping from a newspaper in which a "pastor" expresses, "I'm honoured to be chosen by the greatest liberal church in America." It was just the liberal church he had been seeking. "I couldn't believe there was a church that open, that liberal," he said. "I was excited when they told me, 'We believe there are no absolute truths, that all truth is relative.'" My only consolation in this respect is that the same newspaper report says that a twelve-member pulpit committee has been searching for a replacement for its present minister for about a year. Apparently such ministers who are elated when they are told that there are no absolute truths, that all truth is relative, are not all that numerous that a suitable candidate can be found within a couple of months. However, it is sad enough already as us.

Let's return to the communion of saints.

In a report on the meeting of the deacons in Burlington West we read, "A brother of the congregation has brought to the attention of the deacons a member who possibly needs assistance. It was decided that the deacons will pay a visit to find out in which way help is needed. It was also stressed that it is very important that also fellow brothers and sisters look out for members who may be in need, for we are all members of the communion of saints."

It is good when we read something like that. It shows that the members take heed of one another. When that is done, we won't hear expressions such as, "And is the Consistory not doing anything about that?" or "And why don't the deacons go after that?" Then each and every member asks himself or herself whether he has done enough in this case. Then the communion of saints will flourish.

Yes, and that is all to be mentioned about Ontario. We skip even Manitoba this time on our way to Alberta.

Above I already mentioned the necessity to make ourselves known and not to seek seclusion. I am happy that I can report that Coaldale is joining the growing number of Churches that use the airwaves for the spreading of the Gospel.

Letter received from the Home Mission Committee, requesting permission to start Radio broadcasting on Taber station CKTA; cost \$40.00 per broadcast for the duration of half a year or \$35.00 per broadcast for one

year . . . Council decides to grant the request to start a radio broadcast for the period of one year on a trial basis. Now we proceed to the Valley.

From Chilliwack's "new" building no news can be reported. Apparently it takes time.

Langley, on the other hand, does make progress. In the one Consistory report it says that "The building committee reports that the submitted plans to the authorities have been approved. Preparation of the building site and construction can be started in the beginning of May."

In the following *Church News* we are told that "the building site is excavated. Construction is hoped to begin soon." "Within a short period of time," the building committee informs the Congregation, "we will be in need of volunteers to assist in the erection of the church building."

The thoughts are also occupied by the desire to have a good organ in the new building. We have the impression that the desire of the Consistory to do good work right away was behind the rejection of the following request by the Organ Committee: "Letter from the Organ Committee with information regarding available parts for a pipe organ, requesting consent of the consistory to further investigate." The Consistory said, "No."

We conclude our journey in Surrey. Two items that give joy and one that causes grief sandwiched between them.

The first one.

Rev. VanDam mentions that he has received word that his thesis on the Urim and Thummin has been accepted so that he will now receive his Master's Degree in Theology from Knox College.

That is indeed a reason for joy. Especially those who have seen from close by how much work has gone into the thesis will appreciate the result. I have not read anything about a date at which the degree of Master of Theology will be conferred on our brother, but in due time we'll hear, I think. Usually the Convocations are held in the beginning of May. Or has the degree been awarded *in absentia*? Let us know.

The Western colleagues will reap the first fruits of this study, for at the Ministers' Conference which was to be held in Calgary, Rev. Van Dam was to introduce the topic "Urim and Thummim." We have his "statement of intent" to share his acquired insight with the readers of *Clarion*. It is about time that I learn a little more about the topic of Rev. Van Dam's study.

Now the sad piece of information.

On a sadder note, this past week the church has been broken into again. This time, among other things, the Lord's Supper tableware has been taken. If this is not recovered, this will mean a tremendous loss, since this is the first and only Lord's Supper tableware that we had, dating from the early fifties, and is as such irreplaceable. Of course we realize that the administration of the sacrament as such does not depend on these pieces, but we may nevertheless deeply regret this loss.

I certainly did, for there are some personal memories connected with the communion ware set that we brought along in 1952, if I am not mistaken. Therefore the joy was the greater when we read the following *Church News*:

Finally, I am happy to be able to report that we have recovered virtually all of our Lord's Supper tableware, except for one cup. It had been found and handed over to the police.

That was a happier note, and on this happier note we may also conclude this medley. If the situation gets worse, we

## 55th Wedding Anniversary



*Brother and sister L. Lodder were united in marriage in Barendrecht, The Netherlands on May 28th, 1925. They emigrated with their five sons and one daughter-in-law in March, 1950. They settled in Exeter, Ontario, moved to Orangeville, Ontario in 1951 where a farm had been bought. They retired several years ago and are now living in a little bungalow at 362 Metcalfe Street, Guelph, Ontario. All of their children are living in the Guelph area. They are thankful to the Lord, Who has blessed them with many blessings during their 55 years together.*

may have to return to the "old" practice that either the minister or the caretaker live close to the Church building, sometimes even in an annex. Sometimes the upper floor above meeting rooms was the caretaker's dwelling. Such an arrangement might prevent break-ins such as the one by which the Surrey Church has been plagued almost ever since it was built there. I don't think that it would help to post signs all over the place, "Neither money nor valuables are kept in this building." Hopefully the broadcasting room will never be discovered!

Have a good Sunday.

vO

Ministers of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches, who are willing and able to conduct worship services between June 29 and July 20 while travelling through or staying in Winnipeg, are cordially invited to contact the consistory (call collect):

J. Jissink, Vice-Chairman  
(204) 222-9206, or

W. Gortemaker, Clerk  
(204) 222-7095

## VOTING RIGHTS —

*Continued from page 274.*

gregation to choose between a capable man and an incapable one. In addition to announcing the candidates, the Consistory also announces the date on which the election of office-bearers will take place by the Congregation (as currently represented by the male communicant members).

Now at this point many assert that technically speaking the Consistory has the right to keep the power of election for itself. As long as nominations are asked for and the approbation follows, the Consistory has fulfilled its calling. Whether the voting itself is done by the Consistory or whether the Consistory asks for congregational involvement in this matter is up to the Consistory.

Be that as it may, it is sufficient to state that our Church Order hardly envisages a situation in which the Consistory does the voting alone. The accepted practice is that the Consistory calls upon the Congregation to participate in the election process. In other words, it requests the *co-operation* and *involvement* of the members of the Congregation in the matter of determining who is most qualified to serve. The outcome is then said to express the will of the Lord, since His guidance has been requested at the beginning of the meeting and His over-ruling is recognized at the end of the meeting through the medium of the ballots cast. Also this fact gives to the vote a certain weight and should prevent any Consistory from wilfully tampering with the outcome.

At this juncture we must examine closely the nature of the co-operation and involvement of the Congregation. The vote that is cast, we have said, is not simply giving advice or expressing a preference since it is determinative for the Consistory. Neither is it a simple participation in the governing process. What is it then? We would say that *voting in the church for office-bearers by members of the Congregation is an involvement in governing the church. It is not an involvement in the sense of governing or ruling, but of electing those who are to govern.* As such there is, we maintain, a very close relationship between voting and governing. Your Committee felt itself *unable* to state categorically that voting has *absolutely nothing* to do with governing. The two cannot be totally isolated from each other. To say that because the Consistory afterwards appoints the brothers elected and that this nullifies

any relationship or connection between voting and governing is to ignore the determinative character that the vote has on the Consistory, a character it has agreed to respect fully on recognizing and granting the Congregation's right of participation. Besides it ignores the simple fact that the Consistory's appointment is limited to the brothers elected by the Congregation. It cannot substitute other names after the election has taken place, names that were not on the ballot. It has bound itself to certain limitations in this regard.

Now at this point the question arises, "where does this leave us in the matter of women's voting rights? Is it in harmony with Scripture to say that we should recognize that women should be involved in this way or not? Is it more a harmony with Scripture if we continue to exclude women from exercising this privilege (right, duty, responsibility)?"

In response your Committee chooses for the latter, namely that *it is more in harmony with Scripture if women are not called upon to be involved in the voting for office-bearers.* Voting "rights" should *not* be extended to the ladies in the Congregation. We take this stand after having studied and examined the role of women from creation to the New Testament, from the early Church to the Church today. Especially the former, for it is the basic authority, makes clear that the woman has been given a supportive role in marriage and not a leading one, and that the same applies in the church. She is to keep silent and may not rule in the church. She is excluded from the office of the elder who preaches and teaches and the elder who rules. In light of this it is inconsistent to say that she may *not* teach, may *not* rule, may *not* hold office, but *may vote* or "have a say" in determining who will teach, who will rule and who will hold office.

In addition the fact that the voting in the church cannot be totally separated from governing, since there is a link and relationship between the two, would seem to point much more to her exclusion from this responsibility than to her inclusion. We use the qualification "seem" here to alert you to the fact that no Bible text deals directly with this issue and gives a clear command which denies women this privilege; however the teaching of Scripture and the testimony of church history clearly assert that women are not to exercise privileges that include

official ruling and teaching, or for that matter we would add, that are linked to official teaching and ruling in the church, such as voting.

### XI. *Tentative Conclusion*

On the basis of the above, your Committee

*comes to the conclusion:*

- a) that the right of women to vote cannot be deduced from the Scriptures;
- b) that neither church history nor the stipulations of the Church Order indicate that they have or had the right to vote.

Accordingly, we *recommend* that Synod decide that the churches refrain from introducing the practice of women voting.

Submitted for your consideration  
this third month of 1980,  
The Committee: J. DEVOS,  
J. HENDRICKS;  
D. VANDERBOOM (convener);  
M. VANDERWEL;  
J. VISSCHER (secretary).

<sup>36</sup>J. Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.) 1960, p. 306.

<sup>37</sup>H. Bouwman, *Gerreformeerde Kerkrecht I* (Kampen: J.H. Kok) 1928, p. 388.

<sup>38</sup>Translation: "An act of authority (government) or not."

<sup>39</sup>Translation: "that the election to office by members of the congregation does not have the nature of advice, but is an act of general authority, which is surely to be distinguished from the special authority which is entrusted by Christ to the special office of overseers; to be sure, also the approbation, from which the women are not excluded, belongs to the general authority of believers, but there is then this common difference in character: that with the election the congregation expresses who they want as office-bearers, while the approbation consists of the positive or negative approval of the chosen persons; that therefore from the fact that the women have a right to the office of believers as much as the men, it does not follow that they also may participate in the election to office; that moreover the convincing proof that the Scriptures demand women's voting rights has not been supplied, but the data which they do present to us seems to plead more against than in favour."

<sup>40</sup>Translation: "not to grant the right to vote in the church to the female members of the congregation."

<sup>41</sup>Translation: "that the act of participation of female communicant members in the election of office-bearers is already in the freedom of the churches, since the method whereby the congregation elects her office-bearers is not specified in the Holy Scrip-

*Continued on next page.*

**VOTING RIGHTS — Continued**  
from page 282.

tures, the confession, or the Church Order; and is completely dependent on the varying place, time, and circumstances which, through the local office-bearers, acknowledging their dependence on the Lord in the wisdom of the Spirit, needs to be distinguished, eventually with the advice of the major assembly."

<sup>42</sup>Translation: "the election to office must be regarded as it has been in the past, as a matter of the churches in common" . . . . "there is no sufficient reason, in such a state of affairs, to come to a revision of that which has been decided."

<sup>43</sup>Translation: "it is very desirable that with respect to the right of women to vote in the church, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland yet come to a decision which is supported with good argumentation based on the Scriptures."

<sup>44</sup>Translation: "to again appoint deputies to look more closely at the material about women's voting rights from the viewpoint of the Scriptures and at the same time to pay attention to the character of the election of office-bearers in all its facets."

<sup>45</sup>Translation: "that the rule which among other things has been maintained by the General Synod of Arnhem 1930 (Acta, art. 200, decision 1) is not needed to be altered."

---

**Consulaat-Generaal  
Der Nederlanden**  
**CONSULATE GENERAL  
OF THE NETHERLANDS**

1 Dundas Street W.,  
Suite 2106, Box nr. 2  
Toronto, Ontario M5C 1C3  
Phone: 364-5443

**OPSPORING ADRESSEN:**

DIKS, Antonius, geboren op 30 juli 1933 te Schalkwijk naar Canada vertrokken in 1979.

HOWEIDT-SPRENGERS, geboren op 5 november 1919.

MAIGRET, Jean Benoit, geboren te Malang, op 19 maart 1934 naar Canada vertrokken in 1978.

MESKER, A.A. geboren op 5 september 1942, laatstbekende adres te Toronto, Ontario, Canada

SCHIPPER, Arend, geboren op 15 december 1907 te Holten naar Canada vertrokken in november 1951.

SCHOLTE, Robert, geboren op 22 augustus 1939 te Djakarta naar Canada vertrokken in 1972.

DE BOER, Jacobus Wilhelmus Maria, geboren op 8 maart 1949 laatstbekende adres te Kingston, Ontario.

Mariano Di Gangi, *Word For All Seasons — Preaching Through the Christian Year*. Baker Book House, 1980. \$4.95., 115pp.

The author dedicated this booklet to outstanding Reformed theologians, R.B. Kuiper, J. Murray, J. Skilton, N.B. Stonehouse, P. Woolley, C. VanTil, and E.J. Young. This gives ground for the expectation that we find here a truly Reformed exposition of sound preaching. This we find, indeed, in the first and last chapters, Prologue and Epilogue. In between these two the author offers his set-up of the "Christian Year" or "Church Year." The remarkable thing, however, is that neither Paul nor the Reformers, to whom Di Gangi refers abundantly, were very enthusiastic about a yearly preaching program built up around the four redemptive events:

1. *Christ with us* — Advent and Virgin Birth: becoming man.
2. *Christ for us* — Lent season (i.e., Passion Weeks).
3. *Christ over us* — Easter and Ascension.
4. *Christ in us* — Pentecost.

# Books

The result of this in-itself-original set-up is that there is not much room for preaching from the Old Testament. In 1, some so-called "messianic" texts from Isaiah 40ff. plus a few from the other prophets are mentioned; in 2, Isaiah 53 and some texts from Zechariah, but there is no mention of the greater part of the Old Testament, the Books of Moses, the so-called historical books, and the poetical literature.

A Reformed preacher who wants to do justice not only to redemptive-historical preaching but also to preaching the full counsel of God will not be satisfied with this guide for setting up his yearly preaching program, although he agrees that all preaching be Christocentric. Yet, every preacher who "according to custom" follows the "Christian Year" (Advent, Christmas, Passion, Resurrection, and Pentecost) will find helpful suggestions. He may also wish to supplement his library with the help of the valuable Bibliography of seven pages.

G. VANDOOREN

---

BLOMEKEN-PLATTON, Iberia Maria, geboren op 26 juli 1915 te Amsterdam, naar Canada vertrokken op 14 december 1973.

CHRZANOWSKI, Franciszak, geboren op 2 mei 1915 te Polen naar Canada vertrokken op 16 oktober 1951.

GEWAAY, Alphonso, geboren te Indonesië, naar Canada vertrokken op 31 juli 1962.

HOPMAN, A.C., geboren op 2 januari 1920 te Hilversum, naar Canada vertrokken op 5 augustus 1946.

JANSEN, R.O.B., geboren op 29 mei 1951 te Bussum, naar Canada vertrokken op 20 september 1978.

OTTENS, Jitse Johannes, geboren op 10 januari 1944, naar Canada vertrokken op 9 oktober 1979.

DE REGT, Jan, geboren op 29 mei 1915 te Colijnsplaat, naar Canada vertrokken op 25 oktober 1954.

WORMER-HAVERLAND, J. geboren op 6 maart 1944, naar Canada vertrokken in 1977, laatstbekende adres te Wellesley, Ontario.

STORK, Jitse, geboren op 13 november 1915 te Ferwederadeel, naar Canada vertrokken op 22 mei 1957.

SELLES, Harm, geboren op 14 juni 1915 te Amsterdam, naar Canada vertrokken op 1 februari 1980.

POLAK, Jacques, geboren omstreeks 1925, naar Canada vertrokken in 1945.

DE PAUW-POLAK, Julia, geboren omstreeks 1925, naar Canada vertrokken in 1945.

MAAS, Petrus Gerardus, geboren op 25 mei 1915 te Haarlem, naar Canada vertrokken op 29 april 1953.

GOEDBLOED, E.E.L., laatstbekende adres te St. Albert, Canada.

CEELEN, Marinus Johannes Antomius, geboren op 17 november 1915 te Oss, naar Canada vertrokken op 11 augustus 1952.

De Consul-Generaal,  
voor deze:-  
G. SCHNITZLER



*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.*

Pope John Paul II used a March synod of Ukrainian Catholic bishops to bring this Eastern Rite church firmly under Roman (or Western Rite) control. The Ukrainian Catholic Church, declared illegal by Stalin in 1946, has perhaps five million secret members in the Soviet Union and another one million elsewhere. Under the strongly independent 88 year-old Cardinal Joseph Slipyj, it had held eight previous synods disowned by the Roman curia. As the price for official recognition for this synod, the Pope appointed a weak successor to Slipyj, Metropolitan Myroslav Ivan Lubachivsky of Philadelphia, 66, and made clear that the Ukrainians would not be permitted to follow their tradition of ordaining married men as priests. (CT)

\*\*\*

The Bible House of the Bible Society of Ethiopia has been taken over by the Ethiopian government for official use. The headquarters were located in the center of Addis Ababa where there is an acute shortage of commercial building space. The society has had to relocate its operation in three separate locations. (CT)

\*\*\*

The Coptic Church of Egypt cancelled its traditional Easter celebrations this year to protest the alleged mistreatment of Coptic Christians by Muslim extremists. Easter services took place, but without the usual festooning of electric lights on church buildings, and without the customary exchange of greetings between the Coptic Pope Shenouda III and the Egyptian Government. President Anwar Sadat has attempted to increase minority Coptic

representation in the government, but Muslim fundamentalists have used the developments in Iran and the offer of asylum to the ex-shah as rallying points for a crusade against both the Coptics and Sadat. (CT)

\*\*\*

#### SALT LAKE CITY (RNS)

Mormon Church leaders speaking at the recent 150th anniversary world conference here said the church is determined to press on with its goal of teaching the gospel to every person on earth — but warned members that they may face increasing obstructions and opposition in the years ahead.

Spencer W. Kimball, president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon), said the church now has 30,000 full-time missionaries in the field. He urged all members to be "more neighbourly" and help spread the religion.

Church statistics cited at the conference show Mormonism being taught now in 46 languages and in 81 nations. There are some 4.4 million members worldwide and some 12,000 organized congregations. (CN)

\*\*\*

#### MINNEAPOLIS (RNS)

There is a conflict going on in China between a government-recognized group of Christians and the unofficial "household" churches which meet in homes, a Lutheran leader from Hong Kong reported here.

The Rev. Andrew Hsiao said he was optimistic that the gap might eventually be healed, but he said some of the leaders of the household churches don't trust leaders of the official church group which had persecuted them.

The government-recognized group, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, recently announced plans in an open letter for the formation of a national Protestant church. (CN)

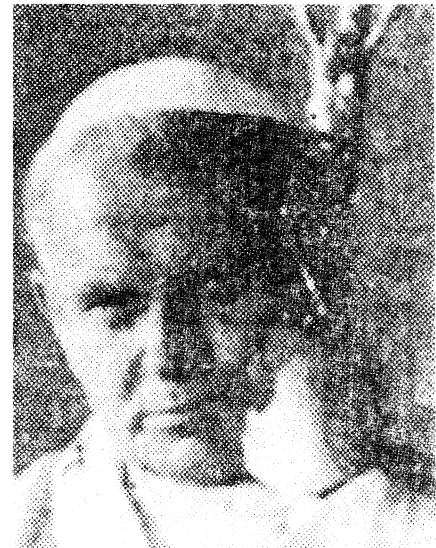
\*\*\*

The 3.3-million member Seventh Day Adventist Church is expanding on several fronts. During their fifty-third World Conference last month in Dallas, the 2,000 delegates from 190 countries were told that Africa should be the church's top missionary priority. In South America, where there are 500,000 Adventists, a new Adventist church is being built every 56 hours, said one speaker. Other figures: 50 publishing houses around the world; a

missionary airplane fleet of 130; and in the last five years, more than 15,000 "five-day plan to stop smoking" sessions. (CT)

\*\*\*

Pope John Paul II has decided to move toward a showdown with rebel Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, according to reports published in Paris newspapers. He has been moved to action, the sources say, because the traditionalist archbishop — against the expressed wishes of local church officials — went to Venice on Easter Monday and celebrated a traditionalist mass there. Despite a number of reconciliation gestures from the Pope, Lefebvre has become increasingly defiant. (CT)



\*\*\*

Adequate monitoring of relief supply distribution in Kampuchea (Cambodia) "is not taking place and is not possible under the present restriction and controls imposed by the Vietnamese-controlled Heng Samrin government." That was the testimony of an evangelical relief agency official before a Senate committee in March. Robert "Bud" Hancock, Washington liaison official for World Relief Corporation, had just completed a four-day survey trip into the country. He urged the Senate Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, meeting with the State Department Kampuchean Working Group, to demand full accountability from the Cambodian regime, insisting on the right to control distribution of relief goods, including monitoring of their use. (CT)

vO



# Build a Wall — Analysis of Current Events

Talking about current events implies one danger: if you write an essay one day, the next day it may be outdated for the largest part. That will not be the case now, however, because we do not so much deal with events as such, but we should consider (as far as we know) why certain events and developments took place. We should, however, keep a few things in mind:

1. Nothing in this world happens by chance; the Lord governs this world with His almighty hand. We should be comforted by that faith when we notice rapid developments in the political world. If we just look back half a year — we mention Cuba, Iran, Afghanistan, Columbia, El Salvador — each of these happenings in the countries mentioned threatened world peace (if there is something like that). Will a nuclear war explode? You and I don't know. Will Russia soon continue invading other countries? You and I don't know. Should we worry? No; God governs. Nothing happens without His will.

2. This brings us to our second introductory remark. World history and current events seem to dominate this world. Are not many politicians and leaders of countries concerned about world peace? We, however, should look at it differently. We should put Christ's church-gathering work in the centre of our thinking. The present world will exist as long as the last one of the elect has not been added yet. Everything that is necessary for the gathering of the church will happen also in the political world. No mighty powers have the final decision, but our Lord lets all of the events contribute to the coming of His Kingdom.

3. Current events can only be viewed correctly if you consider the past events as well. Why could it happen that an American embassy was captured and fifty hostages held for so long already? Why did Russia dare to invade Afghanistan? Why did Iran dare to make rash statements? That can only be explained if we look at developments which have taken place in the past. Speaking about actualities, we must make a choice and that is difficult. I would like to draw your attention to the following events: USA — Russia

China; Middle East, and Western Europe.

A. USA: The States could not save Vietnam and later Cambodia (1972) from a communist take-over. Bani Sadr of Iran called out triumphantly when America set the Iranian diplomats out of the country and broke diplomatic relations: "Finally our country will be freed from the detrimental influence of that Western nation." Russia maintained combat-troops in Cuba despite the protests of the USA. America could not prevent the downfall of the Shah; it could not solve the hostage-drama problem. The Russians did not withdraw from Afghanistan despite the threats of the USA. What are the reasons? Have the United States changed? Older readers will remember 1948: the Berlin blockade and the airlift to Berlin. Russia did not get its way. In 1962 J.F. Kennedy stood firm over-against the Russian intentions in Cuba. But in A.D. 1980 it seems that America does not influence world developments any longer. Or is it just a weak president who is responsible for these signs of weakness and lack of courage? In my opinion we can trace the following Post WWII development:

America acted as policeman all over the world from the Second World War to approximately the late sixties. The troops were fighting all over the world to withstand communism and other leftist powers. It enlarged its weaponry considerably.

— A turn in these developments took place when — internally — the necessity of having a strong army was no longer seen. Less money was available. The Russians caught up with their military strength and even bypassed the Americans. The result we notice today. Russia is very well aware of this and takes more chances than ever. Only in the number of heavy nuclear bombs America may be stronger. But who is going to start a nuclear war if not absolutely necessary?

— In the mid-seventies America suffered a nationwide sickness called Watergate Syndrome. This affected the foreign policy as well. More foreign countries looked at the Yankees differently. Who benefited the most? Russia.

Internal trouble stagnated several weapon developments and it lowered the international prestige incredibly.

— A cure was considered to have been found; or better, had announced itself: Jimmy Carter, the moralist. He had no connections with the whole Watergate affair. He defeated Gerald Ford, and, right after his inauguration, he started his moral crusade throughout the world. Friends, as a result, questioned the ability of the statesman and his country; his willingness to show power was seriously doubted.

Two events happened which converted Carter from moralist to realist; which brought many Americans back from a kind of pacifism and/or isolationism; which united the nation (at least for a time; how lasting this effect will be, cannot be predicted) — those two events are: the fifty Americans held hostage and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Not all of the blame for the current situation should be put on America. Its position is weakened because the allies in Europe don't want to burn their fingers (to say the least). The French are to be trusted the least; the British, the most. Most of the European countries worry about two things: save the detente (whatever that may be), which means: do not make the Russians angry; and do not irritate the OPEC countries either, because of the oil we receive from them.

Not long ago, Solzhenitsyn (again) warned the West. (In the ND I read a so-called open letter, "Warning to the West"). In his strong language he warned the western world to resist the communistic powers strongly. He advised the West: build a wall which the communists cannot break. That wall, of course, should be built of weaponry. Solzhenitsyn is convinced that only an alert and well-equipped military force can impress the USSR. Russia had and has and will have only one purpose in mind: conquer the world and make it communistic. Many examples could be given to prove this statement. Russia invaded Afghanistan because it knew that the West could not back their protest up with military force. Detente is used by the Soviet Union to voice their peaceful intentions, but in reality they are waiting for the Western world to fall asleep. They must conclude from the Russian peace-efforts that communism has denied its original goals of changing the world into communist countries. America and its allies have been shocked by the Afghanistan invasion.

America seemed to have learned a lesson about its allies. I have my doubts.

Has the United States become a spectator instead of a policeman? It could not prevent the Shah's downfall; it cannot free its fifty hostages; in Nicaragua the dictator was replaced by a more leftist government; it could not get the Russians to change their mind about stationing combat troops in Cuba. A positive reaction to the events of the last few months as taken place. The draft has been reintroduced; the signing of the SALT-pact has been postponed, and more money for defense will be spent. In the race for the presidential nominations it seems that Ronald Reagan is a strong anti-communist.

Two super powers have been mentioned thus far. What about potential super power China, which is communistic as well? It is not in conflict with the other communist giant? Was it correct that the States recognized communist China and dropped nationalist China (Taiwan)? Solzhenitsyn says "no," and I tend to agree with him. Should not the wall to be built be against Russia and China? Does China, in principle, have the same goals in mind? Surely, currently they are not able to execute any of their plans, but what if they will have developed to the same level and if they are able to produce the same sophisticated weapons as the other two? The step was pragmatic. However, Russia and China are enemies. Strengthening ties with China might increase their enmity. To maintain the balance of power, the USA decided that a close relationship should be established with both countries. "Speel ze tegen elkaar uit." That might be true for the moment, but in the long run this policy may be deceivable.

Related to America's development are other events in the world. This world was shocked when the Shah of Iran was toppled and replaced by the ancient Ayatollah Khomeini. The States lost its most faithful and strongest ally in the Persian Gulf. Western Europe crossed its fingers: stand back and wait. Watch the developments closely. Recognize whatever government will take over to assure a sufficient oil supply. That oil can be a strong weapon, stronger than bombs and tanks. The Arab countries discovered that in 1973, during the last war between Israel and its neighbouring countries. Since that time, oil has been used as a weapon. And effectively! We

notice that not only in the Iran situation, but also in the relation of the Western world to the Arab countries. The PLO has established strong economic ties with West-European countries. That same PLO still has in its constitution that one of their goals is to drive Israel into the Mediterranean Sea before it will be satisfied. That they have killed many innocent men, women, and children is forgotten for convenience's sake. And Israel becomes isolated. Oh no, I do not completely agree with Begin's policy of the settlements on the Westbank. If the government of Begin would be a bit more tactical it might have reached an acceptable agreement with Egypt about the Palestinian issue. Although I was hesitant about Sadat's intentions initially, I think that he is honest and that he really wants peace. He must be tough on the autonomy questions for his friends' sake, or he will be more isolated yet. He must show that he wants an overall peace in the Middle East. He travelled to Jerusalem and risked a condemnation by his Arab fellow countries. To bridge the gap he repeats that the Palestinians should have self-rule on the West bank. On the other hand, we should never forget that Israel will insist upon safe borders, or defensible borders. Its being a small country, the government recognizes that the country must be able to defend itself. Moreover, what are allies worth? Therefore it wants to have a well-trained army equipped with sophisticated weapons. In the meantime, as you understand, we have switched our attention from Iran to Israel/Egypt. That may happen unnoticed, because most world events are tied together (interwoven) in one way or another.

Let us now have a look at Western Europe yet. In general, we have stated already that

a. the countries do not want to "destroy detente";

b. they are hesitant to support their ally which protects them with its atom shield: America; they have not supported America during the Vietnam War and are doing it even less in the current situation.

We would like to note a few things:

a. *West Germany* is the strongest economically. It has had serious problems with the leftist Baader Meinhof Group, but that movement seems to have been crushed.

b. *Italy* is troubled by the one government crisis after the other; The 39th

after WWII is serving the country. The dangerous situation exists that the country can hardly be governed without the active or passive support of the communists. The Red Army is a real threat to the Italians. Many high officials have been killed by this cruel group.

c. *France* has directed its course in a direction different from that of most of the countries. It still seems to nourish the idea that one day France will play first fiddle in Europe.

d. *Spain* seems to be moving quietly toward becoming a democratic country. An historical event took place when the king of Spain visited The Netherlands; the first official visit of a Spanish monarch. One editor of the ND was considering what his feelings and thoughts were when he heard the Dutch national anthem, which contains the phrase: "Den Koning van Hispanje heb ik altijd geerd."

We should come to a close, although we have not touched upon the hostage situation in Porto Rico; nor have the independence festivities of Zimbabwe, Rhodesia had our attention; the apartheid problems in South Africa have not been mentioned, nor the troubles in countries like Cambodia; even Afghanistan has not been dealt with sufficiently; neither has the strategic position of Turkey been considered, whose turmoil creates a dangerous situation. To keep track of world events you need a full-time job. We should be involved; we should follow and discuss world events regularly. We do have a view on these events, don't we? Let us say to America: "Build a wall to prevent the communists from taking over other countries." Let us say to the Canadian government, "Support the Big Brother in the South actively"; let us say to ourselves, "Do not cease praying for Christ's return; and: pray for kings, magistrates, and rulers that the preaching of the Gospel may be continued and that so Christ's church-gathering work may be finalized."

A. GUNNINK  
Smithville

#### OUR COVER

Near Osoyoos, B.C. (Photo courtesy of Department of Tourism, B.C. Government.)

# I'm Getting Old

I am getting older. I will soon join the fastest growing minority in the country. In 11 years I will have reached the typical retirement age for professors in the college where I teach.

I look in the mirror and cannot avoid the evidence that I am not a beneficiary of the fabled fountain of youth. Crow's feet in the corners of my eyes, and only sparse remains of what was once a full head of hair, stare back at me. But I'll not go on in this vein; who wants to hear again the quavering complaints of creaking bones and aching joints?

How about it? Are you getting older too?

If you are, have you developed a theology of old age? How does the word "geriology" strike you? Do you have a "geriology"? Here let me suggest some ideas about growing older to help us both face that rapidly wrinkling image in the mirror.

Begin with your attitude — although I am hesitant to bring up the subject. I must confess that my attitude could be interpreted as less than Christian. I find it difficult to think of anything good about growing old. Oh yes, the older we get the more wisdom we possess. And if experience is the best teacher, then obviously old age is an advantage.

But these things do not necessarily follow. We get wiser and have more experience and even move closer to the day of glory not because we are older, but because we have lived longer. What would be wrong with living longer but not getting older?

Getting older is not everything it is cracked up to be. What is good about slowing down, getting weaker, losing sharpness of eye, keenness of ear, soundness of tooth and squareness of shoulder? What is so great about lowering yourself slowly into your seat of honour and then having to struggle when it's time to stand up?

Getting old is something that ought not to be. This is not stated in bitterness — although I am a little angry. Illness is something that ought not to be. Birth defects, stillbirths, accidents, injuries and physical suffering for whatever reasons are things which ought not to be. Death is something that should not have been. It is a curse

pronounced on all mankind because of the sin of one man (Romans 5:12).

This curse is all-inclusive. We may say that aging is part of death and is therefore part of the curse; it is a consequence of the fall. It is something that ought not to be. And that's why I'm angry.

Are you a bit put off by my expression of anger? "The curse," you say, "after all, is God's righteous judgment on sin. Why should we be angry at God for doing what He must do as a holy God?"

But I am not angry at God. I am angry because what should not have been is now a reality. Death is God's curse upon us all because in Adam we all sinned. Death is nevertheless an enemy and ought to be treated as such. Is it not a tool in the hands of Satan (Hebrews 2:14-15) and did not Jesus come to destroy it (II Timothy 1:10)?

I remember a sermon from a man who had just lost his father. He spoke on the subject of death — but refused to accept it as a matter of course, stoically and with a benign smile. He saw death as an enemy which had intruded on what ought to have been. Was he angry at God? Not at all — looking instead to the victory of God over death as his hope and the only reason death can at all be tolerated.

Victory. A few years ago a young Christian wife and mother in our congregation was snatched away from her husband and children and from us by an untimely, sudden and unexpected death. We were all shocked and dismayed.

But I shall never forget the minister's opening sentence at the funeral: "We are in the presence of an enemy; but he has been defeated." In the words of a Gospel song, "Death is conquered; dry your tears!"

Old age, too has been conquered. But, as with death, the defeat of old age is in that awkward format of *now*, but *not yet*, in the history of God's work of redemption.

Death and all that pertains to it has already been defeated but not yet. We experience *now* the meaning, blessing, and power of the death, burial and resurrection of Him Who has passed into triumphant glory (Hebrews 2:9-10).

We experience it *now* as in its beginning. We will experience it fully and completely at the consummation when the risen, exalted and triumphant Son of God returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels and makes all things new (Revelation 21:5).

The *not yet* is the resurrection of believers. Then this mortality will put on immortality and this perishable will put on imperishability. Death will have been swallowed up in victory.

Then this old bag of bones will be recreated never to grow old again. A full head of hair awaits! Teeth that are all mine and eyes that will never miss a thing are also part of the newness of all things.

But what of the *now*? As Paul puts it, the outer man is decaying day by day. Can I stop the aging process? Only in a relative sense for even if I could live to 150, eating nothing but yogurt, I am still certain to grow old and die — unless, of course, Jesus returns first. So why not accept it stoically, wait for death and look forward to the resurrection?

I cannot accept it stoically for the simple reason that getting old is something that ought not to be!

Therefore I will fight it. I will not give in to it. I am 54 years old — and I am just beginning. I pay careful attention to what I eat. I eschew tobacco instead of chewing it, and frown at those who don't! I jog 12 to 15 miles a week, and play intramural basketball. In October, I ran 10,000 metres (6.2 miles) in a road race, and now wear with pride the bright orange T-shirt I earned for finishing.

I try not to live with a closed mind. I want to learn something new every day. I want to be a growing person, not just one who is growing old.

All of this, of course, could be pure vanity on my part. Still worse, it could be all in vain. I could have a stroke, get hardening of the arteries, grow senile, get cancer or suffer from any one of all the diseases that afflict the aged. My family may need to put me in a nursing home.

But it is not vanity to resist aging. It is one form of testimony to the fact that all age's effects, like death itself, are more a friend to Satan than they are to Christ. The fact that they are normal does not make them good.

Old age, I know you are coming. But I am not afraid of you. I am going to fight you. You will seem sometimes to

*Continued on next page.*

# Books

Robert G. Rayburn, *O Come, Let Us Worship — Corporate Worship in the Evangelical Church*. Baker Book House, 1980. \$8.95. 319 pp.

For a proper evaluation of this recent publication one must keep in mind that the author is very much concerned about the sorry neglect of God-pleasing corporate worship in churches where, with due respect for the divine character of the Scriptures, too much attention is centered on man and too little on the glory and holiness of the God in Whose presence we come when we say, "O Come, Let Us Worship." He tells about his experiences which prompted him to write this solid book — solid in the sense that a firm and detailed foundation is laid for proper worship by extensive biblical references throughout Old and New Testaments. This part of the book makes it a good textbook for liturgies in Seminary or College.

It also makes for worthwhile reading by Reformed believers who, we fear, do not excel in proper awareness of what is going on, and should go on, in our worship services. "Be holy for I am holy!"

After having dealt with the biblical teaching in this respect, the author continues with a very detailed analysis of every single element that, in his opinion, should be part of the order of liturgy or worship. It stands to reason that here his background comes to the fore. We find elements which are strange to us. Yet, it is worthwhile to listen to him also then, because he does not tire in seeking biblical support.

**I'M GETTING OLD** — *Continued.*

have won the battle — but you will not have won. Already, you have lost the war, for you have been defeated by the Creator and Life-Giver Himself.

I know that I share His victory. I have Him who is the firstfruit of the resurrection, the Spirit who is the power of eternal life, within me.

CHARLES W. ANDERSON<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This article first appeared in the *Presbyterian Journal*, Asheville NC 28802. Kind permission was received to give it a place in *Clarion*.

vD

Thus he rejects the "gospel songs" which are dripping with subjectivistic sentimentality. With Augustine he calls a hymn "a song with praise of God." He recommends "the great hymns which have come down through the centuries," and wants to give a primary place to the Psalms. Although Rayburn gives proof of a wide knowledge of the literature, it surprised us that he does not mention the Genevan Psalter (we will send him the *Book of Praise*, also for another reason, see below).

In a review we cannot mention all that is said about the many elements in the order of worship. Therefore we are not entering a discussion on points where we would differ from him. Some points should be mentioned. Although the author takes a Reformed position regarding the Sacraments, here again it surprised us that he gives the impression that he does not know about specific Forms for Baptism and Holy Supper. We fully agree with him when he pleads for a rehabilitation of the first main part of the order of worship:

- public confession of sin;
- prayer for forgiveness;
- assurance of pardoning grace;
- hymn of thanksgiving.

Two other recommendations should be mentioned, because they are fully biblical (although strange to us). In order that the full participation of all in the prayers be strengthened, we should, according to biblical example, let the congregation say, "Amen." "The people shall say, 'Amen,'" Deut. 27 repeatedly; "All the people said, 'Amen,'" 1 Chron. 16:36; Neh. 5:13, 8:6. In our *Book of Praise*, Psalm 72:9, "Let our chorus with Amen, Amen ring." Wonderful for the pastor, when in their Amen the congregation lets him know that they were with him. Wonderful for us all, too. Another point is kneeling during prayers, after Psalm 95:9, "let us kneel before the LORD"; we are in the presence of the Most Holy One. In the churches of the Reformation people knelt. Only when the Puritans appeared upon the scene, this went overboard. It would be a return to what is *old*, and be a proper expression of our humility before the Lord. It could be expected that the author considers it normal that the Creed as well as The

Lord's Prayer be recited by the whole congregation. Our forthcoming General Synod will receive a proposal to that effect from the Committee for Liturgical Forms.

Rayburn sees a role for a choir in corporate worship, to support the congregational singing. When, however, he also considers it an element in itself for the greater glory of God, he comes in conflict with the word "corporate" in his title.

Apart from this and other minor details, this book with its 319 pages leaves an impact on the reader, and is convincing when the stress on the glory and praise of God in everything includes that our "worship" also means that we "offer ourselves up as a living sacrifice of thanksgiving, with body and soul."

Such corporate worship, in order to leave a deep imprint upon the worshipper, demands from the pastor/preacher utmost carefulness in preparing every service, and from every churchgoer prayerful preparation for the moment that we enter God's presence.

Come, let us worship and bow down  
Before this God of great renown,  
Our Maker, Him our thanks we render,  
He is our Shepherd, our Defender.

(Ps. 95:3, *Book of Praise*.)

P.S.

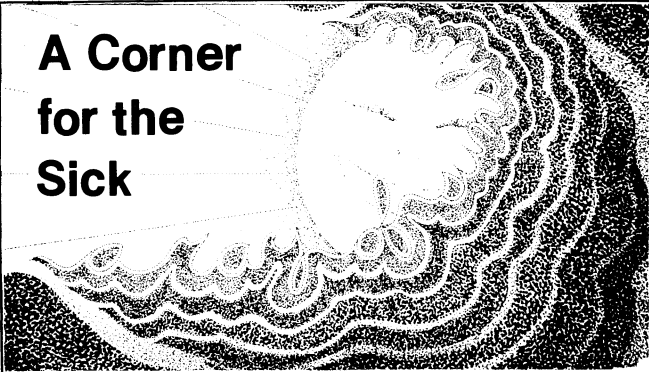
While continuing our series on "The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy," we plan to return to this book now and then.

G. VANDOOREN

## I Chronicles 16:35, 36

"Deliver us, O God of our salvation, and gather and save us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to Thy holy Name, and glory in Thy praise. Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!" Then all the people said "Amen!" and praised the LORD.

## A Corner for the Sick



### The Way to God

If my days were untroubled  
and my heart always light  
Would I seek that fair land  
Where there is no night?

If I never grew weary  
with the weight of my load  
Would I search for God's Peace  
at the end of the road?

If I never knew sickness  
and never felt pain  
Would I reach for a hand  
to help and sustain?

If I walked not with sorrow  
and lived without loss  
Would my soul seek sweet solace  
at the foot of the cross?

If all I desired was mine  
day by day  
Would I kneel before God  
and earnestly pray?

If God sent no "winter"  
to freeze me with fear  
Would I yearn for the warmth  
of "spring" every year?

I ask myself this  
and the answer is plain —  
If my life were all pleasure  
and I never knew pain

I'd seek God less often  
and need Him much less,  
For God's sought more often  
in times of distress,

*And no one knows God  
or sees Him as plain  
As those who have met Him  
on "the pathway of pain."*

by Helen Steiner Rice

*We have received the following note:*

*"The family of Marinus Foekens would like to thank all the brothers and sisters for the cards which Marinus received on his 28th birthday. The staff at the Regional Centre was very impressed and would also like to thank everyone for making it such a memorable day for Marinus. The picture is one of Marinus with his niece Anna-Marie."*

\*\*\*\*\*



*It's great to lie out in the sun,  
Or sit on the grass in the shade,  
To watch children play on the beach,  
Or walk in a sun-dappled glade,  
For some, though, it's all just a wish,  
A dream that can never come true —  
Don't forget to take sunshine to those  
Who cannot share summer with you.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Send your requests to:

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