

Clarion

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Bible Translations

One of the reports that will reach the Canadian Reformed Churches during these summer months in preparation for the General Synod, to be held at Smithville, Ontario in November 1980, is the report of the Committee on Bible Translations. Since we published the Report on the Matter of Women's Voting Rights, we could also print in full the Bible Translations Report. But it is quite extensive, gives many details of different translations and will be printed in the Acts of Synod anyway. As far as our readers are members of a Canadian Reformed Church or the American Reformed Church, they will be able to study this Report in this Acts in the near future. Let me, therefore, now simply summarize it and make some personal comments.

If we act as some readers of Harlequin novels, we first glance at the last pages to satisfy our curiosity. How does it end? Well, it ends with two sets of recommendations, a majority and a minority set. The main mandate of the Committee was to make a comparative study of the New American Standard Bible and the New International Version with the Revised Standard Version and the King James Version in order to determine which one translation can be positively recommended for use by the churches, whereby the criteria are: faithfulness to the original text, and linguistic character of the translation. On the basis of this comparative study, the Committee now recommends Synod to decide to use the RSV for the Scripture quotations in the linguistic modernization of the Creeds and the Liturgical Forms as much as possible and for the sake of desired uniformity to recommend to the churches the use of the RSV in worship services and catechism teaching. The minority, one of the four members of the Committee, however, recommends to cease the use of the KJV, to leave the churches free to use any of the three modern translations — RSV, NASB, or NIV — and in the meantime to continue the comparative study of these three versions. For the sake of objectivity I immediately add that the present writer belongs to the majority of the Committee and that his comments are to be read in the light of this fact.

The recommendation of the Committee is not something completely new. When we scan the Acts of general synods for a quick survey, we see that already the Synod of Orangeville 1968 expressed a certain preference for the RSV as far as modern translations are concerned. It reasoned that the churches should, if at all possible, use only one translation, in order that it becomes possible for believers to learn part of God's Word by heart. The RSV has the merit of not being a completely new, a "revolutionary" translation, but is meant as a revision of the King James Version. However, Synod 1968 did not yet declare that it was desirable for the churches to use the RSV besides the King James Version which had been recommended by our first Synod 1954. For the editors of the RSV were in the process of preparing an im-

proved edition and synod was of the opinion that the churches should await its publication. In the meantime a study committee was appointed to answer the question whether the RSV could be recommended for use by the churches and to contribute to its improvement.

The following Synod — New Westminster 1971 — declared that no valid reasons had been adduced why the RSV should be declared unacceptable by the churches. Later this was called the "negative recommendation" of New Westminster. It continued the Committee on the Revision of the RSV. This Committee, appointed by this synod of 1971, did good work. It submitted two sets of recommendations to the RSV Bible Committee, the great majority of which were accepted. The editors of the RSV showed themselves to be responsive to our recommendations and improvements were made. Therefore, the Synod of Toronto 1974 decided to leave the use of the RSV in the freedom of the churches. In the meantime because of its intensive study and scrupulous investigation the Committee had become more aware of the weaknesses of the RSV. A study of the book Hosea showed that the RSV too often deviated from the Hebrew text in order to follow ancient versions like the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Committee had also become aware of the existence of the New American Standard Bible and the New International Version.

It was no wonder that the following Synod, Coaldale 1977, again left the use of the RSV — though with discretion and care — in the freedom of the churches and decided to broaden the mandate for the Committee. Now the New American Standard Bible and the New International Version had to be compared with the RSV and the KJV in order to determine which one translation can be positively recommended. The situation therefore is that at the moment only the use of the King James Version and the Revised Standard Version is in the freedom of the Churches.

What now is the result of the comparative study by the present Committee? Well, simply stated, the opinion of the Committee is that the King James Version is obsolete, the New American Standard Bible is too stilted and sometimes not clear, the New International Version is smooth but too free, and the Revised Standard Version has its weaknesses but is still the best choice of a modern translation for use by the churches. Once more it has become clear that a perfect or nearly perfect translation does not exist.

The Committee is unanimous in its conclusion that none of the four translations should be qualified unscriptural. But the King James Version cannot function any longer as a translation in contemporary English and as the best rendering of the original text.

The New American Standard Bible reaps the benefits of ongoing study of the Bible, its languages and its manuscripts.

But the translation is too literal and such literalistic rendering obscures the meaning. This became obvious from a comparative study of the newer translations, e.g., of the letter to the Romans.

In my opinion the most striking result of the study is that the New International Version is very appealing, a lucid rendering in contemporary English, pleasant to read because of its clarity and its freshness of expression, and nevertheless not to be recommended for use in the worship service. The reason is that the NIV uses a method of translation — the dynamic equivalent method — which results in something that is sometimes more a paraphrase or interpretation than a proper translation. Instead of the name “LORD of hosts” the NIV gives “LORD Almighty”; the “ships of Tarshish” simply become “trading ships,” etc. and the annotation is scarce. Personally I have come to the conviction that the NIV method is not apt for a translation to be used as basis for the preaching of God’s Word. More often than now already is the case, the preacher should have to refer to what the original really states, and the man in the pew does not even have the advantage of full marginal notes that can make such reference clear. Although I do not agree with the too abundant use of ancient versions in some portions of the Old Testament prophecies, I can always refer to the Hebrew text that in the margin of the RSV receives an adequate translation. This is not the case with the NIV.

After our Report had been finalized, I saw in the Agenda 1980 of the Christian Reformed Synod that their committee also observed that NIV could have given more footnotes and that it is somewhat more inclined to follow the principle of “dynamic equivalence” while the RSV is more a word-for-word translation. Nevertheless, the Christian Reformed Committee judges the NIV to be an excellent modern version and recommends that the synod designate it as one of the versions acceptable for use in worship services. Prof. B. Van Elderen opposes this recommendation. He criticizes the NIV’s use of the principle of “dynamic equivalence” and observes that this may promote greater clarity and understanding of a passage, but often at the expense of precision and fidelity to the original language. “For private use, devotional reading and study purposes this may be acceptable. And the NIV is an excellent contribution to the collection of such versions. However, one must question whether a version employing the principle of dynamic equivalence can be used liturgically in the church.” It struck me that the observations of the Christian Reformed Committee and especially of Prof. Van Elderen are similar to ours.

Although in the comparative study of our Committee the RSV as a word-for-word translation finally prevailed above the NIV, we were and are aware of its weaknesses. We contacted Dr. B.M. Metzger, secretary of the RSV Bible Committee, on the matter of the use of ancient versions in disputed places of the prophets and the preference of the RSV for the D text in Luke 24. Dr. Metzger answered that it is his impression that the Old Testament section has a tendency to return to the Masoretic Hebrew text. Since the second edition of the Old Testament is not expected to be ready until the latter part of the 1980’s our churches should make their decision on the basis of the present edition of the RSV. As far as the New Testament is concerned, Dr. Metzger informed us that the third edition of the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament is adopted as the basis text for the current work on the RSV New Testament. The RSV will then no longer follow the readings of codex D in Luke 24. Although I cannot enter into details, I conclude that the second edition of the

RSV — Old Testament and the third edition of the RSV — New Testament will be closer to the “conservative” text. This will eliminate some of the weaknesses that the committees of previous synods had indicated.

Given the wish in our churches to come to a more or less general acceptance of one modern translation, and given the desire for continuity in our synodical decisions and for continuity in the use of a Bible translation in worship service and catechism teaching, the majority of our Committee on Bible translations chose for the Revised Standard Version. Our Committees on Translation Heidelberg Catechism and on Revision Confessional and Liturgical Forms are in need of one contemporary version of the Holy Scripture. It is foundational for the progress of their work. Several churches use the RSV already for years and there should be special reason to change our course of action, especially after the improvement of the RSV in the past and the expected further improvement in the future.

Naturally, we are in favour of uniformity but against compulsion. The use of one and the same Bible version, though desirable, is not an ordinance of God nor a rule of the Church Order. Reformed Churches do not authenticate one specific translation as the Roman Catholic Church did with the Vulgate. Therefore, if the acceptance of the RSV meets with insurmountable objections in local churches, it should be left in their freedom to use the King James Version, the New American Standard Bible or the New International Version. But, after years of study of the RSV and after this comparative report, the time has come for the churches in general to make a choice and to express a preference. Others could follow.

J. FABER

Psalm 33:1, 2

1. Rejoice ye in the LORD, O righteous,
To praise is comely for the upright,
Sing Him new songs with strings and psaltery;
Praise Him with harps and voices bright.
Justly He has spoken,
Truth and love betoken
All the works He willed.
Equity He treasures;
Earth is with the measures
Of His goodness filled.
2. His mighty word has made the heavens,
Their blazing hosts are in His keep.
The waters of the sea He gathers;
In store-house rooms He hoards the deep.
Let the earth then fear Him,
Stand in awe, and hear Him.
When God spoke 'twas done;
When He gave His orders
Earth's remotest borders
Then stood firm anon.

The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy ⁵

In the fourth instalment the Order of Worship was built upon what we have in our Official documents, the Prayers for public worship and the Heidelberg Catechism on the Fourth Commandment, Lord's Day 38. Now we will discuss the various elements in the order given in the previous article.

THE OPENING

In the light of the solemn character of our meeting the LORD the opening or beginning of the service is of the greatest importance. It "sets the tune" for all that follows. This opening is not only a votum and a blessing, plus a Psalm. While this takes place, we who attend the church of God must have prepared ourselves so that we are in the proper frame of mind. This cannot be stressed too strongly. In the previously mentioned book, *O Come Let Us Worship*, Dr. Rayburn needs more than 130 pages to make clear, from the Scriptures, what it means, and must mean for us, that we meet the LORD. And He meets us; He, the God of all the earth; He to Whom the seraphim constantly sing, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD God Almighty," Isaiah 6.

The Reformation cleansed the church buildings of all superstition, from images, these "books of the laity," because God wants His Christians taught by the living preaching of His Word, Lord's Day 35.

The popular iconoclasm, however, went a bit farther. The simpler, the barer the church building, the better. It became a meeting place of the congregation, where people went to hear a sermon. As we experienced after the Liberation, 1944, we could have wonderful church services in barns, school rooms, even storerooms. The building as such is not that important, although one could write articles on biblical architecture.

But even the most ornate building would be an empty shell, if the congregation that fills it is not itself filled with the deepest reverence and at the same time joyful expectance: "we have drawn near to the heavenly Jerusalem." The LORD descends in our midst. Only when *that* is our attitude, do we receive the full benefit and blessing from the "opening."

Three and Three

Traditionally we have three elements or parts in the opening of the service: the votum, the blessing or salutation, and the first Psalm or Hymn, expressing the "Come, let us worship and bow down before this God of great renown" of Psalm 95. There are, however, three more elements which we will consider.

The First Three

The service starts with a (B) element, coming from the congregation, on whose behalf the minister speaks the words of Psalm 124, "Our help is in the Name of the LORD Who made heaven and earth." We call that the "votum" for lack of a better word.

This is quite a statement! First, we call upon the LORD, Yahweh, the God of the Patriarchs, the God Who revealed His Name to Moses at the burning bush. He is the God Who adopted us and our children in His gracious covenant. This already establishes the meeting-together as a covenantal event. Although there may (hopefully) be visitors whom we call "outsiders," they do not change the character of the meeting: the covenant people has gathered with their Covenant God.

Then, we confess Him as the Creator; that is the first article of the Apostles' Creed; and when you read Lord's Days 9 and 10 of the Catechism, you realize again what that means. He, Who created all things and still upholds them, is for His Son Jesus' sake our God and Father Who takes care of us more than any earthly father ever can, Psalm 103.

Finally, we call Him our Help: we put our lives into His hand. "Blessed is he who has the God of Jacob for his help," Psalm 146:5. We declare that our "help" is in His NAME: we are open to His *revelation*.

This "votum" is spoken by the minister on our behalf. There can be no objection against saying these words together. It would impress upon us that these words are not just a traditional formula which means little more than when a chairman opens the meeting with his gavel. It is much more! The reason that the "Votum" is spoken by

the minister may have to be sought in the fact that this element of our liturgy stems from the so-called *Latin Mass*. When the clergy became more and more central, the priest had to perform all sorts of ceremonies before he could start his real work. One of these ceremonies was the confession of his personal sins and a prayer for forgiveness and cleansing. This prayer, then, began with the words, "Our help is in the name of the LORD," while one of the assistants responded by saying, "Who made heaven and earth." This is the origin of the traditional beginning of our services. Since the Reformation these words do not apply to the "clergy" any longer, but to the whole congregation.

The above is a near-literal quote from *G. Van Rongen, Liturgy of God's Covenant*, p. 11. The "Call to Worship," of which we have to say more in the next article, is of older, pre-romanist origin. As a matter of fact it stems from the Early Christian church.

Then comes the *salutation*, an (A) element, coming from the LORD as His answer to our confession expressed in the votum. Although we do not suggest it, in order to express the difference between votum and salutation, the minister could, during the votum, turn his back to the congregation, lift up his face and on behalf of the people behind him address God. Then, turning around, he faces the congregation and blesses them from the LORD. "Two-way traffic!"

The service is also closed with a blessing, usually called the benediction. This is the LORD's "farewell" at the moment we go back home, crowned with His blessing which will accompany the true believers all through the week.

The opening blessing is meant for the worship service itself. In the company of the Triune God we are assured of the grace and the love of God. We may count on that during the whole service, because it is a blessing, not a (pious) wish. It is a statement, a divine statement. That's why we favour "Grace *is* upon you . . ." and, likewise in the closing benediction, "the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit *is* with you all."

Dr. Rayburn warns against "monotony." He fears that, when we always hear the same words, their meaning will escape us in the end. Although there is such a danger, we would not favour giving the minister the right to

use different words every Lord's Day. In our churches two different wordings are used, from I Corinthians 1:3 and Revelation 1:4, 5. We would, however, like to see that there be some more variety. The Bible undoubtedly contains more blessing-formulas than just these two. Paul opened his letters every time in a different way. One may also think of Peter, who starts his first letter with the words, "May grace and peace be multiplied to you. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Still, we favour the ones we use regularly, because they remind us of our adoption in the covenant, "baptized into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." One needs only to read the first page of the Form for Baptism to realize what this blessing means.

It would take too much space even to paraphrase these blessings. They are loaded with promises; they contain all that we need for this life and for the life eternal. The blessing should always be a *literal* quotation from the Bible. The LORD speaks. No minister should try to emulate Him by adding all kinds of pious frills.

It stands to reason — this as a final remark — that the congregation should *not* close their eyes during the votum and blessing. A confession (votum) is said with open eyes, and we should see the uplifted hands of the minister, reminding us of our Lord and Saviour, Who ascended while lifting up His hands, by which He blessed the pillars of the church, the apostles.

The third element is the *first Psalm*. This Psalm (or Hymn) need not be selected by the minister with a view to his text. It may be related to the sermon, but, in any case, it must be a song of praise, expressing the all-surpassing glory of our God. The Psalm book contains a great number. The new Hymn section opens, on purpose, with six hymns under the heading, "We praise Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"; as it also closes with "All glory be to Thee, Most High." Bulletin and Psalm board render it unnecessary to announce this Psalm, let alone to hear it being read by the minister. Right after the blessing we sing glory to God. Our song pierces the clouds and becomes one with that of the seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy!" Our singing will please the LORD only when we can say with Paul, "I will sing with the spirit, but I will sing with the mind also," I Corinthians 14:15. Put your mind to it, and know what you are singing!

The Second Three

There are three more elements that should be mentioned here, namely, the prayer in the consistory room, the silent prayer when the consistory has entered, and the so-called "Call to Worship."

It is a bit risky to say something negative about number one and two. Prayer is an intimate matter. Be silent! We take that risk, for the simple reason that, though these two prayers are still in use in some of our churches, they are in our opinion not what the LORD expects from us.

The prayer in the consistory room by the "shaker" (. . .), i.e., the elder who leads the minister to the pulpit, stems, according to most "experts," from times of persecution, when all too often the service was cruelly interrupted and dispersed by the enemies. The purpose was then to ask the LORD that this might not happen. I myself have again felt that need during World War II when bombs sometimes fell close by or when people, spying for the Germans, hoped to hear something that might put the minister into the concentration camp (as happened in several cases). But, in normal circumstances, is it necessary? I assume that every elder has prayed for his minister at home already, privately and with the family. Add the closing prayer at consistory meetings.

One's opinion on this matter is related to what one thinks of the consistory gathering separately, before the service. Our churches may, in this respect, be an exception. Why do the elders and deacons not join the congregation right away? It is also related to one's opinion of the necessity (or not) of that shaking of hands by the elder whose turn it is. I have heard as an explanation that, in doing so, the elder, on behalf of the consistory, gives the minister the mandate to preach, while at the end of the service his hand-shaking means that the sermon was alright.

I have never been impressed by this explanation. The mandate to preach was given once for all in the letter of call and the ordination. This does not need to be repeated every Lord's Day, even twice! Nor can that one elder, without having consulted his colleagues, right off the cuff publicly declare: "It was alright; no objections." Imagine, *if* he has objections, what then? Refuse the hand? There are other and better ways for that.

This usage stems from the days after the Reformation, when there were

quite a number of itinerant preachers, unknown to the congregation. Before he could ascend the pulpit, the consistory had talked with such a "preacher-on-the-loose," — and then this hand-shaking made sense; it told the congregation, "He is alright." (That's why Church Order and Church Visitation speak about the task of the consistory to see to it that no one enters the pulpit who is not qualified.)

Now that "silent prayer," a few moments (seconds) before the minister starts with the votum. The organ falls silent; everyone bows his/her head, and prays. The remark that it is risky to say something negative about this, is repeated here. Imagine! you feel the need for privately asking the LORD for a blessing, and the consistory would forbid it! Terrible!

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“Together we know Precious Little”

The above words are a quotation from “somewhere.” Because the first question often is, “*Who* said it?” instead of “*What* is said?” the source is not mentioned.

The article was dealing with the fact that now that the society meetings of the season have ended, we should ask ourselves, “How much did we benefit from them?” Often society discussions circle around questions like, “What does it mean for me?” Thus we may neglect the study of the Word for God’s sake and keep ourselves dangerously ignorant of much that would spur us to worship and praise. Though struggling together, season after season, we have to leave many a crucial question unanswered.

The author then speaks about her own experience and compares it with what others tell her about it. She is afraid that it is all too often a case of the blind and the lame trying to lead each other, if not down the garden path, then at least through a maze of conflicting opinions.

Till now I was quoting from here

and there. Now more literally,

Do we have something to show for our combined efforts? Have we gained knowledge? Have we grown in our faith? Are we better acquainted with the doctrines of our church? Do we know and understand our Confession? Can we defend it?

Some of us have spent 25 winters or more in one society or another. Can we pass an exam?

Although her own experience was that her society life has strengthened the bond with fellow believers,

. . . if it has taught me anything at all, it’s this: that together we know precious little. It’s an alarming observation, to say the least.

Then she decided to attend night classes offered by community colleges. Armed with books and pencil case, “I’ve experienced the thrill of accomplishment, of achieving a goal, albeit an ever so modest one.”

I can’t help but compare the two endeavours. It leaves me convinced that I should have spent those countless hours of Bible study in a classroom setting. But where? It’s simply not done in most churches.

REFORMED LITURGY — *Continued.*

Therefore the first remark is, give everyone who wants to pray for himself the opportunity. Let the organ stop some moments before the consistory enters. But, having stressed time and again that the church service is a gathering of the covenant congregation, we believe that from the very moment the service starts, we should approach the LORD together, as the one body of Christ. There is ample opportunity for private prayers at home, and not only on Sunday mornings! We would rather plead for more prayers sent up during the week, when the minister is preparing his sermons. Sunday morning is a little late for that, and . . . he needs those prayers!

Therefore, although not being a promoter of this silent prayer (while respecting everyone who feels the need for it), I suggest that from the very second the “meeting with the LORD” starts, we do all things together! Instead of that silent prayer that can mostly be counted in seconds, we

should start the preparation for worshipping the LORD a bit earlier and a bit better. Not to bed too late on Saturday evening; up in time on Sunday morning, have a breakfast together instead of fighting for the use of the bathroom, and a rush to find the “Sunday shoes, tie, etc., . . .” The best preparation is to do what the Catechism adds in Lord’s Day 38: “that all the days of my life I rest from my evil works, let the Lord work in me by His Holy Spirit, and thus begin in this life the eternal Sabbath.”

The last item on the agenda for this article was “*Call to Worship.*” But we got sort of carried away with the other items and have to stop. One question that may prepare you for the next article, be added. Did it strike you that in the meeting with the LORD *man*, in the “*votum,*” has the first word? Is that right? Should not the LORD be the First, as He always was and is and will be?

(*To be Continued.*)

G. VAN DOOREN

Now I had better quote the whole last part of this article in full.

After a few years of catechism classes we are now on our own, even though we were told at the public confession of our faith, that we had not arrived yet. On the contrary, the occasion represented (among other, greater things of course) the first step on the road towards Christian maturity. And who hasn’t felt lost at times, unsure of the right direction?

In my night classes I was guided by teachers who knew the subject of our study thoroughly. And I would plead with our church leaders to provide the same for every “layperson” in every congregation. I know, ministers are overworked already. Besides, not every preacher is a good teacher. Yet, throughout the church, we hear of premarital courses, leadership seminars, evangelism workshops being offered on a regular basis. Imagine! being offered a night class on the Book of Romans for six consecutive weeks or a series of lectures on the Book of Job!

An added responsibility for our pastors perhaps? An impossible dream? I should hope not! If it ever came about, I would be the first in line to register.

Over the years there have been pleas in *C.R.M.* and *Clarion* for a better “training of the congregation for service.” In the context of such pleading the question was asked — cautiously — if indeed our societies in their present form bear the fruits that may be expected; fruits for the members personally, for the congregation as a whole and for service in the kingdom. Our impression is that the lady who wrote the above remarks is not far beside the truth.

1. It must be admitted that, as a rule, young members, after profession, were “left alone.” Right at the time when they were eager to learn more, there were no post-confession courses to continue teaching and training.

2. The weakness of societies (notwithstanding all their merits!) is that the combined knowledge of the members is not much more than the knowledge of every member individually. Or, if there is no “teacher” who is more or less an expert on the subject, all discussion, however nice they may be, will not bring the members much farther.

3. Our editor has rightly criticized the word “*fore-study*”; it is a Dutchism. To use it once more: the general complaint is that the members do not study the matter before the meeting. They go there without any “*fore-study.*” Even if they wanted to, they did not have the necessary sources. One does not find in every local church a real good *church*

library, for which there should be a place on the yearly budget.

4. Do not pity the ministers as being overworked. If they are, they lack self-discipline and the art of delegating several activities to talented members. They need not attend all meetings. Their Christ-given task is "preach and teach." It may be true that some of them would rather preach than teach, if with the latter is meant, large catechism classes with unruly youngsters. But I remain convinced that every preacher would love to teach classes and courses of professing members. Thus they may put to work, and multiply, all that they have studied during their seminary years. Think of church history, the various books of the Bible, church order, and so on.

Our experience is that, by demanding much from your course-members, you only activate their interest. Their thirst for more will become stronger. In addition, other members, qualified in a specific field, could and should serve the body of Christ by their readiness to teach courses in their field (philosophy, education, counselling, and the like).

5. Up till now our churches seem not to be willing to follow the example of other, "evangelical," churches, which have their midweek meetings. We had them in Holland, as I remember from my youth. The minister taught (just what the lady wants) a course in Romans, or Job, or any other Bible book.

I wonder whether we can combine such courses with the existing societies, because these lines were not written to "kill" society life. But if readers, willy-nilly, must agree with the lady that twenty-five years of attending society meetings do not enable you "to pass an exam," for example, in the Canons of Dort and in the "Canonic" of the Old and New Testament, we should do something about it! Discuss it with your pastor. Challenge him to become your teacher, and alleviate his burden by taking over from him all kinds of activities that eat his time and thus prevent him from doing his primary task: next to preaching also teaching.

Some (re)organization of our congregational life in this direction is no luxury. It may be a must. Then in due time we may "know together precious much" for the edification of the church and the furthering of the kingdom of Christ.

G. VAN DOOREN

Our Reformed Response to the Secular Labour Unions

The following was extensively discussed at a Ministers' Conference in Calgary. Some minor points were added as a result of this discussion.

When introducing a subject such as the above, you will realize that one will then have to point to some official position taken by the Canadian Reformed Churches, otherwise the term "Our" is rather dubious and may only be a matter of suggestion, recommendation, or wishful thinking, or even no response at all. Due to the fact that there is no official synodical statement with regard to the above, one can only recommend a response with the hope that it will be adopted by the individual churches and/or its members.

The closest we can come to any unifying statement regarding secular unionism can be found in the first Year Book of our confederated churches (1952). In this Year Book Br. E.C. Baartman made a few statements which I believe are as valid today as in 1952. Having said that membership of a secular union and membership of Christ's church are incompatible, he stated:

I. The character of such a trade union is absolutely revolutionary and humanistic. God has no place in their midst. Their only objective is the welfare of sinful men. This welfare they endeavour to achieve without regard for God or His Word. As a means to achieve this goal they use strikes, boycotts, etc., which are against God's ordinances.

II. These trade unions are not only godless, but also anti-God. This may not necessarily appear in their constitutions, but becomes apparent via their practices. Should someone simply refuse to join as member due to his religion, he is ridiculed, insulted, and persecuted in the lowest manner thinkable.

III. History has proven that these trade unions use violence when their wishes are not met. We think of the destruction of implements and materials in their so-called sit-down strikes, and of their beatings, and worse, of people who do

not think the way they do. Sometimes respect for the authority which God has placed over us is hard to find, and even force is needed to break up the strikers.

IV. The promise or oath which is required of those who desire to join the trade union as member binds them without reservation to obey all the rules and decisions of the union. The following is taken from the constitution of one of these trade unions: "I agree without reservation to abide by all laws, rules, and discipline of the United Association and its local unions, that are now in force and may hereafter be enacted."

One must also promise to promote the welfare of fellow members above that of non-members. This speaks for itself, i.e., the trade union must be obeyed even above God's Word. A member must promise to enhance the welfare of the godless fellow members and fight against his brothers in Christ who for reasons of conscience refuse to be a member of the trade union. Can such a member of the Church of Christ sit together at the same Lord's Table with members who are not members of such a trade union?

V. Perhaps someone will say: "I am a member, but not an active one. I never attend the meetings and I do not vote, and therefore I am not responsible." In answer to this, consider the following:

a) Membership in an association entails a corporate responsibility in all the decisions and actions of the union.

b) Joining such a union means subscribing to a Constitution and Bylaws which are contrary to God's Word.

c) No one has the right to be a poor (unfaithful) member of whatever organization, especially not a Christian, for he must always be active whenever he is a member of something.

VI. The ultimate ideal of these trade unions is that no one should

have the opportunity to find employment unless they carry a union card, and that no one should be allowed to purchase anything unless it bears the label "union made." This is literally prophesied as the power of the antichrist, cf. Revelation 13. Where is the antichrist today? We do not doubt that we find them in these secular (worldly) trade unions.

VII. Strictly speaking, the present day (secular) "unionism" is a religion, but then a false one naturally. They are "United Brotherhoods" and the members address each other as brothers. What is a brotherhood? It is an association of likeminded people striving towards one goal. "Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?" Amos 3.3.

(The above is translated from the Dutch by SdB.)

THE FIRST OFFICIAL DECISION

It seems that the Church at Surrey (New Westminster) is the church which has the honour of being the first church to have made an official pronouncement regarding secular unionism. It can also be found in the 1952 Year Book, and, translated, it reads as follows:

I. Membership in a (secular) union requires unreserved obedience of the member to all laws, rules, and disciplines which are in effect today or which will be adopted at a later date. Such laws and rules are thus equated with God's Word. Only to the Word of God do we owe unreserved obedience. Consequently we confess with Article 7 of the Belgic Confession that we may not consider the writings of men of equal value with God's Word, since all men are of themselves liars and more vain than vanity itself. For that reason we may not in advance promise unreserved obedience to future laws and regulations, but we must maintain the apostolic rule: "Test the spirits whether they are from God."

Therefore it is not permitted for us to take upon ourselves the above mentioned requirements of the (secular) unions.

II. The (secular) unions strive for the goal that in all places of employment only the members of such unions be employed. This is

already the case in several places. This constitutes theft (*brood-roof*) and the removal or shoving aside of another from the place God has given him under the sun. It is a sin against the eighth and sixth commandments.

But we must continue to believe that, when the Lord forbids stealing, He requires of us that we further our neighbour's profit wherever we can or may, and that we deal with him as we would have others deal with us. Also, when the Lord forbids murder, He commands us to love our neighbour, to be merciful and friendly to him, and to prevent his hurt as much as possible. (See Lord's Days 42 and 40 of the Heidelberg Catechism.)

However, membership of a (secular) union makes it impossible for us to submit ourselves to these commandments of the Lord. Therefore, membership in the above makes one guilty of theft and murder.

(Freely translated by SdB.)

FIRST REAL STUDY MADE PUBLIC FOR THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

The late Rev. J. Van Popta has the honour of being the first Minister of the Word in the Confederation of the Canadian Reformed Churches to have made an extensive study of the union-membership question. In this study he quotes liberally from a number of union constitutions to prove his points. His conclusion, although far more extensive than the above, comes down to the same thing, i.e., that it is not pos-

sible to be a member of Christ and a member of a secular union. His study also appeared in the 1952 Year Book and is certainly worthy of careful study by those who desire more detailed ins and outs of some of the major secular unions in our country (see pages 73 to 84).

When one looks at the history of the Canadian Reformed Churches one may well conclude that our confederation seems to have been the strongest in its early years as far as a stand on the association with secular organizations is concerned. What happened since 1952? As stated before, no Canadian Reformed Synod has ever taken an official stand with regard to secular unionism. There have been problems in some of the churches regarding the matter of check-off, e.g., the Feenstra-Ouwensloot appeal to Synod 1954, but no decision could be made since the matter had been presented to Synod in too general a manner. However, we may be happy that this Synod did not make a decision at the time, for the matter of union membership and check-off was not all that well-understood at the time. It seems that most of our members equated union membership with the check-off.

Perhaps when looking back to our early period someone may ask: "Could we not have turned to the other churches or 'denominations' on this continent to see how they had dealt with this thorny issue?" Whether or not this was done is unknown to me, but even if this was done, it would not have been of much help. What follows in the next instalment will bear this out.

(To be continued.)

S. DE BRUIN

* * * * *

Western Ministerial Conference

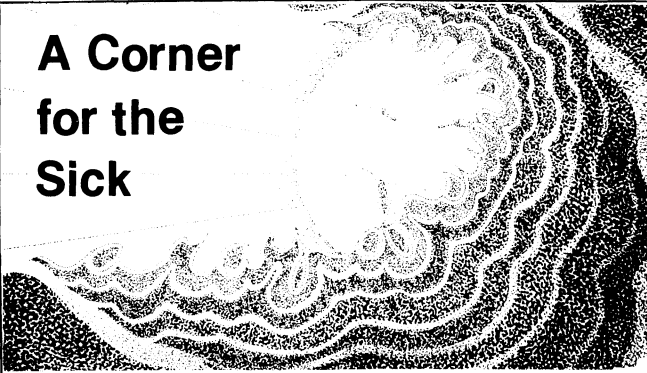
From the east, west, north, and south, the twelve ministers of the Churches located in the western provinces came together during the last week of May for the second annual Western Ministerial Conference. Being the most central, the city of Calgary was again chosen as the site for the conference.

On Tuesday evening, May 27, we all met together at the home of Rev. and Mrs. D. De Jong. There new ac-

quaintances could be made and old ones renewed. And from there we could be directed to our lodging places among families of the Calgary congregation.

The next morning, our convenor, Rev. J. Visscher, opened the conference with reading from Psalm 89.1-18 and prayer. After having welcomed all his colleagues, and once some initial business matters had been dealt with, he gave the floor to Rev. C. Van Dam.

A Corner for the Sick



O, my Lord, send, I pray, some other person.

Exodus 4:13

Sometimes we may feel the same way as Moses did when he was called by God to deliver the Israelites from the hands of their cruel oppressor, Pharaoh. We, too, like to walk away from tasks which seem too difficult for us, and we may find many excuses as to why we should NOT perform a certain task. Moses was afraid, and he found the excuse that he could not speak very well (a very suitable excuse). Even after the LORD gave him the ability to perform miracles and gave him the assurance that He would go with him as the great "I AM," Moses still dared to say, "Send someone else, please"! He is not the only one mentioned in the Scriptures who doubts himself and is afraid. Jonah went in the direction opposite of where he was sent, and Jeremiah thought he was too young to fulfill such a heavy task of prophesying to God's people. Let us read what the Lord spoke to Moses, in Exodus 4:11: "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be your mouth, and teach you what you shall speak."

"It is not the man who commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends," II Corinthians 10:18. Happy is the man who puts not his trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no help, but trusts in the Lord forever. The Lord will be his confidence and will guide him in all his ways.

We have received the following request:

MISS JENNY HANSMAN
19890 - 55A Avenue,
Langley, B.C.

"Jenny, a young lady in her early thirties, is now confined to her home most of the time, due to an illness she has. She immensely enjoys reading and would also greatly appreciate receiving a little mail."

We have also received a request from a brother in B.C. concerning two brothers in The Netherlands. I will quote his letter: "This summer from July 14th to August 5th, Jurrien Jongman is taking a friend, who is paralyzed from the waist down, on a tour of Canada. Hans, his friend, had a swimming accident two years ago, which left him severely handicapped physically; so this is a very special opportunity for him. They hope to drive through B.C. and Alberta, starting from Vancouver, B.C. They want to rent a car, preferably a station wagon or van, to make it easier for Hans. Is there anyone in the Vancouver area who has a vehicle not in use during that time, and who would be willing to spread some sunshine for a fellow pilgrim in this way?"

The address to which able and willing readers should write is as follows:

MR. J. JONGMAN
P. Potter Straat 124
9718 TN Groningen,
The Netherlands.

Please let us know if you had an enjoyable holiday in Canada, Jurrien and Hans.



The more you give, the more you get —
The more you laugh, the less you fret —
The more you do UNSELFISHLY,
The more you live ABUNDANTLY . . .

The more of everything you share,
The more you'll always have to spare —
The more you love, the more you'll find
That life is good and friends are kind . . .
For only WHAT WE GIVE AWAY,
ENRICHES US FROM DAY TO DAY.

By: Helen Steiner-Rice

Send your requests to:

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



Rev. Van Dam, speaking about "The Place and Function of the Urim and Thummim," gave us a summary of his extensive master's thesis. The Urim and Thummim, unique in the ancient world and unknown in other religions, were apparently located in the pouch of the breast-piece of the high priest of Israel. The high priest could make use of them in order to enquire of Yahweh on behalf of Israel's leaders concerning matters of national significance about which Yahweh had not already made His will known. It seems probable that the high priest gave an oracle in order to instruct the leaders, and, if the Urim and Thummim stones glowed or lit up, then the leaders were certain that the prophetic oracle came from Yahweh. After having examined various other aspects and numerous Old Testament references to the Urim and Thummim, there was opportunity for questions and discussion.

Shortly before noon, all the ministers boarded a spacious van and were transported to a restaurant, where an excellent dinner was served.

Upon returning, the Rev. J. Van Rietschoten introduced his topic: "The New Testament Text: a Historical Review regarding the Current Debate." Entering into a very complex field in New Testament studies, he outlined the different viewpoints presently held regarding the various text-types, and showed how different scholars have made claims of certainty about matters which are basically quite uncertain. By delving into the historical data, he tried to illustrate that there is not that much ground for treating the Byzantine text-type as late and inferior. Different aspects of the debate were examined in the discussion, as well as the implications of this for Bible translation.

After prayer and thanksgiving, we returned to the home of Rev. De Jong. There his wife had prepared supper for all of us. In the evening we had a "General Question Period" in which many pertinent matters of a general nature could be freely discussed.

On Thursday morning, Rev. M. VanderWel opened with reading from Ephesians 6 and prayer. Then Rev. S. De Bruin spoke on "Unionism." Previously he had mailed to each of us some articles which he wrote on this subject and now took the opportunity to enlighten some aspects. The history of the Canadian Reformed Churches' stand concerning unions was traced, and the standpoint of the Christian Re-

Circumspection...

"BLESS THIS HOUSE"

Recently major networks and newspapers carried a very juicy item: Anita Bryant, former beauty-queen, singer, evangelist, and active campaigner against gay rights, filed for DIVORCE from her husband of twenty years, former disc-jockey Bob Green. The reason? Bob and Anita had set up a Christian talent agency called "Fishers of Men Opportunities Inc.," and, as Bryant claimed, her husband had violated her very conscience by cooperating with certain staff members to trade on her reputation for personal gain.

Because of her vigorous anti-gay campaigns, Anita Bryant has many enemies, and these will undoubtedly join with other liberal, feminist groups in heaping scorn upon her: how have the mighty fallen! The cause of marital fidelity and the Christian Family in America seems to have been dealt another blow.

In the past (CLARION, Vol. 26, page 325) I have criticized the manner in which Bryant conducted her famous campaign against gay rights, although agreeing with its purpose and scope, and that is why I find this marital breakdown especially tragic.

Anita and Bob Green-Bryant co-authored various books and cooperated in extensive evangelical campaigns to promote the cause of Christian marriage and family living. The heading above this CIRCUMSPECTION is the title of one of these books, BLESS THIS HOUSE, published in 1972. Other books written by Anita Bryant also deal with religious themes and Christian living, MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY and AMAZING GRACE, in which Anita also traces her path to Christ and her conversion from a secular singer to a Christian entertainer.

The content of these books is certainly not Reformed, but rather Arminian and Methodist, typical of American evangelicalism. There is the usual stress on man's will and effort, while episodes are related in which God is constantly "showing and telling" things, indeed not the kind of material which would flow out of a Reformed pen.

Nevertheless, especially BLESS THIS HOUSE contains many worthwhile elements with which we can undoubtedly agree. The book intends to show that marriage and family are not outmoded institutions or old-fashioned forms but are God's gift and calling to man which must be received in obedience to Him and can be enjoyed only under His blessing. The book is a solid appeal that Christians enhance their marriages and family life by "going back to the Bible" and engaging in spiritual renewal.

Anita Bryant has written, "We're not experts on marriage and family life. Our home is not perfect. We don't have all the answers. But the Bible does! For the sake of ourselves, our children and our nation, we've got to return to the Bible. A big problem with so-called Christians today is that they continually compromise in little ways — until their faith is watered down — with no real power — no power with the children — no discipline — and this is what's wrong with America" (page 19). Certainly these words contain undeniable truth.

Bob and Anita have put correct emphasis on a number of important points. They have claimed that the greatest gift in marriage is "not sex, but LOVE," the only context in which sexuality can truly function. They point out that sexual disharmony (a common diffi-

culty?) usually indicates deeper-lying problems of communication. Anita has stressed that a mother's greatest responsibility is towards her children, whose upbringing may not be left to nurseries and day-care centres. This couple has stated everywhere that all worship begins in the home on a daily basis and that this worship must be shared in a Bible-true church. They have said that Christian couples should entertain close friendships only with fellow-believers. They have protested against the "changing roles" of men and women in today's society and have promoted the Biblical truth that the man is to be the head of the woman. They have unceasingly battled the promiscuity and homo-sexuality of our times with boldness and upheld the sanctity of marriage.

These things — and more — you can find in the book, *BLESS THIS HOUSE*. Which Christian would not be grateful for such testimonies? It is clear, *DIVORCE* should not exist in this league, especially not for the reason given. That is why the news item is all the more shocking and tragic. It must sadden us that those who have helped so many others with solid advice cannot seem now to overcome their own differences.

Perhaps the Bryant-Green marriage itself became too much of a model and symbol, and, although showing outward lustre, began to lack inward depth. This marriage was built up too much as a "testimony that the Christian family is alive and well." Perhaps unwittingly the emphasis came to lie on the human performance of the two celebrities and not on the blessing of God. The impending divorce does reveal a growing rift between two talented, strongly-differing personalities. It becomes clear that even Anita Bryant — symbol of American motherhood and purity — could not mix a high-profile career with a full-time task as homemaker. Ultimately we might even say that the evangelical glitter and shine type of Christianity of Anita Bryant and others does not give the basis it pretends



"Bob Green and Anita Bryant."

to give. Let us, however, be careful with our analysis and judgment.

Nevertheless, we will not gloat like many others and join the ranks of the scoffers. David did not gloat either but mourned when he heard of Saul's downfall, "How are the mighty fallen!" Remembering the Lord's own warning (that he who thinks to stand, see to it that he does not fall), let us work hard at preserving our own marriages and families.

Work and pray. Pray unceasingly for the blessing of the Lord. "No enterprise can have success unless the LORD decides to bless," Psalm 127:1, *BOOK OF PRAISE*. And the blessing is received only in the way of obedience to His covenant word of redemption and sanctification.

Indeed, LORD, bless our marriages and families, that we may have true Christian homes. Bless this house, and in doing so, build Thy Church.

Cid.

formed Church was summarized. The point was made that not only is membership in most secular trade unions incompatible with a believer's allegiance to Christ, but it is also questionable whether a Christian should join up with many other associations, such as businessmen's associations or even recreational associations. The question is: what are we signing or expressing agreement with? Does that conflict with the truth of the Word of God, or does it hamper us in living according to that Word? In the discussion, which continued into the afternoon, the position that the Church should take towards these matters was further examined and an attempt was made to see the problem in the wider context of a capitalistic society. We decided to continue the discussion next year by having someone speak about the position of the early Christian Church towards the guilds and the secular world as a whole.

At 2:30 p.m. the discussion was ended. Some business was dealt with. The costs of the conference were calculated and paid. It was decided to hold the next conference on May 27 and 28, 1981, D.V. There Rev. D. De Jong hopes to speak about "The Place of the Christian in Society in the Early Christian Church," Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar about "Divorce," and Rev. J. Visscher about "Catechism Teaching." After Rev. D. Vander Boom led in thanksgiving, the convenor closed the conference, and everyone took up the journey homewards.

This report is, of course, only meant to give you an impression of that which was discussed at our two-day conference; from it you will hopefully feel that we had some very enjoyable, profitable, and educational days together. Especially in the West, where distances between Churches and ministers are quite great, it is beneficial that something of the unity that we have together be felt and strengthened also in this way.

G.H. VISSCHER

Church News

DECLINED the call by the Free Reformed Church at Albany, Australia:

REV. J. VANRIETSCHOTEN

of Carman, Manitoba.

CALLED by the Church at Edmonton, Alberta, as minister for Edmonton East:

REV. J. GEERTSEMA

of Chatham, Ontario.

press review

MOVIES AND MATURITY III

In the previous article I promised to tell more from the chapter about "Movies and Theater" in P. Jongeling's book *Woord en Wandel (Word and Walk)*, because of the striking parallel between what happened in the (Synodical) Reformed Churches some twenty-five years ago and what is happening in the Christian Reformed Churches on the North American continent today. I shall give a number of quotations. The reader may remember that the editor of *The Banner* mentioned a pronouncement of Synod 1966 of the Christian Reformed Church as basis for what he wrote and what the Periodicals Committee had decided. Already on the first page of the chapter about the movies Jongeling writes: "The General Synod of the (synodically) bound Reformed churches appointed deputies to study the matter of the movies; they have come with a report." And: "The theater problem is especially a youth problem."¹⁹ After this the author first gives a short history about movies and the movie theater in which he states that the driving power behind making and showing movies is the desire to earn (lots of) money, and that the theater has become an enormous power. (The book was written already in 1958!) He then points to the morally destructive power of the movies especially on the youth, which is shown not only by Christian believers but just as much by non-Christian people.

We then read how the breakthrough of movie attendance by people of the Reformed persuasion came after the Second World War, when people wanted to see the documentary war movies, and in that way learned to go to the theater. That is, according to Jongeling, how Dr. R. Schippers states it in his book *De Gereformeerde Zede (Reformed Morals)*. Dr. Schippers also writes that in that way the youth discovered that "there were also good movies, which they were not told before." Jongeling reacts: "We are of the opinion that Dr. Schippers does injustice to the former contenders of the evil of the movie theater. They did not

deny that sometimes an innocent, or (one could say) good movie is shown But those opponents have said: 1) Such good movies (good according to the norms of God's Word) are very rare. 2) With such a movie there is always an additional one, usually with piquant, sensually exciting contents. 3) We must not go to places where the realm of the devil is promoted almost every day; we must not spend our money there; we must not get used to visiting these palaces of false glitter and dangerous charm.

"And those who spoke and warned this way were right. More right than those who first *in abstracto* acknowledge the objections against movie and theater and thus seem to close the theater door, in order to open that door again with a reasoning about 'separating the good from the bad,' which is in conflict with reality.

"This is how Dr. Schippers does it on pages 171-175 of his above-mentioned book. And we cannot get away from the strong impression that this new attitude regarding the theater is at least partly caused by defeatism, by the conviction: we cannot maintain this frontier position any longer anyway; the break-through is there. For Dr. Schippers *first* writes:

"'Especially the youth is fascinated by the language of the movie; and if there are so many dangers connected with it, should we, then, not give something better to these young people than a prohibition on grounds which are not all and not always solid; do we, then, not do better to teach them to understand the language of the movies and to help them in separating the good from the bad?' "

Br. Jongeling calls this a capitulation, which Dr. Schippers, says he, will deny. For Dr. Schippers writes: "To fit in good entertainment, also good theater attendance, in the whole of many lives, that is a task for our style-consciousness, for our Christian style-consciousness. Good customs must yet be formed. The mere "no" has been heard here too long and too emphatically. Those who are Reformed have some-

thing more to say; something that does more justice, and is therefore sharper; something that is also more beneficial and therefore more edifying. And only when they also in this find positive morals, can they be a blessing for our nation in this respect."

Jongeling reacts to this by saying: "Beautiful words. But words. We do *not* believe *anything* of the statement that 'Reformed people' can be a blessing for our nation when they go to the movie theater."²⁰

Dr. Schippers, in his book, was not the only one. Jongeling also writes: "In the year 1948 twenty-three Protestant Christians, among whom some professors of the Free University: Berkhouwer, Dooyeweerd, Hellema, and Waterink, issued a declaration in which they said that 'more than half of the members of the Protestant churches in Amsterdam go to the theater.' " The twenty (-three) wrote further: "They are convinced that more leadership is needed and a positive pronouncement regarding the theater and movies is necessary; and that dealing with this problem — even though with the best intentions — in a generalizing and negative way has caused a loss of confidence from the side of the youth. Going to the theater increased very much in Christian circles. But everyone sails by his own compass here, which does not always show the good direction."

Jongeling then tells us that these twenty-three want a strong control of movies and of the places where they are shown, with enlightened criticism. But he concludes that in this way the door of the theater is officially opened for Christians, even though not to its full width.

He also writes that Christian daily newspapers in those days started to give movie reviews, "whereby the norm of the Word of God was not used." There was, for instance, *Trouw*: "In November/December 1956 quite a discussion was held in *Trouw* about the question whether this daily paper had to start giving guidance regarding movies shown in the theater The opinions about this question were quite opposed to each other. But one thing appeared to be very clear from the discussion: the movie theater had gained a firm foothold with the Christian public. A break-through had taken place here, which was increasing more and more.

"Besides, the one who gives movie reviews accepts the theater, and to a certain extent propagates it."²¹

We also read that not all in the (Synodical) Reformed Churches agreed. There was Dr. J. Schelhaas Hzn. who wrote in *Vaarheid and Eenheid* his complaint that there was "no longer the willingness to make sacrifices for the service of the Lord," but that there was "the hankering after worldly entertainment in those circles which still do not want to lose the name Reformed." The argument is that people "want to enjoy life." And he mentions the theater, and that one must see movies in order not to be an odd-ball. Dr. Schelhaas writes: "The service of the Lord in heart and life is in great danger. Slowly but surely it has become this way with many, I fear: on Saturday evenings to the theater, and on Sunday mornings — at least if they wake up in time — to church. It is not certain any longer who wins here. When the heart lives in the world and the body sits in church, one makes oneself more and more insensitive to the preaching of the gospel.

"What is a person still willing to sacrifice? Before, the world knew: those who attended an orthodox church, did not go to the movie theater. But that rule does not exist any longer. Now the world has to know very well that we are not old-fashioned, not so narrow-minded, not so provincial, not so backward, that we do not go to the movie theater. This has to be known especially. For any insult for the sake of Christendom has to be avoided. For we have become broad, progressive, cultural. We still do have a good word for the previous generation because of their firm stand, but in our heart we are sorry about their restrictiveness and narrow-mindedness.

"Would you believe that in this way the church is being broken down in a most powerful manner? When it is that far that the world must not think at all that we stay away from worldly places because going to church is not compatible with it, then we have opened the floodgates for worldly thoughts, attitudes, and behaviour; and then, unless God forbids, true godliness is destroyed."²²

And I whole-heartedly agree, as Jongeling does, with these words.

* * *

After all this I now come to the *Derived Guidelines* in the editorial in *The Banner*, as promised. These Guidelines are:

1. It is both appropriate and desirable that *The Banner* publish film reviews by competent Christian critics.

2. Since not all films can possibly be reviewed, those selected should be culturally significant and hold interest for a considerable portion of *Banner* readers.

3. Reviewers must draw upon their critically sharpened faculties to increase the Christian's appreciation of the film arts, thus extending Christ's dominion over this aspect of modern culture.

4. Reviews should comport with the basic principles enunciated above, and should enable the Christian viewer better to discriminate between films compatible with Christianity and those not so compatible, to judge between integrity or its lack, and to perceive good workmanship as distinguished from the shoddy and cheap.

5. The goal which reviews should seek to attain is not to insulate the Christian community from worldly culture but to develop the capacity to deal with it maturely and creatively.

At the end a *Prudential Observation* follows yet. Here it is:

Recognizing that movie-reviewing is as yet a new thing among us, the reviewer is to bear in mind that: a) offense can often be avoided by prudent choice of words; b) the average viewer will be more sensitive to a film's real or apparent moral stance than to its technical quality; c) the average reader's deepest concern is likely to be the film's impact upon the moral behaviour of himself and/or his children.

After all that is written above, a few remarks should suffice now.

Ad 1) In the light of the history of the theater in the days of the early church: the strong opposition of councils and church fathers against this worldly form of amusement and entertainment, and further in the light of the recent history of the (Synodical) Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, it is not at all desirable, let alone appropriate, that the worldly, mostly ungodly, movies be reviewed and herewith accepted for and by Christians. The inclusion of movie reviews some twenty-five years ago in the Dutch "Christian" press was *one* of the signs of the apostasy of the churches and it promoted further apostasy. It is very remarkable that in the same years the matter of the doctrine of the Canons of Dort came up, whereby the Reformed doctrine of election and reprobation as confessed in the Canons was attacked and deviation allowed. It was at the same time that a different (un-Reformed) interpretation of the Bible, the liberal one denying the inerrancy of Scripture, was brought in and more and more accept-

ed. And these are things which at the moment are also hot issues in the Christian Reformed Church. And to what did it all lead the (Synodical) Reformed Churches? To greater and greater apostasy!!

Ad 2) About that "culturally significant" movie I would like to quote the very last lines of K. Schilder's *Christ and Culture*: "Our cultural task in following Jesus Christ is indeed an 'endless task.' Blessed is my *wise* ward-elder who does his home visiting in the right way. He is a *cultural* force, although he may not be aware of it. Let them mock him: they do not know what they are doing, those cultural gadabouts of the other side!"²³

Indeed, that simple Reformed ward-elder, who warns strongly against going to the movie theater, fighting to keep body and soul of the youth of the church holy for the Lord, is a truly cultural force. And those who give in to this evil and accept it break down Christian morals. They allow the world to enter and conquer the church.

I do not deny that there are products of modern culture that are significant, and that can be used and appreciated in a right way. But there are cultural, even culturally significant products against which Christians must speak a clear "no," because they are so completely in the hands of the ungodly, *anti-Christian* world. So is, e.g., the movie theater. Movies can be culturally significant according to worldly measures, but at the same time breaking down all true, godly, upbuilding culture. Must not a Christian always maintain and go by God's commandments? Must he not say "no" to all sin and hate it and flee from it because God hates it, and because he is God's child?

In the next and final instalment I will continue with my comments and come to a conclusion.

J. GEERTSEMA

(To be continued.)

Notes:

¹⁹ P. Jongeling, *Woord en Wandel*, page 85.

²⁰ *Ibid*, pages 115-117.

²¹ *Ibid*, pages 118-122.

²² *Ibid*, page 121.

²³ K. Schilder, *Christ and Culture*, Premier Publishing, Winnipeg, 1977, page 86.

OUR COVER

Manitoba Wildlife. (Photo courtesy Manitoba Government, Department of Tourism.)

Letters-to-the-Editor

Dear Editor:

Where are we going?

Would you please allow me to make a few remarks and to raise a question or two about the quotation you took from an article of Rev. Wielenga in Coaldale's Church Bulletin in your "News Medley" of *Clarion*, issue May 3?

According to Rev. Wielenga, if the burden to have our own school is becoming too heavy, we may only appeal to the mercy of the other brothers (who do not yet work along) to assist us, in what we sincerely see as *our* duty and calling. That makes for unity in the Church.

So, we may *not* say: "This the Lord asks of us and of you too brother!"

Did we not promise — to instruct our children to the *utmost* of our ability? The Lord demands this of us and therefore the Lord makes it possible for us.

But we may not say that? Only plead on their mercy; please help and support us brother, for it is such a heavy burden for us?

Why should they not say to us: "What are you taking such a heavy burden on your shoulders for, if it is not necessary?"

And, if it is necessary, is it not necessary for the Lord's sake and His Covenant which He has made with us and our children?

Do you agree with this, dear Editor? Do not forget that the article of Rev. Wielenga was not written in the first place with respect to our young people!

Some time ago you wrote in the *Clarion* about Calgary's congregation: "I hope that you too may soon have your *own* school."

But if it is not that the Lord requires it of us and that we promised it, why should we plead upon the mercy of the other brother? Why not have a good parental school as they have in Calgary? Why take such a heavy burden upon our shoulders?

And dear Editor, must we not say to our older children, "This is also what the Lord asks of you and requires of you: to support your parents and the *Reformed* school?"

Is that a hard, harsh, word?

And does this text then apply here: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger?"

And was it not you, dear Editor, who also wrote in an article: "The reformation of the Church always brings about the reformation of the school?"

Dear Editor, I think it rather sad that our shepherds, instead of stimulating the office of all believers to institute Reformed, parental schools, bring it down to a matter of personal preference whereby we have to call upon the mercy of others in order to obtain Reformed education for our children in school.

Dear Editor, if I did not see it as a necessity for the sake of the Name and the Glory and Honour of our God and for our children, I would say: "Don't take that heavy burden on your shoulders." But if the Lord gives us the possibilities (*Reformed* schools with *Reformed* teachers) it would be a matter of life or death for us and our children.

Therefore, never complain about the heaviness of the financial "burden," for we bear *each other's* burdens — for Christ's sake.

E. WIERENGA

COMMENT

Let's keep the record straight.

1. I have been pondering whether it would be fair towards Rev. Wielenga to publish this Letter-to-the-Editor. What is the situation?

a. Rev. Wielenga wrote a little article in the Coaldale bulletin;

b. I was so bold as to quote from it;

c. Strictly speaking, only such letters should be accepted for *Clarion* which object to *my quoting* that piece, not such as criticize what the *Rev. Wielenga wrote*.

For that reason brother Wierenga's letter should be declared out of order in our magazine.

2. Yet we publish it in order to take away some misunderstanding which appears to exist with this brother.

3. We have not submitted this letter to the Rev. W. for his comments. There is no reason why he should become involved.

4. Having re-read the quotation which brother Wierenga attacks, I come to the following conclusions.

a. Rev. W. clearly spoke of what "the members for themselves see as their duty and calling";

b. Rev. W. stated that what the members for themselves sincerely see as their duty and calling is not (thereby) a duty and calling of *all* members of the congregation, whether young or old, whether married or single; nor may it be presented to all members as being their duty and calling even though they have no children at school;

c. We are not to go beyond that by which we have bound each other in our Confession;

d. What the Lord asks of the one (i.e. parents with school-age children) the Lord not necessarily asks of the other (e.g. single members of His Church);

e. When the burden is getting too heavy, the way to engage the other members is *not* to claim that it is their God-given duty to support the *school* (that is only the parents' duty), but to appeal to the bond of the communion of saints to get them to support *their brothers and sisters*.

That's how I understand Rev. W.'s words, with which I implicitly expressed my agreement.

We should not put anything else into those words nor, by way of rhetorical questions, impose conclusions on them which their author will not acknowledge as being his own.

vO

Dear Editor,

In *Clarion* of May 3, 1980 you placed a translation of an article of the Rev. H. Bouma, titled "Eutychus, a Warning for Young and Old!"

Eutychus is a young man of which we can read in Acts 20:7-12. Rev. H. Bouma, in his article writes of Eutychus as one who thought of Paul as a disappointing speaker, as some of the Corinthians did (II Cor. 10:10). He writes, "Eutychus, too, did not care much for Paul's sermon. Besides, the apostle went on and on, till midnight. It took far too long for Eutychus. He couldn't keep his mind on it, and so it was that he finally drifted off to sleep."

I do not quite understand how the Rev. Bouma arrived at that conclusion. I found little to support that view. Luke, the author of the book of Acts was probably present at this occasion (see verse 13 "we"). Luke, who is a medical doctor, seems to point into a different direction.

The apostle Paul, at the end of a seven-day stay with this congregation, speaks to them on the last evening before he continues to Jerusalem. He has

reason to think that this is the last time he can be in their midst and, understandably, prolongs his message till midnight. It would be quite normal that at that time the people would get sleepy; isn't that how the Lord has made us?

Luke goes on that there are many (!) lamps in the room. Why would he mention that? I am assuming that these are oil lamps, which do not just supply them with light but also produce a fair amount of heat. Further, these many lamps need their share of oxygen in order to burn. If many lamps are needed, there would likely be many people, each needing his share of oxygen.

I picture Eutychus taking a seat in the window sill for some fresh air, the breeze would likely blow inland from the sea, the time being late April (12 days after the feast of the unleavened bread); the cool breeze was not cool enough to keep him awake. He did not try to sleep, he was *overcome* by sleep, Luke relates. He would not have chosen a window opening three stories high if he thought he might fall asleep.

In verse 12 Luke remarks that the people were greatly comforted on account of the boy being alive again. Why? Could it be that in this way this congregation would have a constant reminder of God's power and mercy every time they would see and hear Eutychus? In my opinion the point Rev. H. Bouma was making was good, but he took the wrong text.

JOHN VANBODEGOM

Dear Editor,

Concerning the remarks of the author of News Medley of May 3, 1980 regarding the Yearbook, I would like to point out the following *facts*.

1. Contrary to what Rev. VanOene may think, I am indeed very well aware of the fact that the publisher of the Yearbook sends a letter to the consistories every year asking for information. I am so aware of it that I always make personally sure that our clerk sends only *correct* information. I was not, as Rev. seems to think, complaining about wrong information about *our* congregation.

2. However, there were (and still are) several obvious errors that should be eliminated in order to make the Yearbook reliable. As it now stands, it is not! That is why I took the trouble to send a copy of the bulletin in which I had listed the mistakes to three people. Rev. VanOene seems to know exactly

who is responsible for what, but I did not. But I hoped, in my ignorance, that at least somebody would catch on and make sure that those errors would be eliminated.

3. I sent a copy to the publisher, the editor (of the Yearbook) and to Rev. VanOene.

4. Rev. VanOene did not react. Strange! The News Medley editor claims that he receives all bulletins and that he even *reads* them all. Apparently he is overestimating himself. He apparently did *not* read that particular bulletin. The result is that he now misinterprets what I wrote recently. Perhaps he should put his own hand into his own bosom and wipe the butter off his own head.

4. Rev. VanOene uses strong language when he accuses me of *blasting* the publisher or the editor. For blasting usually dynamite is used in order to

blow things up. This is not the first time he publicly accuses me of blasting. Why do a person's intentions immediately have to be interpreted that way? I wrote last year: "But we should take care that our official publications should be as correct as possible." My aim was not to blast, but to have the *best* Yearbook available.

Rev. VanOene would have done the churches a better service if he had published that list of errors (one of them he himself published in News Medley of April 5, 1980) in his News Medley. He has, by now, quite some experience in pointing out other people's mistakes. Now his criticism returns on his own head. I agree with him when he says: "We are to be careful when writing and first to ponder whether we indeed do have a case where such criticism is justified."

M. WERKMAN



Books

It is about time that we have another chat on books. Some books which we received for reviewing purposes have been discussed; others are with competent persons who will give us their judgment in due time. Let me give you a brief opinion on some books we received and on others I purchased, so that the interest in good publications may be kept alive.

First of all: I have here in front of me four books which were published to "celebrate." Three were published on the occasion of the 35th "anniversary" of the Liberation of 1944; publication of the fourth one was occasioned by the 125th anniversary of the Theologische Hogeschool of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands.

Let me start with the last one. Its title is *De Biddende Kerk (The Praying Church)*. Dr. C. Trimp is the editor; other contributors are members of the Faculty of the Theologische Hogeschool: Dr. L. Doekes, Dr. J. Douma, Prof. J. Kamphuis, Drs. J.A. Meijer, Drs. H.J. Schilder.

The subtitle tells us that it is "a collection of studies on prayer, presented on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the Theologische Hogeschool at Kampen."

Let me say that the authors have enriched us with a valuable book on prayer. The various chapters show variety in unity and unity in variety. There is a chapter on "Abba, Father," one on "Prayer in the Reformed dogmatics after Calvin," one on "Prayer and Ascetics," one on "Israel's Salvation and Hannah's Prayer," one on "Tertullian on prayer." There is a chapter on "Sacrificium Laudis" (sacrifice of praise), and on "Prayer and excommunication in the Church Order."

This hard cover, 238-page book was published by "De Vuurbaak" in Groningen and is available for the sum of Fl. 27.50, some \$16.00, I presume.

I shall not yield to the temptation to go into the contents of this book but leave it up to you to read for yourselves. I am sure that you'll treasure this volume.

And now about the other three books I mentioned above.

Het Vuur Blijft Branden (The Fire Keeps Burning) is an illustrated "history" of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands during the last, approximately, sixty years. Many of the photographs bring back memories of sad and

happy times, of days of tension and relaxation, of moments of joy and periods of grief. We surely notice that time has gone on: whole rows of brothers and sisters we see on the pictures are already with the Lord. Our older readers will recognize many a familiar face, perhaps even discover themselves among the many who can be recognized.

I cannot admire the way in which the pictures have been arranged in this work. Several pages are very disorderly and the text is cut up far too much by pictures spread over the page.

As for the contents — it is difficult to describe thirty-five and more years of history in less than 200 pages of which, I estimate, almost half is taken up by pictures. Such limited space cannot but have an undesirable influence on the contents. That is indeed the case. Another drawback is that three different authors have cooperated in composing this book, of whom two actually wrote the “historical” part.

The first two parts are intended to be a description of the history of the Liberated Churches since 1920. A total of 102 pages (including the pictures) are dedicated to that. Therefore it cannot be taken ill of the authors that they have not succeeded in giving such a description that the intent has been achieved. The reader who has no additional material at his disposal, after having read this book, will have a vague idea what it was all about but — I’m afraid — will not have a comprehensive understanding of the issues and of the whole course of events with their contributing factors. One who has gone through most of the years covered by this book and who has taken an active part in various actions and activities, one who was a *living* and *active* member will be able to fill in the gaps and will thus benefit from it, but it gives too little in order to be qualified as a real description of the history of the Reformed Churches before and after the Liberation.

The third part is of a more contemplative and apologetic nature. What Prof. Douma writes in that third part has drawn the fire of some, as readers of *De Reformatie* will know.

Do not think that I don’t appreciate the present book; but I had to give an honest evaluation: It is a valuable and interesting contribution to our knowledge of the history of the Liberated Churches, but cannot qualify as a thorough and clear, documented description of that history.

Two smaller booklets were published at the same time as the above volume.

The one is called *Vrijgemaakt en toch Gebonden (Liberated and Yet Bound)* and is characterized as “an ‘Open Letter’ to our young people.” Mr. H.R. Munneke is the author and he tells the story of the Liberation in a language which is simple and clear. He primarily addresses teenagers, students of secondary schools.

The other booklet is called *Vrijgemaakt — Waarom Eigenlijk? (Liberated — Why?)*. It was also written by Mr. Munneke in cooperation with Mr. Niek van Noort. It is more for children of elementary school age and will “speak” to them.

It was a good idea, besides a book for the older ones, also to publish one or two for the younger generation, for younger and older children. Hopefully they will also read them and be helped by them in their struggle to continue in “the faith of our fathers.”

Now we return to the American continent.

A long time ago someone asked me what I thought of *On Your Way Rejoicing* by Louis M. Tamminga. It is a book with meditations for every day of the year.

We have been using it every day since the beginning of the year and I must say that oftentimes we were on the verge of discontinuing our reading and going back to *Lasting Food* or *Daylight*. Two things kept us from doing that: the oftentimes substantial Scripture reading indicated and the hope that “next day will be better.” Sometimes the “next day” was better.

What we have found is an astounding lack of exegesis and a superficiality which amazes us. Only occasionally did we find a piece that deals properly with the text mentioned in the heading. Mostly one gets a moralistic lesson which uses the text mentioned only as a stepping-stone, not as a basis. The author oftentimes “meditates” more on a quotation from a well-known or lesser-known writer than on the text for the day.

I’m sorry, but I cannot recommend the book.

A book that I can recommend wholeheartedly is Dr. William Hendriksen’s *Commentary on Luke*. That — to my knowledge — is the latest volume to appear in the Hendriksen series of *New Testament Commentaries*. It comes from Baker Book House, and

is a welcome addition to the series. Here is a commentary one can trust, which can be used also by those who know no Greek, and which our societies will do well to purchase.

It is my sincere wish that the Lord enable Dr. Hendriksen to complete this series and that, to that end, the author may remain “fresh and green,” as Psalm 92 has it.

Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones is a prolific writer. Baker Book House published his *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ, An Exposition of Ephesians 3:1-21* (\$9.95).

Dr. Jones tells us that “each chapter of this book records a sermon preached by me on a Sunday morning during my regular ministry in Westminster Chapel, London, during the year 1956.” A total of twenty-four chapters makes a total of twenty-four sermons.

The present volume is not the first one on Paul’s letter to the Ephesians; it is the sixth one and is just as beneficial to the reader as the other volumes.

The “Christian Library Press,” Box 2226, Grand Rapids, MI, 49501, published *The Elders Handbook, A Practical Guide for Church Leaders*. It has been written by Gerard Berghoef and Lester DeKoster. The price is \$12.95 (U.S.).

Although this work does contain some good parts and helpful hints, I cannot recommend it. It has too much the character of a “Do It Yourself” book. I’ve heard it being very irreverently referred to as a “Cookbook for Elders.” That may be a little too harsh, but in my opinion the work is too pragmatic to be a guide for our elders to teach them the nature and character of their office and to help them execute that office for the edification of the saints.

Thus far for this time our chat on Books.

If any among our readers should like to know more about books which have been published or are advertised, they will be most welcome to write us about their desire. We’ll contact the person who may be considered to be well-acquainted with the work or with the material contained in it and request him or her to give an opinion on the work.

vO

our little magazine

Hello Busy Beavers!

Summer's just around the corner!
 You're really looking forward to those holidays, I know!
 All these months you worked hard in school, right?
 Well then, now the holidays are coming.
 Are you having a party the last day of school?
 That's something to look forward to!
 And then what will you do?
 Do you have lots of plans for the summer?
 Maybe your Dad or Mom has plans for you for the summer!
 You're all more grown up than last year, right?
 That means you're able to do more, too.
 What do you think?
 Will you have chores in the house and maybe in the garden?
 Maybe some of you will have chores in the barn or in your Dad's shop!
 Of course you'll have time for reading and hobbies, too.
 I hope you'll all have fun looking forward to your holidays.
 And I hope you'll all have fun making plans, too!

WRITE-IN

Busy Beavers, let's have a "write-in" about:

BEING A GOOD SPORT

You'll all be playing baseball (and other games, too, of course) now, and then it's important to be a *good sport*. Isn't that right?

Why is that so important? How can you be a good sport?

Send your letter or postcard to:

Aunt Betty
 Box 54, Fergus, Ontario N1M 2W7.

A Story for You by Busy Beaver *Irene De Jong*.

Today we had music at school. The teacher asked us to make our own instrument, so we could form a band. I made one already. I put some rocks, dry rice, and dry macaroni in a box. Next, I tied two big nails together, which I tied on the box. When you hit it with a stick it makes a noise like a drum, a rattle, and a bell at the same time. What an invention!



From the Mailbox

You are welcome to join the Busy Beaver Club, *Brenda De Boer*. I see you are a real Busy Beaver already, sending

us riddles and a quiz too! Thank you very much. I know the Busy Beavers will enjoy them. Bye for now. Write again soon.

A big welcome to you, too, *Geoffrey Hoogstra*. We hope you'll enjoy being a Busy Beaver and joining in all our Busy Beaver activities. Thank you very much for the picture, *Geoffrey*. Was that you walking your dog?

Hello *Jolette Moeliker*. It was nice to hear from you again. Did you have more success with your tape later on? Is your fort dry again? And has your dog brought home any new animals? Thanks to you all for your contribution to the Birthday Fund, *Jolette*. Keep up the good work!

Good idea you have, *Cathy Van Delden*, playing the organ every day! Thank you for the riddles and the poem, *Cathy*. The Busy Beavers will like them, I know. Are you looking forward to the summer holidays?

Congratulations on your baby brother *Marcia Veldman*. Do you enjoy helping to look after him? And how did you like your school trip to Holland? I hope you get your pen pal, *Marcia*!

Busy Beaver *Marcia Veldman* would like to have a pen pal. If you would like to exchange letters with her, here is the address:

Marcia Veldman
 858 Aleda Court S.E.,
 Grand Rapids, Michigan 49508, U.S.A.

Are You Thinking?

Riddles from Busy Beaver *Lorinda Barendregt* and *Wayne Breukelman*.

1. What is gray and has four legs and a trunk?
2. What is round and purple and hums?
3. What does a duck do when it flies upside down?
4. What is black and white and red all over?
5. What odd number is even without the "s"?
6. Why does a hen lay eggs?
7. Why is the number 9 like a peacock?

Answers: 1. a mouse on vacation; 2. an electric grape; 3. It breaks if she dropped them; 4. a sunburned zebra; 5. seven; 6. They would quacks up; 7. Without its tail it's nothing.

QUIZ TIME

By Busy Beaver *Annette Van Anandel*

Code Quiz

5	G	48	H	32	L
7	A	14	F	51	S
13	B	17	N	79	V
3	E	2	P	72	R
21	D	11	J	6	T
50	I	1	O	10	U
4	C	12	Q	68	Y
0	K	9	M	98	W

5 50 79 3 6 48 7 17 0 51
 6 1 6 48 3 32 1 72 21
 14 1 72 48 50 51

51 6 3 7 21 14 7 51 6 32 1 79 3

3 17 21 10 72 3 51 14 1 72 3 79 3 72

CLUE: A well-known saying in the Bible.