

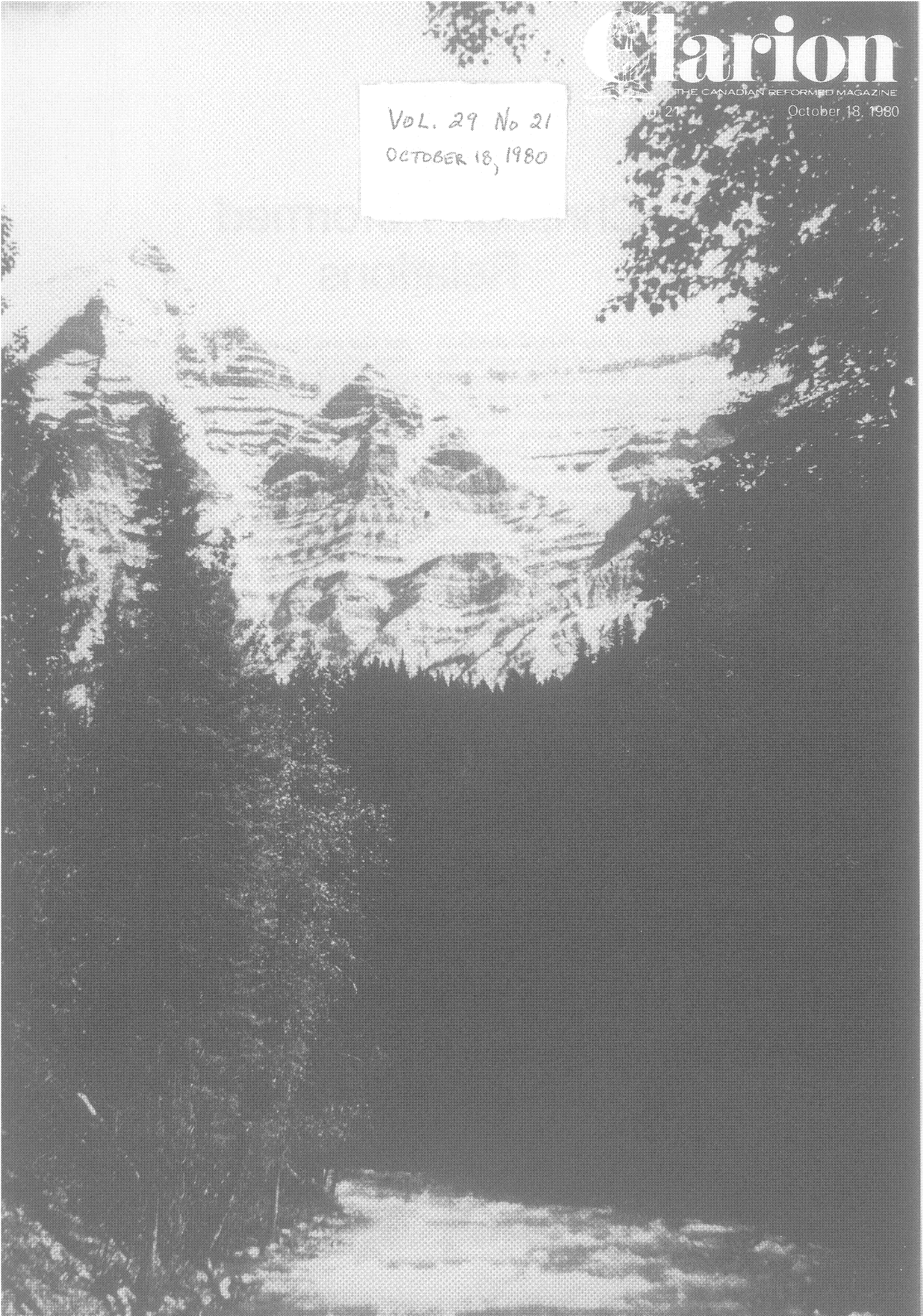
Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

No. 21

October 18, 1980

VOL. 29 No 21
OCTOBER 18, 1980



Christian Reformed Relations

The *Acts* of Synod 1980 of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) have been published, and I duly scanned the pages to see what is of interest for our Canadian Reformed readers, or what may be of importance for our Synod of Smithville which is to be convened in November of this year. First something about the contact with Korea. The Interchurch Relations Committee reports that the Christian Reformed Church had been represented at the Hap Dong General Assembly and the Kosen (formerly known as the Koryu-pa) Assembly in Korea. Neither the Hap Dong Church nor the Kosen Church, both of which at one time were "corresponding churches" with the CRC have acted on the invitation to become "churches in ecclesiastical fellowship." The committee surmises that this invitation was not well understood; it is now seeking to pursue contacts in order to regularize synodical relationships.

Our Dutch sister churches live in full correspondence with the Korean Presbyterian Church (Koryu-pa or Kosen) and are supposed to be informed about this contact with the Christian Reformed Church. Our own Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad researched the whole matter of the Union of 1960 between the Koryu-pa and the Hap Dong, the subsequent disintegration of that Union in 1963, the differences between the Hap Dong and the Koryu-pa, and the relationship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to both. A well-written special report came to the conclusion that, if General Synod 1980 decides to establish an official relationship with the Koryu-pa, we should be willing to consider the establishment of a similar relationship with the Hap Dong, if so requested by these churches. Our report does not give an evaluation of the relationships of Koryu-pa and Hap Dong to the Christian Reformed Church, but would our churches not do wise to take these into consideration? The Hap Dong Church has some one hundred congregations in the United States and Canada; cross contacts between North America and Korea will increase in the future. On the one hand, this situation could urge us to establish an official relationship with either Koryu-pa alone or with both Korean churches. On the other hand, it may caution us not to proceed as yet to full correspondence, if such correspondence would ever be advisable under our existing rules.

As far as The Netherlands is concerned, the CRC was represented at the synod of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken at Amersfoort in the fall of this year. The delegates planned to attend some of the sessions of the current Synod of the synodical churches and also to seek informal and informative contact with *De Gereformeerde Kerken onderhouden Art. 31 Buitenverband*. The relationship with De Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken was in principle established in 1977 and has now to be finalized. "It is our sincere hope that the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken will take

that final step this year and that the objection voiced by their sister churches on this continent (the Free Reformed Churches) to this ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC will not delay that decision." We deplore this development and understand that our brothers and sisters in the Free Reformed Churches are disappointed that the Christelijke Gereformeerden in The Netherlands do not really see the need for Reformed churches to be independent from the Christian Reformed Church. Why do the Free Reformed Churches and we not stand together in a positive attempt to gather God's people in the unity of true faith? If we express *our* hope, then it is that the Free Reformed Churches may be powerful enough not to allow a "double correspondence," to break off the contact with the Christelijke Gereformeerden, and to enter into union talks with the Canadian Reformed Churches. We need each other, and, if it pleases the Lord, we could be a blessing for one another in church life and in broader endeavours, as, for instance, the schools for the education of God's covenant children. Why should the Free Reformed Churches not profit from our Theological College or of the Reformed Teachers College-to-be?

In the Report of the Interchurch Relations Committee also the Canadian Reformed Churches are mentioned. Our readers possibly remember that the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada had expressed their willingness to launch efforts to contact the Canadian Reformed Churches. We now read that in November of 1979 this Council instructed a committee "to attempt to establish fruitful contact with our brothers and sisters in the Canadian Reformed Churches." I suppose that this point will be on the agenda of our Synod at Smithville in November of this year.

With a view to these circumstances, we take note of one of the first acts of Synod 1980 of the Christian Reformed Church. Synod dealt with a Church Order matter that the previous editor of *The Banner*, Dr. Lester DeKoster, rightly deemed to be of crucial importance. It concerns a conflict between the consistory of Goderich (Ontario) and what in the *Acts* is called Classis Huron. What was the case? The Christian Reformed Church Order has an article that regulates the release of a minister from active ministerial service in his congregation because of an intolerable situation existing between him and his church. Nothing in this Article 17 gives authority to a classis to initiate the separation of a minister from his congregation, but Classis Huron did just that. When the consistory did not concur, because the classis had exceeded its authority, the classis suspended the consistory and the minister under Article 89 of the Church Order. Now the charge was brought in "that Classis Huron abused the God-given authority in the minor assembly by lording it over the Consistory of the Goderich Christian Reformed Church and by exercising ecclesiastical authority in a hierarchical

manner not in keeping with the domain and character of the authority entrusted to it by way of delegation." Reading those words I suddenly sat straight up: this is language that sinks into the heart of people who have fought the battle of the liberation of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands in that dark year of the war, 1944. A classis is a meeting of delegates, and even to speak about "Classis Huron" already means to give in to the un-Reformed idea of a classis as a permanent body besides (and above?) the consistories of Christ's congregations. How did Synod 1980 react? It decided that Classis Huron was not guilty and it gave, among others, the following grounds:

- a. Classis did not exceed its authority when it engaged itself with the situation at Goderich CRC. Christ gave authority to the church as a whole and thereby entrusted authority to the occasions of its exercise in classis and synod as gatherings of the churches to maintain the unity of the congregations in both doctrine and discipline.
- b. The gathering of churches and their representatives in Jerusalem set a pattern of authoritative decisions which pattern is followed in principle in the deliberations and decisions of the major assemblies.
- c. To contend that Classis Huron had no proper jurisdiction over the Goderich Consistory proceeds on a mistaken conception of the relation of the minor assembly to the major assembly. The same authority, constituting the same standards and same goals, is applied by the several assemblies. Classis Huron adhered to the correct use of the authority delegated to them by Christ.
- d. The manner in which classis handled the protests and appeals and other procedural matters did not impair the rights of nor prove to be harmful to the position of the complainants. Substantial justice has been effected, contradicting the claim that the classis lorded it over the consistory at Goderich.
- e. In the application of Article 17 (re the release of a minister) to the Goderich situation, it is in order that a classis act where a consistory fails to do so (Art. 27, C.O.). Classis Huron's action was within the range of the delegated authority.

It is remarkable that this reasoning lacks Scripture proof. The Goderich consistory, however, published a study in July via *The Banner*, based on Scripture and the Church Order. This study is refreshing compared to the dry synodical statements. The consistory referred to the seven churches of Asia Minor, mentioned in the first few chapters of Revelation. Each church is held directly accountable to the Head of the church. The elders of the church of Ephesus were charged with care for the flock in which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers, Acts 20:28. The elders are held accountable for the life and doctrine of their flock, Heb. 13:17. In defending the principle of local autonomy (that is, the right of the local church to answer directly to her Lord) the consistory of Goderich quoted H. Bouwman in his *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*: "All ecclesiastical authority, given unto His Church by Christ, resides in the particular church This ecclesiastical authority consists of three things: authority to administer the Word and Sacrament; authority to elect ecclesiastical office-bearers; and authority to exercise ecclesiastical discipline. There is no other authority in the ecclesiastical sphere. And this threefold authority does not pertain to the Major Assemblies, but to the office-bearers of the particular churches." Voetius, Rutgers, and other spokesmen for Reformed church government have agreed that the differences between consistorial authority and the authority of the major

assemblies are differences as to origin, necessity, essence, duration, and purpose. The authority of broader assemblies is derived, limiting, ministering, smaller in measure, and not higher in degree. What is basically at stake is the respect for Christ's Headship over the church. This publication by the Goderich consistory could gladden all Reformed hearts, and, if this consistory studied a book like *Inheritance Preserved*, written by our editor the Rev. W.W.J. Van Oene, they would perceive that their battle now is exactly the same as our battle was in 1944, the battle against hierarchy.

Synod 1980 bluntly stated that Christ delegated authority to classes and synods, but there is no Scripture proof. The slight reference to "the gathering of churches and their representatives in Jerusalem" is insufficient. The apostles and the elders were gathered together, Acts 15:6, and these elders were only the elders of the church at Jerusalem. How can Synod speak of the gathering of churches? And does the presence and authority of the apostles not make this assembly unique? Could Classis Huron, even without consent of the Goderich consistory, write in the manner of Acts 15: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us"? May Synod 1980 direct Classis Huron to see that the release of the minister in Goderich is accomplished under Article 17 of the Church Order? Since when does a Steering Committee replace the elders of a congregation? It is not true that in the release of a minister a classis may act where a consistory fails to do so. The classis did not call the minister, the consistory did. If there is mismanagement by a consistory, the only way ultimately left is that a classis no longer receives the delegates of such local church, and that the ecclesiastical bond is broken with a church that persistently deviates from the Scriptural order. But what happened in Classis Huron, and what, in principle, is authorized now by Synod 1980 of the Christian Reformed Church, is alien to Scriptural and Reformed Church government.

Let us place the issue in the context of church relations. If the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada addresses the upcoming Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, and if this Synod is willing to re-instate the contact and to re-open the extended but fruitless exchanges of the past, we could begin close to home and discuss the principles that are basic to actions like those of Classis Huron. Hierarchy is still alien to Reformed Church polity; broader assemblies should acknowledge Christ as Head of His congregations at the coast of Asia Minor and of Lake Huron.

J. FABER

Hebrews 13:17

Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantages to you.

Our Contacts with the OPC

A REPLY TO REV. J. VISSCHER

In *Clarion* of October 4, 1980, you could find the first instalment of an article by Rev. J. Visscher of Cloverdale regarding our contacts with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, an article written basically in defense of the decisions of Synod Coaldale 1977 with respect to the above mentioned Church, although also some criticism is included on these decisions.

Since Synod Smithville 1980 will be called to deal with no less than five appeals against the above-mentioned decisions, and since this Synod will convene shortly, Rev. Visscher's article will undoubtedly be read with great interest. Interest will be generated all the more because Rev. Visscher promises to "present a different approach to the matter of inter-church relations."

Due to the lamentable situation with respect to the postal services, Rev. Visscher's article was sent directly to Winnipeg, and, although I am mentioned twice in this article, I could not receive prior knowledge of its contents. Since my colleague's article touches on important matters, I now feel compelled to make some remarks, even if his article is not (yet) completely published.

It seems that "certain members" have voiced criticism to Rev. Visscher about Synod Coaldale's decisions and "the first thing that certain members stumble over is the fact that this Synod used the qualification 'true' for the OPC." I cannot be included among these members, for my *first* question has always been whether Synod Coaldale had the *right* to deal with this matter *as it did*. The Committee appointed by Synod Toronto (1974) could not complete its mandate (due to "unforeseen circumstances") and had not finished its evaluation of the OPC letter of 1976. Subsequently, the Committee did not come with any recommendations that Synod proceed with giving such recognition to the OPC. As in 1971 with the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad (when the Synod of New Westminster decided that to do the work of a committee would mean "turning things up-

side down" *Acts*, Art. 47, 3b) Synod Coaldale should have simply continued the mandate given by Toronto in 1974 and not have dealt with the letter of the OPC which was directed to our committee and *not* to Synod (see: Appendix IV, *Acts*, Synod Coaldale, 1977). Even then, Synod, dealing with the OPC letter, did not answer it directly but appointed a new committee with the mandate "to complete the mandate given by Synod Toronto, 1974." A strange situation, indeed; to quote Rev. Visscher, "one senses a double standard creeping in. . . ."

Then the statement of Coaldale that the OPC is a true Church. I have never denied the "truth" of this statement, but I have questioned whether Synod Coaldale gave the *grounds* for such a statement. Is that not the least which we might expect? Rev. Visscher errs when he states that "such a statement was consistent with what previous Synods had said about the OPC." Careful reading of the *Acts* shows that such previous statements were *grounds* for establishing and continuing *contact* with the OPC. Our Synods, meanwhile, have *consistently* brought forward the remaining objections against certain doctrinal and church-political viewpoints in the OPC. This consistency remained even *after* the OPC was recognized as a "true Church." Since Rev. Visscher does not appreciate the nature of these statements, he also does not appreciate "another round" in the discussions.

Rev. Visscher acts quite exuberantly about the statements which our Synods have made regarding the OPC. Indeed, we have not been meagre in our praise and gratitude for what we have found in this Church. But to conclude from a statement like "a church *commits* itself to the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God" that, subsequently, all the *marks* of the true church are present, is somewhat naive, to say the least. If Rev. Visscher had taken more into consideration the (partial) draft-reply of the committee appointed by Synod 1974, he would have noticed a growing *reluctance*, instead of an increasing satisfaction, re-

garding the answers of the OPC. As it stands, that reply was set aside without much ado. The statement of Coaldale (namely, that the OPC is to be regarded without question as a "true Church") is *in itself* certainly not consistent with the declarations of previous Synods. The fact that we continued to bring forward the still-existing divergencies, should have also made Rev. Visscher more careful.

And then there is this argument that our Dutch sister Churches have recognized the Korean Presbyterian Churches (Koryo Pa) who also have the Westminster Confession. None of our Churches have ever overtured Synod to disavow this decision. I agree wholeheartedly. Does this mean, however, that our Churches have officially *agreed* with the actions of our sister Churches? On the contrary, the Canadian Reformed Churches have tried to discover for themselves whether the action of our Dutch sister Churches was correct. In our own investigations, we have asserted our own independence. Our contacts with the Koryo Pa are only in the initial stage, and we have not come to a broader discussion concerning the divergencies which are apparent between the Westminster Confession and our own creeds. In the course of time, such questions could very well be posed to the Korean Churches, but the lack of posing such questions cannot be misconstrued as an argument in favour of the decisions of Synod Coaldale. I find Rev. Visscher's argumentation quite shallow here, especially if I consider that Dutch decisions have previously not played such a prominent role in our ecclesiastical life. That we have not recognized the Koryo Pa until now (even though our Dutch sister Churches have requested such recognition) only proves that we make decisions of our own accord and do not slavishly follow others. More it does not prove.

I am grateful that Rev. Visscher admits that my "mischievous remark" is not pointless. I still feel that we were indeed manoeuvred into making a statement that the OPC is a "true Church." Do the OPC delegates (and Rev. Oliver) indeed have the right to feel "hurt" because we were slow in giving them the recognition they feel is due? We are sympathetic, but we must also be *honest* in our appraisal of the divergencies. Are we indeed wrong in (again) bringing to the fore matters concerning doctrine and church-polity which are

important? Rev. Visscher may "white-wash" the differences ("wondering aloud about the seriousness of the differences"), but these have played an important role in our discussions until now, and I, for one, would hate to see these "divergencies" disappear until these are adequately solved. Even Synod 1977 deemed these divergencies of such importance that they were to be discussed after the given recognition.

Rev. Visscher conveniently bypasses the OPC's whole position with respect to the Christian Reformed Church. Everything is reduced to a "historical" matter, as if our discussions with the OPC could not have been enlightening in this respect. The fact remains that an OPC minister could celebrate the Lord's Supper in the Christian Reformed Church on one Sunday and advise our Synod on a subsequent Monday. Rev. Visscher may accept this, but I certainly cannot.

Rev. Visscher wonders if it is right to "find all kinds of Kuyperian errors in the teachings and doctrinal statements of the OPC." He considers this not only an "unhistorical but also an unjust" approach. Maybe so, but it would certainly be un-historical for us to disregard the Scriptural and dogmatical gain made in the Liberation of 1944. Why must we always take *their* history into account and they not benefit from *our* history as Reformed Churches? Is our historical background then not so valuable? I, for one, will not settle for recognition of a creed which makes a distinction between an invisible and a visible Church (and connected with this the existence of two covenants), and I imagine that Rev. Visscher is willing with me to fight the same battle for the preservation of our Reformed heritage.

Rev. Visscher poses the question whether we did "the right thing in making correspondence our aim with the OPC." Undoubtedly, in the next instalment he will essay to prove his point. Perhaps he will prefer some form of "fraternal relations," I don't know. We have always had the *one* goal of "correspondence" with sister Churches, but maybe we've been all wrong; I'll wait and see. The question remains, indeed, whether the decision of Coaldale was "premature" or "long overdue."

I am sure that the Deputies appointed by Synod 1977 cannot agree entirely with Rev. Visscher's remarks. It renders their whole appointment ridiculous. Why, indeed, should another round be necessary when all

"On the 'Churchly Road' — in a 'Churchly Way'?"

THE "CHURCHLY ROAD"

Now that the time for General Synod is approaching, a few simple remarks may be made that have been waiting for publication a long time. First, the "churchly road" is not the road to church which we, in obedience to the fourth covenant word, go twice every Lord's Day. The term must be understood in the light of the Church Order which regulates the "traffic" within the federation of churches, for churches as well as for individuals.

The present Article 31, describing that "churchly" or ecclesiastical road, starts with the normal thing: *agreement*. "Whatever may be agreed upon in a major assembly by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding" — in that assembly, but also by the churches, or by "anyone who complains that he has been wronged by the decision of the minor assembly." The matter is settled.

Because Article 31 comes after Article 30, it stands to reason that this rule of agreement also may be applied to two sorts of matters which are on the agenda of the major assembly, i.e. those "that could not be finished in minor assemblies" and "such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common."

This "*agreement*," however, is not a dictatorial one: *Roma locuta, causa finita* (Rome has spoken, the matter is finished, period!). There are, the way I see it, *two* "openings." The first, already mentioned, that anyone who complains that he has been wronged by the decision of the minor assembly, has the right to appeal. The second opening is, for "wronged" individuals as well as for all churches belonging to

OUR CONTACTS WITH THE OPC

— *Continued*

things have been settled? It would seem, however, that Rev. Visscher's remarks should make Synod 1980 extra-careful with respect to the appeals presented. There may be more substance to these appeals than Rev. Visscher imagines.

CL. STAM

the federation, the freedom not to accept a decision by a major assembly, if it can be proven that it is in "conflict with the Word of God" or with the Church Order. The former is clear to all: only the Word of God rules. The latter means that every breaking of the "traffic rules" is to be exposed as such. The burden of proof is a Christian burden, and it lies on those who undertake to get a decision changed or cancelled altogether. The Draft Report of the Com-



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

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

\$19.50 per year (to be paid in advance).

Foreign Countries: Seemail — \$30.00

Airmail — \$39.00

ISSN 0383-0438

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mittee for Revision of the Church Order simplified the style somewhat, but did not change the contents of Article 31.

Having read some commentaries on the church order, I am inclined to conclude that the Dort Fathers meant to say: in the case of someone complaining, "I have been wronged", he may go to *the* major assembly; that is, from consistory to classis; one appeal should be the rule. When such a person then goes from the consistory, and against the consistory which (to him) has wronged him, he walks the 'churchly road'.

The first step, however, always is, should always be: to consider a matter settled and binding. That means, to ask oneself seriously and prayerfully, "Am I indeed wronged or am I wrong?" Appeal should be the exception, not the rule, in a federation of churches that want to live according to the Word of God in Christian love. My conviction of "one appeal" is also based on the fact that Article 31 does not speak of "may appeal to major assemblies," plural, but "a major assembly," singular.

THE ROAD TO LIBERATION

Around 1944, Article 31 was on everyone's tongue. No wonder: the churches, office-bearers and all, were bound in their consciences by a synod that lorded it over the churches. The "unless it be proved to be in conflict with the Word of God", etc., was in fact replaced by "until . . ." As long as synod did not change its unbiblical decisions, you were bound, whether you agreed or not.

Those, whose consciences forbade them to accept the synodical binding decisions, did their utmost to convince synod that it was wrong. Nothing helped. Discipline was applied, good-Reformed preachers thrown out, and so on. Then, in agreement with Article 31, they did not consider the unbiblical decisions binding, and "liberated" themselves from them — *not* from the Reformed churches: they continued the old Reformed line.

USE AND MISUSE

Since the Liberation books have been written on Article 31, and still there is reason to doubt a universal agreement among us as to how to understand each segment of this article and how to live up to it. We do not do injustice to the history of recent decades when we say that the *right to disagree* was and is sometimes stress-

ed at the cost of the *duty to agree* of which Article 31 speaks in the first place. The right to disagree is sometimes used in a blatantly un-churchly, un-ecclesiastical manner.

What is "ecclesiastical"? Most certainly it is not just a formal principle. It means: we are in the Church, the Kingdom of our Saviour. In that kingdom the "old man" or old nature has no rights; only the new nature. Thus Article 31 gives no opening for the desire to get things your way at all costs. Sometimes one, complaining to have been wronged, has already stated, *before* his appeal was dealt with by a classis: and if I do not get my way at classis, then I will go to regional synod, and if they don't agree with me, I will go to the general synod. Such an attitude is un-ecclesiastical. It betrays that one may be more concerned with one's own "rights" than with the rights of the Lord.

It is also un-ecclesiastical when our behaviour in an appeal situation is not governed by love. I Corinthians 13: "If I have no love . . . I am nothing." In many appeal cases that I have seen since the Liberation, not the truth of the Word was at stake, but the will to get one's way. Without the love described by Paul, I Corinthians 13, no appeal case will ever come to a God-pleasing solution. Because it does not please Him if the love of I Corinthians 13 (i.e. to each other) is sacrificed to what we call the love for the truth. It is impossible to please God when love for the brethren is missing and is now shown "not only in words but also in deeds" (Form for Holy Supper). In such an appeal situation one may be "straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel," Matthew 23:24. How much time and money has been wasted since 1944!

"IN AN ECCLESIASTICAL MANNER"

(Major) assemblies are, first of all, bound to deal "ecclesiastically" with the matters at hand. This term should — again — not be interpreted as a formal principle, a technical concept. It means that we are in the church of Christ, under the mercy-government of our Redeemer, where the language that we use in decisions is anointed by and with the Holy Spirit. Such assemblies should not get lost (and lose us) in splintery terminology, which fills pages with divisions and subdivisions and sub-subdivisions that may impress a secular court (?) but not the Head of the Church.

It is also doubtful whether "ecclesiastical manner" demands that an appeal contain all relevant documents, and is worded in a form that would need the assistance of a lawyer. The average simple believer must be permitted to reach the ears and hearts of a synod. As James teaches us: the "poor man," poor in words, and typing, etc., should not be told to sit in the back, while the one, rich in writing talents, is invited to the front row. Ending with a question: Is it, indeed, "ecclesiastical" to demand that everything be put in writing, that the person himself never may be heard; that — if it concerns a conflict between brethren — we refuse to call them together, lead them in prayer, lock the door, and tell them, "Now you don't get out before you have given and accepted the hand of brotherly communion"? I know my answer. John would say: a multitude of sins could be covered.

G. VANDOOREN

PRESS RELEASE

of the Board meeting of the Canadian Reformed High School Association in Ontario, held on September 15, 1980.

1. The meeting was chaired by Br. J. Schutter. We opened with the singing of Hymn 50, scripture reading from Malachi 4, followed by prayer. Twenty delegates were in attendance.

2. The agenda for the meeting was adopted and the mail was read and discussed.

3. Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff presented the principal's report. We were happy to note that the school is off to a good start with 269 pupils from 171 families.

4. The treasurer, H.F. Stoffels, explained the proposed distribution of dues and fees on a local basis. He expressed the sincere hope that our local societies will take their commitments extremely seriously.

5. The agenda as proposed by our Executive Committee for the Fall Membership Meeting to be held on October 3, 1980, was approved.

6. The Brampton local reported the purchase of a bus for \$500.00.

7. Next meeting was set for October 20, 1980.

For the Board,
A.J. HORDYK,
Secretary

press review

THE RES AND BROADER ECUMENICITY

In our previous Press Review we focussed our attention on the ecumenicity as it is practiced in the World Council of Churches. This time I would like to ask the readers' attention for the ecumenicity in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, especially also in connection with the WCC. About the RES meeting in Nimes, France, in July of this year, *Clarion* has written. Decisions in connection with what is happening in the synodical Reformed Churches in The Netherlands have been commented on: Did these churches exercise discipline in the case of Wiersinga, and will they in the case of Kuitert? Professor Faber wrote that the whole meeting in Nimes "had the wool pulled over their eyes" on this point. This must be true for many. However, I cannot see that all those delegates were that ignorant. I have the idea that at least a number of those delegates pulled that wool over their eyes themselves because they wanted it that way, although knowing better. Or are the Christelijke Gereformeerde delegates and The Netherlands Reformed observer so blind?

The reader also knows that the RES meeting strongly objected to the decision of the (synodical) GKN to admit homosexuals to the Lord's Supper and to the offices in the churches. Professor Faber showed the ambiguity of the speaking of GKN delegates on this point: in Nimes saying that the decision did not speak about practicing homosexuals, but back in The Netherlands, and under heavy attacks of the homosexuals and their friends, saying that they did not deny at all that the synod of the GKN had meant practicing homosexuals. The whole thing must be an abomination in the eyes of the LORD, indeed.

But what I cannot understand is that on this point of that decision with regard to practicing homosexuals, the RES now suddenly comes with such a strong rejection. In our modern society, where homosexuality is an accepted, by many even promoted, thing, just like premarital and extramarital sexual intercourse, one can expect this kind of

decisions from a church, viz. its leaders, that does not maintain the Reformed Biblical doctrine of the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Here the one thing is approved, and there the other: it is liberalism all over. That is because modern humanism rules, instead of the Word of God. And that is because these "Christian believers" refuse to obey God's commandments rather than stand apart in our world. It is the refusal to submit to "what is written," that is at the root of the evil. Why is the RES so terribly upset with such a consequence, but much less upset and so very much more lenient, on the point of the root: the liberal doctrine about the Bible as is evident in the ideas of Kuitert and Wiersinga? Is that because more members of the RES, in fact, accept a more liberal view of the Scriptures, or do not voice a clear 'no' against it, as we find in the Christian Reformed Church?

Also an important point at the RES in Nimes was the matter of the membership in the WCC of the GKN and the Indonesian Reformed Church. The reader knows that this has been a hot issue for more than twenty-five years already, and never has come to a definite decision. On this point I take over some information from *Nederlands Dagblad*. This paper has given quite a broad report on the RES meeting in a number of issues. I start with what we read about the report of the general secretary, Dr. Paul Schrotenboer. We find this in the paper of Friday, July 18. We read:

In his report to the synod here in Nimes the secretary general, Dr. Paul Schrotenboer, warned for too much attention for the internal difficulties within the RES. "In all honesty, I am seriously concerned that at this synod we are so occupied with the differences which have come into the open among us, that we no longer get to facing the worldwide challenges that are on our agenda," said Schrotenboer. In his speech he amply elaborated on those worldwide challenges.

Our task as a Reformed ecumenical body is, he said, on the one hand to maintain and to deepen the awareness of our identity as Reformed Churches, and on the other hand to promote the unity of the

world church, that is the undivided people of God, of which is spoken in the old Apostolic Creed: "I believe a holy, catholic, Christian Church."

Schrotenboer warned for two dangers. In the first place, there is the danger that we strongly hold on to that faith of our fathers, but at the same time forget or minimize our unity with the rest of the world church. The other danger is that we do fully accept the challenge of the ecclesiastical unity and exert ourselves very much in the field of ecumenicity, but at the same time create a bigger and bigger distance between ourselves and the heritage from which we have come. In both cases the tradition of the apostles can be darkened, he said. . . . Schrotenboer stressed that the member churches of the RES must be aware, not only of the spiritual heritage, but also of the character of our time, the new decade of the eighties. We must not only be on the defensive, but also on the offensive. We have to equip the people of God for service.

The secretary of the RES pointed to the great attention which is given in ecumenical circles to the bringing about of justice in the world and to work in view of the coming kingdom of God. He reminded (the delegates) of the fact that also in the circles of the evangelicals more and more attention is paid to social questions. In this situation the question arises, according to Schrotenboer: What is the Reformed perspective with regard to these developments? Shall we, from our Reformed heritage, fully participate in this care for the matters of the kingdom?

The report in *Nederlands Dagblad* continues to tell us that, according to Dr. Schrotenboer, this Reformed heritage, namely, that the Word of God is normative for all aspects of life, should make the Reformed Churches take a leading role in these social questions; and that this task is especially for the RES as an international organization. The RES's involving itself in these matters has resulted in contact with "the broader ecumenical movement."

In this connection he pointed to the joint consultation of a delegation of the World Council of Churches and of the Interim Committee of the RES about the church and its social calling. This meeting has to be seen, according to Schrotenboer, in the broader context of two charges given to the church: the social calling and the ecumenical testimony. Neglecting the first-mentioned calling would mean falling short in our obedience to the Lord, he said. Evading our second charge means that we deny our confession regarding the unity of Christ.

I would like to make a remark here about that social calling of the church as it is stressed by so many, and now also has been emphasized at the RES in Nimes. *Nederlands Dagblad* of Wed-

nesday, July 23, reports that the RES meeting dealt with racial issues, especially also in South Africa. And the decision was made to appoint a study committee to study the matter of human rights, whereby the international declaration of human rights has to be scrutinized in the light of the Scriptures. It was also stressed by a delegate that the churches, in the meantime, should be socially active.

In our Church Order we have Article 30 that says that in our ecclesiastical meetings we are to deal only with ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical way. Talking about social justice and activity is the hot issue in today's world. Socialism has been calling for that social justice for a long time already. Now doing this as such is not wrong. The Bible also protests against social injustice. But my point of doubt is: Is the task of the church as such to do something about it? Is it really the calling of the church in its ecclesiastical meetings to deal with this issue? Is it not rather so: other churches and organizations do it, so we had better do it, too? Let the church preach, also about justice in society. And let all the members of the church, each and everyone, first of all in his and her own surroundings and relations, practice that justice. And if the members of the church can also do more and send relief and help abroad, that is very good. But let us not forget that the gospel is not social justice as such. The gospel is Jesus Christ crucified for our sins and raised for our justification and sanctification.

And then that second point, the ecumenical calling: that testimony in the broader ecumenical movement. Dr. H.B. Weijland of the GKN had made a report in which he tried to defend, on biblical grounds, that the GKN is a member of the WCC. In Nimes the strongest opposition to this report came from the delegates of the OPC. Dr. Weijland states in his report that

since 1968 (. . .) two opposite developments are taking place within the RES. On the one hand, the advice against membership of the World Council of Churches is stated in even stronger wording, but, on the other hand, the Interim Committee speaks gradually more positively about the joint consultations between the RES and the WCC. Weijland added the question why it is not right that the GKN maintain contact with the World Council, while contact between the RES and this organization is being applauded.

We read further how the OPC delegates reacted to this report. They said

that the stronger and stronger resolutions of the RES against membership of RES members in the WCC is caused by the fact that the GKN so far have never listened to these resolutions which stated that membership of the RES is not compatible with a membership in the WCC. These stronger and stronger wordings, although starting with friendly words, showed a pastoral care, we read. And about the comparison with the joint consultations between RES and WCC we read that the OPC delegation is of the opinion that

the basis of the two forms of contact is totally different. The RES meets the World Council of Churches as the one ecumenical body meets the other; and its purpose is to bear witness of the gospel of Christ as this is expressed in the Reformed Standards.

But the GKN, by their membership of the World Council, have included themselves in a fellowship of churches which claims to confess Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures . . . but which does not live up to these words . . .

The meetings of the RES with the WCC are not taking place on the basis of the foundation and the regulations of the WCC; they do not bring the RES into fellowship with the WCC; they only provide a stage for testifying. Herewith the RES is living up to its Constitution, according to the OPC delegation, in which one of the purposes of the RES is stated to be: "To give united testimony to the Reformed faith in the midst of the world living in error and groping in darkness, and to the churches which have departed from the truth of God's Holy Word."

This we read in *Nederlands Dagblad* of July 19. And my next quotation comes from the July 22 issue, where we read that the RES only took note of

a letter in which the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Northern Ireland terminated its membership in the RES. This church expressed its disapproval of the last years about the discussions between the RES and the WCC.

Now I can understand that Dr. Weijland of the GKN, defending the GKN's membership in the WCC, does this pointing to these joint consultations. And when the OPC delegation speaks of the difference between a membership and a joint consultation, they also make a point. There is a difference. But I do ask: Is a joint consultation now really the same as giving a Reformed, biblical witness or testimony about the truth of God's Word? I doubt that very much. My dictionary gives as a meaning of the word "consultation": "a meeting to exchange ideas and talk things over." So this word means that

two or more parties, standing on one and the same level, as each other's equals, have a talk together and listen to each other. However, a prophet who is confronted with an apostate people, does not have consultations with them. With authority he says to the people: "You are wrong. For thus speaks the LORD: . . . This is the truth." And if I read the quotation from the Constitution about the purpose correctly, then we must expect a prophetic message rather than consultations together. I see the RES seeking broadness on the ecumenical stage. And this broadness leads to compromising, while compromising results in weakness and breaks the power of prophetic speaking and testifying. Therefore, in my opinion, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Northern Ireland was consequent by withdrawing from the RES. And I also think that in our contact with the OPC this point of membership in the RES has to remain a very important point and must not be minimized.

Our conclusion must be that the RES in Nimes did not take a strong Reformed stand, neither in connection with the apostasy in doctrine in the GKN, nor on the point of contact with the WCC. And as far as I can see, this weakness has to do with the doctrine about the church. At the end of the report about the opening words of Dr. Schrottenboer, we read how he said that Reformed people always have been against an easy, superficial ecumenicity and have wanted unity-in-truth, and that recently there have been international conventions where (Dutch) Reformed and Lutherans and Presbyterians and Roman Catholics in the US have held discussions. But we were standing at the side instead of being present as observers.

In our world of ecumenical broadness, it is a necessity not to lose sight of what we confess in Articles 28 and 29 of our confession of Faith about the calling to join the true church and to exercise the communion of saints there, while of this visible church the marks are given. The true church is not an invisible total number of all believers, but a concrete congregation, or congregations, where the unity of the true faith is found. J.G.

FOR THE READER'S INFORMATION

This issue of *Clarion* was mailed from Winnipeg Central Post Office on Saturday, October 11, 1980.

The Confession Concerning the Church: “Consensus or Confusion?”¹

When Prof. J. Kamphuis, who for twenty years had taught Church History/Church Polity at the Theological College of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, received a new mandate to teach Dogmatology (or Systematic Theology as, I believe, it is called on this continent), he delivered in acceptance of his new position a speech titled, “The Ecclesiastical Consensus as Dogmatic Factor”.² What caught my attention in this excellent speech is the use of the word “*consensus*.” Prof. Kamphuis points out that during the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century the confession was often referred to as a consensus. The confession of the Church, therefore, is an “ecclesiastical consensus.” Or in other words, the confession of the Church is a form of *unity* because all the members consent to (agree with) its contents.

The word “consensus” implies full agreement of all involved and is the basis for the unity in the Church. Therefore, if someone in the Church, e.g. a minister or elder, deviates from the confession or can no longer accept a part of it, the consensus is broken and the unity is disrupted. There can only be a real consensus if all agree and continue to agree with what is confessed. Prof. Kamphuis concludes that this consensus of the Church is a precious thing, both a great *blessing* and a high *calling*. And he goes on to show how in many “churches” the consensus has become a *dissensus* since many prominent members deviate from the accepted standards and such deviations are tolerated.

This word “consensus” keeps going through my mind when I am confronted with the discussions which are currently taking place among us concerning the confession about the *Church*. Certainly, all those who are involved in these discussions claim to adhere to what we confess concerning the Church e.g. in Articles 27-32 of the Belgic Confession and in Lord’s Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism. So do I. But if one looks at the differing viewpoints which are presented and at the various interpretations which are defended, one wonders what is truly left

of the above-mentioned “consensus” or agreement. Is the confession concerning the Church still indeed a consensus or has it become a matter of *confusion*?

We might even ask some more pertinent questions here. Is the disagreement (which I indicated and hope to give some examples of) really essential or fundamental, or is it merely a matter of approach, of placing different emphasis? A more basic question, perhaps, “Is our confession concerning the Church indeed *clear* or is it *ambiguous*, so that difference of opinion is inevitable?”

SHOULD WE REWRITE OUR CONFESSION?

Recently a Dutch minister, Rev. Joh. Francke, published a book titled “*Varia de Ecclesia*” (Various things about the Church), and in this book he treats the various (conflicting) opinions which have emerged during the years on the subject of the Church.³ In discussing this book, the editor of *Nederlands Dagblad*, Mr. J.P. de Vries comes to this question, “If our confession concerning the church gives rise to all kinds of disputes concerning its correct interpretation, does the Church then not have the task to clarify with a new formulation what it really *wanted* to confess according to the Scriptures?”⁴ That is quite the question! If our confession is so unclear that it gives rise to constant controversy, should we then on this point not rewrite it?

A committee appointed by Classis Alberta-Manitoba comes basically to the same conclusion that our confession is not so clear. “. . . the Confession as such does not, in explicit articles or express statements pronounce upon the question how broad the communion of saints is, and even less in the way it should be expressed”.⁵ Therefore “theological” or “dogmatic” views can be developed and presented from the pulpit, though certainly not as binding.⁶ May the pulpit be used for such purposes? I wonder.

One might argue that such a situation is not desirable and indeed come to the question of Mr. J.P. de Vries. We

should not be too shocked at the suggestion of Mr. de Vries. Prof. Dr. K. Schilder once wrote something similar, “If it — the confession — is not clear on a certain point, don’t get lost in an exchange of interpretations, but take care that a new and then a *clear* formulation is reached.”⁷ Meanwhile, Prof. Schilder himself was not so convinced that the confession was indeed unclear regarding the Church, for he added, “But what is written, do not sleek it down, or polish it away — *gladstrijken* — because it claims to be polished, i.e. clear.” As long as the existing formulation stands, we are bound to it. It must remain a consensus, and we may in no way, not even in appearance, destroy this consensus.

Besides, before we proceed to rewrite any part of our confession, we must be aware of two things, I believe. First, we must prove where and why the existing formulations are indeed unclear, rather are *unscriptural*. And secondly, we must realize that no matter how we rewrite it, humanly speaking, there will always be those who will disagree and continue to prefer personal formulations. If the Church for centuries has spoken so unclearly about the gathering work of Christ (which I do not believe) how will we ever in our time of false ecumenicity and Scripture criticism arrive at a new and undisputed consensus?

HOW MUCH CONSENSUS IS LEFT?

Yet, taking the present formulations seriously as binding for all, I still ask, “How much consensus (agreement) is still among us concerning the Church and (related) the “communion of saints”? Is the confusion not great? Or are we just imagining things, making mountains of the proverbial molehills? Apparently there is some confusion which also others have noted, for Rev. S. de Bruin of Edmonton has written a series of articles in the City Guide entitled, “Is our Reformed terminology about the Church causing confusion?”

It is no secret, furthermore, that one of our Churches (Neerlandia) has closed the pulpit to one of our ministers (Rev. D. de Jong of Calgary) because of “persistent and increased doubts concerning Rev. de Jong’s views of church and communion of saints . . .”⁸ Closing the pulpit to a minister and doubting his doctrinal purity is indeed a *serious* matter, is it not? There is apparently no “consensus” between the Church at Neerlandia

and Rev. D. de Jong and this dissensus will in all likelihood be presented before Synod Smithville.

We might console ourselves for a moment with the fact that the confusion is not contained within our own federation only, for the debate concerning the Church has again caught flame in our sister-Churches in The Netherlands. Just an example, Prof. Dr. J. Douma would like to have the "room" to speak of an "invisible Church," while others (notably Rev. Francke, Rev. D. van Houdt and Prof. L. Doekes) would rather not leave such room.

It is clear from the above-given examples that there is certainly some confusion and that the consensus is not as solid as we would like (or pretend) it to be.

WHAT IS THE BASIC PROBLEM?

We cannot enter into each and every little debate regarding the Church. I have asked myself this question, "What is the basic problem in all these controversies and conflicts?" And I would rather have had other, more qualified people write on this subject, but since this did not "materialize," I may perhaps make some remarks from which hopefully others can benefit.

Is it so that our Confession concerning the Church is unclear so that controversy is inevitable? Is it indeed so that we are not faced with "doctrinal matters" but that it is merely a matter of nuances in which we should give one another complete freedom? Or is it rather a case of not wanting to accept the *clear consequences* of our confession regarding the Church? I feel that it is indeed the latter, but now I have to prove that point, which is not as easy as saying it, I agree.

The first question which must be answered then is the following, "What *does* our Confession say about the Church of Christ?" I mean: in all simplicity, without getting into deep-scientific language or using all kinds of Greek and Latin jaw-breakers, what do we really confess? Is it really so complex that such controversies are warranted or is it in essence simple and comprehensible?

We may, of course, not *oversimplify* things and pretend that we have all things figured out and all questions answered. The gathering of all God's children and the unoverseeable number thereof is not of our design but subject to God's own counsel and de-

cree, and we do not have the ability to fathom the greatness and magnitude of this work. I readily and willingly admit this. Yet we must also not create unnecessary dilemmas, for in essence the Word of God is quite clear as to how the Church is being gathered by Christ. Do we not confess the *perspicuity* of the Scriptures also here?

We can read about the Church in the "Three Forms of Unity," our consensus of faith. Noteworthy are the Articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession and Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism. The Canons of Dort also speak about the Church (e.g. II, 9, where we read that "the elect may in due time be gathered into one that there may never be wanting a *church* composed of believers").

ONE AND THE SAME CHURCH

Permit me a few remarks about these portions of our Confession. The Belgic Confession starts out by saying (in Art. 27), "We *believe* and profess one catholic or universal Church." Similarly, in Lord's Day 21, the question is asked, "What do you *believe* concerning the holy, catholic Church?" The confession concerning the Church is an article of *faith* based on the Holy Scriptures. Prof. K. Schilder has repeatedly pointed out that we may not speak about the Church on the basis of what we see (or don't see, "the invisible Church") but only on the basis of what God has revealed concerning the Church.⁹ All that follows therefore in our confession is not human opinion but divine truth. The Church is not an institution of man, but a work of God and therefore bound to *His* norms. So all kinds of personal opinions are of little value. The question is always, "What do God's Word and our confession based on that Word say about the Church?" That alone is binding and decisive.

Another point must be made. In all these articles and in this Lord's Day, the confession is speaking about *one* and the *same* church. It is not so that e.g. in Article 27 we confess one kind of a church (let's say, the grand *invisible* church) and in the Articles 28 and 29 another church (let's say, a *visible* institution). One and the same church, proven in the simple fact that Article 27 says the Church is a "holy congregation" and Article 28 goes on to speak about "this holy congregation." And in Lord's Day 21 the "holy catholic Church" *is* the "communion of saints," for it is gathered in the "unity of the

true faith" (Qu. 54) and those who share this true faith, "the *believers*, one and all" (Qu. 55) make up this communion.

Here already we note a prime difference with e.g. the Westminster Confession which begins (in Art. 25) by confessing the existence of *two* churches, the invisible one (to which belong "the whole number of the elect") and the visible one (to which belong "all those throughout the world which profess the true religion, together with their children"). A further distinction in the Westminster Confession is that this visible church consists of churches which are "more or less pure," whereas our confession states that this *one* church is never pure in this life, for not only does it contain "hypocrites, who are mixed in the Church with the good" but also there remain in the members "great infirmities" (Art. 29).

CHURCH AND ELECTION

In connection with my previous remarks about the Westminster Confession's rendering of the invisible Church as "the whole number of the elect," let me add a few words here concerning church and election.

As an earlier-given quote from the Canons of Dort indicates, there is an undeniable connection between the church and *election* ("the elect may in due time be gathered into one . . ."). Lord's Day 21, Answer 54 speaks about the Church as "chosen to everlasting life . . ." The committee appointed by Classis Alberta-Manitoba says, "God's secret election is the secret foundation of the church."¹⁰

Let us, however, be careful in approaching the matter from this angle. Prof. K. Schilder has in his time already clearly pointed out that it is *not* correct to speak of the Church as the number or sum of the *elect*.¹¹ Our confession speaks consistently in terms of the "gathering of believers," and a "gathering" is not the same the "sum" or total of believers. If one speaks of the Church in terms of election, Schilder argued, one creates *uncertainty*: where are these elect? Many must yet be born. Are all registered members of the Church by that fact also *elect*? We have already seen that this cannot be the case; otherwise our confession would not speak of "hypocrites mixed in the Church."

It may be true that election is the "secret foundation" of the Church, yet we may not start at that end of things.

The secret things are for the Lord our God. Election is God's sovereign decree, while "gathering" speaks of Christ's ongoing activity and *revealed norms* to which we are bound. If one speaks about the Church as "number of the elect" he might inadvertently come to speak of the "invisible Church," for who knows where all the elect are? Spread out perhaps over various denominations, even throughout the sects. If one speaks about the Church — as our confession does — as the *gathering* of believers, one must apply the *norms* along which the believers are gathered, visibly, at one place, under one preaching, partaking of one communion.

Besides, when speaking of "church and election," Lord's Day 21 does not speak of the election of *individuals* but of the *Church*.¹² This is Scriptural language, for the Apostle John e.g. writes his second letter to the "elect lady and her children" (the local church) and passes on the greetings of her "elect sister." This does not imply that all the individual members are elected, for the Apostle Paul who addresses the Thessalonians as "chosen to salvation" also dares to say "for not all have faith" (II Thessalonians 2:13 and 3:2). So our conclusion must be: let us not speak about the Church as the "number of the elect" but concretely as the "gathering of believers," this gathering-work of Christ being visible and normative for all men.

THE LINE IN OUR CONFESSION

Let me now briefly follow the line of our confession in the articles and Lord's Day mentioned. We see then that the Church is a work of Christ, a gathering-together of believers in "one and the same Spirit" (Art. 27), in "the unity of the true faith" (Lord's Day 21). Article 27 and Lord's Day 21 (Qu. 54) speak of the *catholic* character of this Church, which means, it is gathered out of all times and peoples, not limited to certain places or persons, but spread out over the whole world. This does not mean that the Church is everywhere at the same time, for we confess in the Canons of Dort that God sends preachers "to whom He will and at what time He pleases" (I, 3). This also does not imply that the Church is always "grand" or "large," for Article 27 states that it "sometimes appears very small and in the eyes of men to be reduced to nothing." Yet this does not render it "invisible" — as some like to defend — for in the time which is men-

tioned as an illustration of this fact there were real believers with (high-profile) office-bearers (e.g. Elijah) who refused to worship Baal and persevered in the service of the Lord. Queen Jezebel knew very well of the existence of these believers, why else did she attempt to annihilate them? (cf. I Kings 18:4).

This gathering-work of Christ, being from the beginning to the end of the world, is not *finished*, but is a constant process. L.D. 21 (Qu. 54) speaks in the present tense, "Christ gathers, defends and preserves for Himself a Church . . ." It is a dynamic, ongoing work of Christ, and only when it has been completed will Christ return in glory (cf. II Peter 3:9). So if I may borrow a term from Rev. D. de Jong, this Church is indeed "under construction."¹³ But I would not like to conclude with him that it *therefore* is "quite a mess," like on every construction site, for we do have the clear *norms* of Christ along which He builds ("the blueprint," if you wish) and we know that everything shall be done "decently and in good order" (I Corinthians 14:40). When Prof. K. Schilder referred to the Church as a "mess" (Dutch: *een janboel*), as quoted by Rev. de Jong, he did not refer to its "unfinished" state but to the fact that many lack the desire for true communion and instead place subjective feelings and sentiments above the command of Christ.¹⁴

The fact that this Church-gathering is as yet unfinished, does not render the Church "unrecognizable." This gathering work of Christ is indeed so recognizable (even if unoverseeable) that "this holy congregation" can be called an "assembly." Our confession states that "all persons are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it, maintaining the unity of the Church" (Article 28). That is more than merely recognizing the "style of Christ's construction work."¹⁵ It denotes a concrete *address*, not just for some, but for *all*.¹⁶ Those who do not do so, says Article 28, "act contrary to the Word of God." They do not realize (or do not wish to) that outside of this gathering there is no salvation, and that is a serious matter indeed!

This phrase, "outside of it there is no salvation" has been much discussed and disputed, but I wonder, is it really so cumbersome? Outside of this gathering-work of Christ, Who assembles His Church locally and gives to it the ministry of reconciliation, there is no salvation, and salvation means the

full restoration of communion with God in Jesus Christ. The *point* of Article 28 is that anyone who is serious about his/her salvation must join the Church of Christ where it is assembled according to *His* norms. Some consider this statement of our confession somewhat "rash," but Rev. Joh. Francke has correctly remarked that our confession here speaks *carefully*.¹⁷ Our forefathers did not say that no one outside of the Church is saved — that would be pronouncing a judgment which alone is the Lord's — but they simply and earnestly pointed to the common *calling*: join the Church of Christ, for outside of it there is no salvation. Church membership is not to be taken lightly, for it has consequences not merely for oneself but also for one's posterity.

Therefore in Article 29 the *marks* of the Church are listed. This is necessary, because not only is there the false church, but also are there sects which assume the name church. Where is one to go in this "mess" of disobedience? We are "diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true Church." This is not so difficult, for the marks have been clearly *revealed*. The confession therefore concludes in Article 29 that "these two churches are *easily* known and distinguished." This is another one of those statements in our confession which has been much disputed. In the days of Guido de Bres it may have been true, we are told, for he meant the Church of Rome, but nowadays it is not so simple. It is true that the process of deformation is not everywhere the same; nevertheless the word of our confession stands also today. It will be *clear* from the marks present if a church is true or false, real or imitation. Agreed, to determine this involves study and careful examination, but in the final analysis the true and the false are also distinguishable today. And so also the calling that "everyone is bound to join himself to the true Church" is fully in effect today.

The *same line* we find in Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism. First we read of the "catholic" character, the great gathering-work of Christ, by His Spirit and Word, in the unity of true faith, Question 54. The next question (55) deals with our *duty* with respect to this gathering work of Christ. The believers, gathered together in the unity of true faith, all and each partake of Christ's treasures and gifts, and are

Continued on page 479.

STUDY WEEKENDS — Are They a Boon or a Burden?

For quite a number of years the above has been discussed privately among many Ministers of the Word, and undoubtedly also at Consistory meetings, as well as in our concerned homes. Like many other members of the churches, I have wanted to say something about it in public in an attempt to help our young people, but, alas, nothing ever came of it due to umpteen different reasons, legitimate and otherwise. However, I received a strong reminder of my former good intentions when I read a recent issue of *In Holy Array* which is received by many young people in our churches.

At first I thought it best to send a letter to the Editor of the publication in question, or even an open letter to the Editor of *Clarion*. However, upon advice of the latter I decided to write an article under the above title, since not all our young people read or receive *In Holy Array*, and since it also concerns every Christian home and Consistory.

Like other Ministers of the Word I am privileged to receive the *In Holy Array* of the Ontario Young People's League. This publication I read with considerable interest. However, the last issue, September 1980, has also given me quite some concern, in particular the article entitled "Study Weekend — Guelph (Square Dance)" and the Editorial by E. Kampen "On display in the world" (the latter is very encouraging).

To begin with, I share the concern of the authors of this article (The Guelph YP) when they point out that many young people come to the study weekends with a completely anti-Christian intent, i.e., carousing, drinking, drugs, etc. Many of such young people don't even bother to attend the speeches or discussions, and are at best only interested in the entertainment. The best description of such young people can be found in Jude 11-13. "A harsh judgment for covenant children," you say? Yes, but it is also to the point.

It is true, such non-committed "could-not-care-less" young people are always a minority who spoil things for the sincere majority. They give our young people a bad reputation and

cause parents and Consistory to wonder whether or not these semi-annual young people's activities (both in the East and West) have become an evil which should be banned from our midst. Yes, this could be done, but would such decisions be fair and just for those who are involved in a righteous endeavour to please the Lord and to help stimulate spiritually fellow young people from other congregations? Would it really be justified to prevent our young men and women from meeting their counterparts in other congregations? Think only of the many happy marriages which are the result of meeting a certain boy or girl on a particular Study Weekend. It is my hope that such activities will be permitted to continue. Nevertheless, something must be done to prevent them from undergoing further deterioration. Healthy Christian fellowship must be promoted at all cost. How should this be done? Allow me to say emphatically, "Not in the way it was done at the recent Guelph Study Weekend by arranging a Square Dance."

"But what is really wrong with dancing," you say? This question is persistently being asked by our young people, and also some of our not-so-young are adding to the chorus of similar questions. The Guelph Young People, in relation to their square dance, answered such a question by stating, "Maybe it's time we thought about why we are offended (if you are), and do we have a good scriptural basis for being offended?" Allow me an attempt to answer the above question.

To begin with, the answer can be very brief by simply stating that there is nothing wrong with dancing. All we need to do is read Psalms 149 and 150. Such an answer may sound and look easy. Nevertheless, I am sure that it would not satisfy any truly Reformed Christian. Such people would undoubtedly call this answer simplistic and misleading.

Indeed, when we speak of dancing we will have to ask, "What kind of dancing are you talking about?" There are indeed many references in Scripture to dancing, but again, "Which kind do you mean?" The dancing mentioned in Scripture, or the social dance of

today?" This distinction is legitimate, for social dancing as we know it today was not practised by the faithful in the ancient church.

The dancing done in the Old Testament by the church was always a cultic (an act of worship) dancing, that is, with the intent of expressing joy before the Lord, and never the worldly kind of heterosexual dancing (male-female) as is practised by many people today. For example, Miriam and the women danced before the Lord in thankfulness for the LORD's deliverance (cf. Ex. 15:20). The Israelites danced around the golden calf, but this was "a feast to the LORD" cf. (Ex. 32:5, 19); the intent was to worship God with it, be it in a wrong manner (idolatry). In Judges 11:34 Jephthah was met by his daughter (and probably also her girlfriends) with dancing, in celebration of the victory given by the Lord over the Ammonites. In Judges 21:19-21 there was another feast to the Lord in which the young unmarried girls came to dance before the Lord. I Sam. 18:6, 21:11, and 29:5 speak of a dance by the women, this time due to the victory granted to Saul and David. II Sam. 6:14, 16 speak of the celebration before the Lord due to the ark's being brought into Jerusalem. There David made himself despicable in Michal's eyes by dancing before the Lord like one of the maidens; see also I Chron. 15:29.

Add to all these references the dancing mentioned in Ps. 30:11, Ps. 149:3, Ps. 150:4, Eccl. 3:4, and Jer. 31:4, 13, and you will discover that all the dancing done by the Old Testament Church was a dancing in response to God's covenant faithfulness. As such, it was a dancing in a *vertical* relationship.

It is also important to note that the cultic dance of the Old Testament was primarily restricted to young women. There is *not one* instance where Scripture shows that the church people were instructed or even permitted to dance like the heathen in a heterosexual (male-female) relationship (a horizontal relationship only) (cf. I Sam. 30:16) or simply for entertainment reasons (cf. Matt. 14:6). (The heterosexual dance was often closely connected to the heathen fertility rituals.)

Even worldly psychologists agree that the social dance is a strong psychological stimulant toward, or for, sexual arousal. This was undoubtedly, as well-known by the ancient heathen world as it is known by the heathen world of today.

Satan would be overjoyed if Christians would begin to consider the social dance as innocent fun, for he knows that a first step (be it hesitant) in this direction can be expected to be followed by more. But alas, the naivety of some Christians is of such a nature that nothing seems to be able to convince them that something which makes them feel so nice and free can be all that wrong.

However, the fact is that social dancing is nothing but idolatry, i.e., the serving of the self, which we are commanded to flee (cf I Cor. 10:13-14). Or to put it in plain, Scriptural language, it is an abuse of Christian freedom in order "to indulge the flesh" (cf. Gal. 5:13-21). Besides, if we were to deny that the social (heterosexual) dance provides any kind of sexual stimulant, this would be equivalent to denying that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desparately corrupt" (Jer. 17:9), or read, for example, Rom. 3:10ff. and Rom. 7:7-23.

If we must dance, then let us dance the way the Old Testament Church danced in its desire to express its gratitude to the Lord for His redemptive actions, and let us not be deceived by the Satan into adopting the heathen practice of the social dance.

Perhaps you wish to object to this kind of reasoning or explanation of the Scriptures, and claim that this is simply too rigid. It may be that you wish to present the favourite argument in favour of social dancing by asking the question, "What could possibly be wrong with a square dance, or any other folk dance?" The answer is: in itself probably not much, but that is not the issue at stake here.

In the first place, a Christian is supposed to be prophet, priest, and king. This means that one must be the salt of the earth, and as such the educator in a secular society. In his/her office of all believers one is supposed to be able to say what is right with all his activities. A knowledgeable Christian does not ask negative questions such as "What is wrong with this or that?" but knowing what is right, profitable, and honourable, he desires to do all things with the utmost of his power and ability to the glory of God (cf. I Cor. 10:31, Col. 3:17, Eccl. 9:10). He is the one who is fully aware that whatever is not done out of faith is sin (cf. Rom. 14:23). He is the one who is fully aware that the heart is "deceitful above all things and desparately corrupt" (Jer. 17:9), and that for that reason he wants to flee from

any form of sin (cf. I Cor. 10:7, 14). Note well that the reference of I Cor. 10:7 is quoted from Ex. 32:6, which relates how the Israelites danced around the golden calf, and as such is called idolatry.

The Christian is also aware of the fact that in the false and/or apostate churches around him they used to use many seemingly pious argumentations (with respect to the square dance) prior to its acceptance, but that as soon as the square dance was adopted as an acceptable mode of entertainment, it did, in most cases, not even take a complete generation until *all* social dancing became acceptable.

At this point in our congregational development the relevant questions for us are: Are we stronger than these past generations? Are we now able to play with fire without getting burned? Are our sexual or biological urges weaker than those of the past generation and are we for that reason then able to cope with the social dance while keeping our minds pure and God-pleasing? Can we now get down on our knees and thank God for the gift of the social dance while our forefathers feared it like the plague, lest they be drawn in by Satan's wiles? May we now tempt God by first praying that we may not be led into temptation, while we blatantly give ourselves over to the temptations of this world? May we now conform to the world whereas for the previous generation world-conformity was forbidden (cf. Rom. 12:1ff)?

You may think that all these questions sound ridiculous, but then what is really ridiculous is the naivety of those among us who wish to be Christians while at the same time wish to promote a heathen practice such as the social dance.

If my information is correct, then the dance has also been introduced and/or permitted in several of our homes and at several wedding parties organized by members of our churches. It is my hope and prayer that all our members may wake up from such delusions and repent, lest we call upon ourselves the wrath of God. Let us therefore be positive as Christians, and be at all times prepared and able to defend all our actions as being in accordance with the will of God and therefore spiritually beneficial to ourselves and to the whole congregation.

Yes, much more could be said about the above, e.g., about the often pulsating music played on such occasions, the strong drink served, the often

daring and suggestive verbal or body language used, etc. But let the above suffice for now.

How then can the Study Weekends be improved? By making and keeping some simple and strict rules. Yes, rules! A country can only remain free when there are just laws which are strictly maintained. This also applies in the Church of God. He has given us laws in order that we may remain in the freedom in which Christ has placed us. To ignore His law of love is to fall back into the slavery and hell of serving the self.

In brief, our young people should learn to "police" (sorry) their own activities.

e.g. 1. Register only those who are regular members of the "home society" and who will participate in all activities, and inform the home consistories concerning those of their young people who refused to do so.

2. Make sure that all young people are billeted either at home or with families in the host congregations. All this must be recorded and checked out.

3. Maintain a strict curfew for all, and ban or send home those who refuse to abide by all rules.

4. Ban all alcoholic beverages from all organized activities, and ban those who refuse to comply.

5. Ask the local Consistory for help and advice. It must be informed of all activities well in advance.

6. Every Society should make it a point to do some preparatory studying on the topics to be dealt with at the Study Weekend. The saying holds true: "You will only get as much out of it as you contribute."

7. Etc.

Too strict, you say? Nonsense! Will such rules severely curb attendance? Perhaps, but then it would be a blessing if all those who insist on being rowdies were to stay away. Then at least our sincere young people will no longer have to hang their heads in shame because of the constant abuses of Christian freedom in their organized activities. Then at least one is able to invite guests to one's activities knowing that they will experience a healthy Christian fellowship among young men and women who sincerely love the Lord.

Take courage, young men and women, and "fight the good fight of faith." The Lord has never promised that your task would be easy. Nevertheless, it is a great privilege to be a soldier in His army. S. DE BRUIN

news medley

The month of October is a month of remembering. That does not mean that there is nothing to be remembered in the other months of the year. Whoever reads up on Church History could fill a calendar every day of the year with important events that occurred on that specific day so many years ago. Yet, the month of October reminds us of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, when Luther affixed his ninety-five theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. Actually, that was not the Reformation as such; it was only the first step on the road which would lead to the Liberation of 1521, when Luther officially broke with the pope and the papal organization by burning the bull of excommunication. Yet the thirty-first of October was an important day and it is good that we recall the courageous deed of that unknown monk who himself was not aware of the consequences that were to come from his action.

There is another date that deserves our attention.

On Monday, October 13, 1834, the Consistory of the Church at Ulrum signed the Act of Secession or Return. Most of the members of the Congregation also signed the Act, and thus the Secession became a fact. It spread rapidly throughout the country, and even the fierce persecution and billeting of soldiers could not prevent its growth and increase. If we should wish to elaborate even a little on the importance of the Secession of 1834 and of the influence which it had, we could easily fill many pages of our magazine. However, all we want to do in our medley is mention the fact, lest we forget.

The third date I wish to mention is October 20th. The year I am referring to is 1880.

That was the year when the Free University was opened, and the date was the day when Dr. Abraham Kuyper delivered his inaugural address on "Sovereignty within each specific sphere" as I translate "Souvereiniteit in eigen kring." The banner of the cross, he declared, has been handed down to us and we are to carry it onward. It should never fall into the hands of the enemies unless we have shot our last arrow and inflicted the last wound with the last sword left to us. "And Thou," he continued, "who provest our reins, O Judge also of our nation, and the One who probest and judgest also the schools of knowledge, break Thou Thyself the walls of this institution down, and destroy them from before Thy countenance, if ever it should intend something different, if ever it should wish for anything else than to glory in that sovereign and free grace which is found in the cross of the Son of Thy most tender love."

Those were beautiful words and they no doubt were spoken from the heart. They are words which oftentimes were spoken when a church building was dedicated or when a school building was opened. The sad reality, however, is that in by far the most instances the walls remained standing but covered and hid a serious aberration from the truth on which the forefathers built their community and erected their buildings.

The same has to be said about the Free University which has abandoned the basis on which it was founded and denied the faith and the obedience of the people who sacrificed to establish it.

However, as I have already said, we should not elaborate too much on those events and developments in our news medley. But I am thankful to the brother who drew my attention to the above events to make sure that I did not forget them. I didn't.

We are thankful that the LORD has given us our Church buildings, our schools and their buildings, and that we have our Theological College. And we know that it won't happen that the walls come tumbling down if ever some false doctrine should be taught therein or if ever the basis should be denied. That should render us the more careful and should make us watchful and urge us the more humbly to listen to our God.

We turn to the news from the Churches.

From each and every bulletin it is clear that the General Synod is drawing closer. One month from the moment these lines are written or typed the assembly will have started. The various committees have sent copies of their reports to the Churches and many Consistories are bending over them to study them. That is good, as long as the brethren remember that they don't have to do the work of a Synod at the Consistory level.

One of the points which certainly will evoke much debate and argumentation back and forth is the point of Article 91 of the Acts of Synod Coaldale 1977. I don't even have to state expressly what Article 91 of those Acts deals with: it is the decision regarding the contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Some among the membership are happy with that decision, others are very unhappy with it. From articles by the Rev. J. Visscher we can learn that he is happy with it; from documents sent by some of our Churches we can know that they are not happy with it. The time is a little short, but otherwise we could have expected some articles outlining the latter position, as we now have articles explaining the former. It is good when we have some discussion of the points with which a general synod will deal. The membership should be involved, we have been taught. Of course, that can be exaggerated too, for it is and remains a fact that the decision about a specific point is to be made by a general synod and not by the membership at large or even by Consistories.

We certainly cannot say that we are not aware of the various points that will be part of the agenda of Synod Smithville 1980.

The Smithville societies also experience the effects of the upcoming Synod. They will have to look for other facilities to conduct their meetings for some time. "The basement will not be available for meetings or any other functions after October 18, 1980, until such time as our Synod is completed."

Smithville has been long preparing everything for the Synod. Sometimes, when I read about the things that had to be done, to be changed, to be improved, I had to think of the cities which host the Olympic Games: it costs them quite a sum to prepare the facilities, but once the Games are over, at least they have those facilities left. That's the case with Smithville as well: perhaps it would have taken many years to achieve what they now achieved with a view to the upcoming assembly. Every cloud has a silver lining, doesn't it!

The other time I wrote about sister-help in Smithville. Now the questionnaire has been answered and returned. When I say "the" questionnaires, I am a little to euphemistic, but we'll skip that. The Consistory had to conclude that there is no real need for such an organization. Besides, "we also received a letter from the Dunnville Women's Society

'Ora et Labora' informing us that they themselves had already organized a sister-help in their Society. The purpose is to help brothers and sisters if they need help when a mother becomes sick or so. We were really glad to hear that there is an address where we can go for help, if necessary, and maybe we should give this also into the consideration of the other Women's Societies."

I pass it on to an even wider circle, if necessary. These last two words should be added, for much more is being done in the midst of the Congregations than many are aware of. That should be recognized. Organized help oftentimes receives all the attention whereas that which is done in all quietness and without much ado goes unnoticed.

From Smithville to Hamilton is only a short trip.

It appears that a revision of the borderline between Hamilton and Lincoln was deemed necessary. The Hamilton Consistory accepted a proposal, but a borderline is no unilateral action. It can somewhat be compared to the decision about repatriation of the Constitution. Thus the proposal, although adopted by Hamilton's Consistory, cannot become effective as yet. What is needed? According to the Hamilton bulletin "The proposal is to be approved by the Consistory of Lincoln and by Classis Ontario South."

That the proposal has to be approved by the Lincoln Consistory is a matter of course.

But Classis Ontario South? Oh, please, no, no! Is the borderline between two Churches — if they think that they need one, that is — a matter which cannot be finished in the minor assemblies? Can two Consistories not decide about that? I would not know why not. But then it is not *allowed* at the major assembly. Very simple. Resist hierarchy and hierarchical developments in the bud. Kill it right there.

Hamilton, as we know, has the desire to send out a missionary. They are also talking about a mission aid worker. The following passage be quoted from the bulletin.

The Board of Mission Aid proposes to appoint a mission aid worker. Discussion is extensive and centers on the qualifications of the proposed worker, the wisdom of sending a mission aid worker before sending a missionary, and the question whether mission aid matters should be properly dealt with at a consistory. Although, after voting, the proposal is adopted, the margin is so small that further discussion appears to be indicated. A proposal to rescind the decision and further consider the matter is seconded and unanimously adopted. After some further discussion, the budget of the Board of Mission Aid is adopted.

Is that not beautiful that a proposal to rescind the decision is *unanimously* adopted when the brethren are convinced that further discussion is necessary? If everything in the Churches is done in that manner, there will be no bitterness and no discord.

I wonder why the budget of the Board of Mission Aid is adopted when the Consistory is still going to discuss the question whether mission aid matters should be properly dealt with at a consistory. Would it not have been wiser first to come to a conclusion in that point and to decide one way or another? Then it might not even have been necessary to talk about the budget. Personally I am still convinced that such matters indeed do not belong on the Consistory table for discussion and decision, but that the work of mission aid is a work of mercy and compassion and Christian love either among those who are still living in darkness or who have recently come to the faith, to be shown and done by and on behalf of the members.

We have to continue our journey, otherwise it takes too long, and the printer will become angry with me (for the first time!) if he has to squeeze too much into too small a space.

Of Ontario we have to mention something of Brampton still. "It is reported that an extension to the church would cost \$74,000. The consistory decides not to pursue this at this time, because of the high cost."

Do the brethren think that prices will go down? One would almost conclude that from the wording of the decision. But then, I know that the brethren in Brampton are smarter than that. I think that they decided on that course because they are convinced that at the moment the Congregation cannot take on those extra burdens. As you see: I am always prepared to read things with a receptive mind.

Travelling towards the West coast, we rest awhile in Carman.

The building committee informed us of a plaque or stone for our new churchbuilding. Two examples were shown, 1) black stone with white lettering and 2) white stone with gold lettering. The Consistory chose the latter one. The congregation will be asked to propose a suitable name or text to be engraved on this stone.

Would you like to know the result?

The consistory received a very encouraging response with suggestions of name and texts for the new Church building. Eighteen helpful suggestions were received. Some complaints from people who were against a special name for the church, were also received. After some discussion the Consistory decided against a special name, other than the Canadian Reformed Church. I Corinthians 3:11 was the text chosen to inscribe on the plaque. . . . Brother J. Kuik Sr., as the first immigrant here, and also the oldest member of our congregation will be asked to unveil the stone.

Up to Edmonton.

Edmonton still has not reached a definite conclusion as to which way to follow with the splitting of the Congregation. Now that the minister that was called declined the call, the matter was again taken into consideration.

It was decided that before the Calling Committee's report is dealt with to have a special Council meeting on September 29, 1980, in order to come to some final recommendations concerning the splitting of our congregation. (After this a meeting will probably be called with the congregation in order to receive as much input as possible before a final decision is made. Ed.)

It is time that the division be effectuated. Last year the Rev. De Bruin conducted Catechism Classes for four evenings a week. This has now been reduced to three evenings a week, at the cost of increase in the number of students per hour. That is not conducive to good instruction. It is my personal experience that smaller classes work best. There is more personal contact when you conduct smaller classes, the attention is better and the participation is more general. But when there is no other possibility, large classes are the only solution. And I think that three evenings of catechism is about the maximum that a minister should have.

As far as the Edmonton school is concerned, we read, "It seems that the long awaited building permit for our school edition (addition? vO) is in the process of becoming a reality. If all goes well, the work will begin some time this month."

This brings us to British Columbia. And we start in the North. Smithers demands our attention for a while. Things happen in Smithers which do not happen anywhere else. I

was greatly wondering how they are going to achieve the following: "We heard about the joint effort to start moving the farm of brother J. It is good to hear that things can still get done this way as well." You surely need a *joint effort* for that, don't you?

We also read about a sister who left Smithers for Chilliwack. Chilliwack is namely the Church within whose "territory" we find the Armed Forces Base at Sardis/Vedder Crossing. That be mentioned in connection with the fact that this sister

will be joining the armed forces and enter training for pilot. Her long-range goal is to be able to serve the mission as a pilot, either with the M.A.F. . . . or in similar work.

As you can see: ERA is not all that bad when things develop in this direction!

We move down to the (other) Valley.

As general news from the Valley we mention that the William of Orange School celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. I do not doubt that we shall receive a report on that celebration, perhaps accompanied by some photographs. It certainly makes one recall what happened in those twenty-five years and how the struggle has been blessed by the Lord. I still can see the van der Kamp family arriving at the New Westminster station, and being guided into the not-yet-quite-finished school building which was their hotel or motel for the first weeks. I recall how happy they were when it became possible to purchase an (old) house on the Crest, close to the school building, which saved transportation costs, a house that was still standing when I drove past there this summer. I recall how we went to the station to welcome Mr. S. Vander Ploeg, the second teacher — who now is the principal of the school, after the retirement of Mr. van der Kamp — and how the brethren together built up a school which was expanded gradually to what it is at present. However, let me not elaborate, for I am not the one to write a report on the festivities. We'll wait for the official one.

Right now the Fraser Valley High School will have occupied its new building. "All ladies of the Valley Churches" were "invited to help in the cleaning of the new High School on Friday, September 5." Babies would be taken care of in the Cloverdale Church basement, but the request was underlined please to "mark the babies and their bags for identification." Imagine that some plastic panties were switched!

I also read of another effort to start a band. It is too far and actually I don't have the time for it either, but I would love to join. Come on, brothers and sisters there, make a joyful noise in harmony!

That was then the "general news" from the Valley. We turn to the individual Churches.

Most of our information concerns buildings.

The Abbotsford Church apparently still has not made any definite decision on a possible "annex." The latest I read about it was that a committee came with a proposal, but that they have to study the matter again. At least, that's the impression I got.

In Chilliwack they seem to be making some progress.

We are getting close to the signing of an interim agreement with the M.B. Church along the lines as originally agreed. The matter is now in the hands of the lawyers for both sides who will contact the three Trustees when the agreement is ready to be signed.

Langley is the place where most of the activity is going on nowadays. The building is in full progress.

For those who have driven by periodically not much progress seems to have been made, but rest assured because at this stage of construction a lot of important items are thought of and taken care of, e.g. underground wiring for hearing aids, broadcasting room, P.A. system to the future Rest Home, etc. etc. If any of these items are forgotten it makes it much more difficult to install them later.

If anyone should wonder what that broadcasting room is all about, he may be helped by knowing that the Consistory had received "a letter from the Broadcasting Committee 'The Voice of the Church' proposing to incorporate broadcasting facilities in the new church building. After discussion it is decided to provide such facilities as proposed."

As you see, they build with a view to the future. That is always cheapest in the long run.

Let us conclude our journey this time in the Maranatha Church in Surrey.

The Church at Calgary, in their letter dated June 21, 1980, comes with a proposal to have one Mission News for the whole of Canada. Forwarded to Mission Board for further consideration.

If only that could become a reality! Or rather: if only we could incorporate the Mission News in our *Clarion*! If it were an insert in our magazine it would be easy and it could be achieved at relatively little extra cost to make some extra prints for those who do not subscribe to our periodical. I agree: we should not, via Mission News, compel people to subscribe, at least, if they wish to know what is going on in the mission fields. Subscription to our magazine is and should remain a voluntary thing. But if the Mission News could be incorporated into our magazine at least for those members who are subscribers, we could save quite an amount, I think.

I repeat what I wrote the other time in another connection: Two people together can always do much more than two times one person on his own. That applies everywhere. Cutting things up and each one doing it on his own is not conducive to saving money and producing economically. It should be feasible to have some reprints deposited in the literature rack or on the table at the entrance of our church buildings for those who do not subscribe to *Clarion*; subscribers would get their copy in their magazine.

Is that now really impossible? Is that honestly so difficult?

When are we going to smarten up?

It is getting late. I'm going to bed after a shower. I hope the rest of the family won't wake up from it.

Good night.

vO

IMPORTANT — SYNOD 1980

The Consistory of the Church of Smithville, Ontario, convening church of General Synod, 1980, announces the following:

1. Opening of Synod has been set, Deo Volente, for Tuesday, November 4th at 10:00 a.m. in the Canadian Reformed Church of Smithville.
2. A prayer service for Synod will be held on Monday, November 3rd at 8:00 p.m. in the same church building.

This service will be conducted by Rev. W.W.J. VanOene of Fergus, Ontario, chairman of the last held General Synod Coaldale 1977.



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.

SIDNEY, AUSTRALIA (RNS)

The debate over whether to recognize homosexuality as a justified Christian lifestyle was given a new lease of life here recently, when the Sidney Presbytery of the United Church leased one of its buildings as a place of worship for the homosexually oriented Metropolitan Community Church.

Australia's "gay" church has its roots in a visit to this country, several years ago, by the Rev. Troy Perry, a homosexual minister from California, who founded the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

In 1975, a leading member of the fellowship, the Rev. Lee Carlton, a former Churches of Christ minister and one-time chaplain with the U.S. Air Force, arrived here and started an Australian Metropolitan Community Church.

These events did not amuse another Anglican, the Very Reverend Lance Shilton, dean of Sidney, who said that a special church for homosexuals was as logical as a church for "people who beat their wives or have bad tempers." (CN)

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. (RNS)

Using modern linguistics and a computer, a husband and wife team have nearly completed a four-year project to make it easier to translate the Bible into the 3,000 languages in which it is not yet available.

The couple, Timothy and Barbara Friberg, used a computer to produce an analysis of each word in the Greek New Testament.

Using the results, which will be recorded in six books, on computer tapes and in microfilm, scholars will have ready resources for getting at the structure of the original Greek scriptures when they translate them into other languages.

The books, to be published by the Baker Book House here, will include a one-volume analytical Greek New Testament; a four-volume concordance, and a one-volume analytical lexicon. Mr. Friberg said the value of the computer's use in the project could be illustrated with an historical example.

It took Alexander Cruden, the compiler of the Bible concordance bearing his name, 17 years to complete it and he went blind doing it.

By contrast, he noted, the computer run that resulted in the combined concordance of the entire Greek New Testament (just under 280,000 words and tags) took less than 20 minutes central processing time. (CN)

NEWARK, N.J. (RNS)

The Episcopal bishop of Newark has suspended its "covenant" relationship talks with two Roman Catholic dioceses as a repudiation of the recent Vatican decision to admit married, dissident Episcopal priests.

In a sharply worded text read during a midweek service at Trinity Cathedral here, Bishop John S. Spong said the Vatican provision for an Anglican-influenced liturgy for schismatic Episcopalians was "personally insulting" to women priests. (CN)

In a late July directive issued to all broadcasters, the Mexican federal government's Department of the Interior demanded immediate termination of "all programs or messages that directly or indirectly imply propaganda of a religious nature." In recent years the government has increasingly opposed evangelical programs while permitting regular coverage of the pope's discourses and other programs promoting Roman Catholicism. A few evangelical programs — often paying premium rates for time — were still being aired from isolated stations throughout Mexico, but these have now been silenced. A *Christianity Today* correspondent in Mexico noted that this unequal treatment does not accord with that nation's constitutional provision for total separation of church and state. (CT)

Brazil may severely curtail missionary residence there now that a con-

troversial "foreigner's law," sponsored by the military government, is in effect. The law, which came into force last month despite resistance from opposition parties, empowers the government to expel anyone in an "irregular position," including expatriates married to Brazilians. It also authorizes officials to decide arbitrarily who will be given permanent visas, to limit permanent visas to five years, and to confine expatriates to specific geographical areas. The legislation is thought to have been created as a regime weapon against political activists among the Roman Catholic clergy, more than half of whom are from abroad. But the law could also reduce the Protestant missionary force in Brazil — currently the largest in any country, with more than 2,000 North Americans serving there. (CT)

A crackdown on established missions in Iran appears to be under way. Last month the last six United Presbyterian Church missionaries in Iran returned to the U.S. after official warnings that their safety could no longer be guaranteed. British Anglican missionary Jean Waddell was arrested on August 6 and charged with spying and, at mid-month, medical missionary John Coleman and his wife — also Anglicans — were missing from their clinic in Yezd. All Catholic missionaries have been summoned for interviews with government officials regarding residence permits, and Archbishop William Barden, an Irish-born Dominican, has been expelled. (CT)

Tibet's Drepung Buddhist Monastery has been authorized to accept its first monk novices since the anti-Chinese rebellion of 1959; 20 young men have been selected. The home monastery of the exiled Dalai Lama, Drepung at one time housed 10,000 monks, but now has only 170. Last month a five-man fact-finding team from the Dalai Lama was abruptly expelled from the region after a speech that touched off an impromptu demonstration, interpreted by local officials as "surreptitiously advocating Tibetan independence." (CT)

JERUSALEM (EP via RNS)

The Lebanese-born Arab prelate who heads the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Middle East has taken exception to a statement by Colonel Muammer el-Qaddafi, the Libyan leader, that it is impossible to be both Christian and Arab.

Bishop Daoud Haddad said here

What to do with Ecclesiastical Contact and the OPC ²

ANOTHER OBJECTION!

Some time ago someone mentioned to me that he objected against Art. 91 of Synod Coaldale because of the fact that, without any grounds whatsoever, Synod decided to change the composition of the committee for contact. Now this is a wondrous objection indeed! If one studies the Church Order and the Acts of our previous Synods, it soon becomes apparent that Synod has complete freedom in these matters and has often changed the make-up of its committees. After all, the committees serve the Synod and not vice versa. The Synod is free to change any committee. It can enlarge a committee, shrink a committee, and completely change the bodies who sit on the committees. It does not even have to give grounds for its decisions in this regard. It might be better if it did, but it does not have to do so.

As for the former Committee for Contact with the OPC it should be noted that it was not as completely changed as some allege. Of its five members, two were reappointed (why not three, I do not know), one moved to The Netherlands, one moved to the U.S.A., and one was not reappointed. What this means is that two-fifths of the Committee was reappointed and the other three-fifths was newly-appointed. There is then continuity between the former and the present Committee. The objection is, to say the least, weak.

ECCLESIASTICAL CONTACT — ILLEGITIMATE?

The final objection that I would like to deal with pertains to "ecclesiastical contact." There are some who have voiced the contention that this form of contact was illegitimate and ill-advised. They want Synod Smithville to declare it null and void.

Now it is true that up until 1977 our churches knew of only one relationship with other churches and that was called "correspondence." However, that something else might be in the offing had already been hinted at for quite some time. Already in 1968 there was an overture addressed to

Synod calling for another relationship with the OPC, namely, "fraternal relations." The following Synods of 1971, 1974, and 1977 all received quite a few overtures of the same nature. In the case of the Synod of Coaldale 1977, no less than four churches requested that a new relationship be created and applied to the OPC. In light of this it is strange to hear some talk as if "ecclesiastical contact" fell out of the clear blue sky on an unsuspecting church federation. Indeed, taking into account these overtures one might even have predicted that a change in policy would come one day.

Did the action of Coaldale 1977 then mean a change in policy? Yes, it did. It recognized the desirability of having another relationship besides correspondence, but then as a *temporary* relationship and as a *prelude* and *introduction* to correspondence. Correspondence remains the final goal, only the means of arriving at that goal were changed. Synod was convinced that a change was called for by the overtures it received from various churches. It seems to have wanted to place the whole discussions with the OPC in a firmer and more receptive context.

As for the arguments against this change, the fact that something is "new" is not an argument. The fact that it "supplements" the older, more-established relationship of correspondence is also not an argument. The fact that it resembles "fraternal relations" is also not an argument. The fact that it is "temporary" is not an argument against it. To argue successfully against this new relationship one will have to prove that the "considerations" of Synod Coaldale 1977 are invalid and contrary to the Church Order. Such proof has yet to be submitted.

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

By now you will have received the impression that I, for one, do not regard the success "potential" of appeals against Art. 91 Synod Coaldale as being too great. But let us for a moment assume that Synod Smithville does uphold the appeals against Art. 91, what then? What does it really

change? It simply means that we continue on our way with the OPC but then without the qualification "true church" and the agency of "ecclesiastical contact." Nevertheless, we will still be on the road to correspondence. It might make the road ahead a little bumpier, but it will not change the ultimate direction in which we are headed, namely, to sister-church status.

Yet at this point I would like to ask the fundamental question, "Are we going in the right direction by striving for correspondence with the OPC?" They do not prefer correspondence. They have tried it with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (synodaal) and terminated it with them. In the process they came to the conclusion that it asked too much of them. They lean strongly in the direction of fraternal relations and the like.

Now I am not convinced that the rules of correspondence always ask too much of participating churches. In the case of our relations with the sister churches in Australia, Holland, and South Africa it has been shown in recent years that correspondence can work quite well. Only it should be stated that that is not too surprising in a way. After all we and our sister churches all have the same point of origin (The Netherlands), the same confessions (the Three Forms of Unity), the same church order (the polity of Dordt), the same original mother tongue (Dutch). In other words, we all have a common heritage and background. We understand each other. We know how we function as churches even though we may be thousands of kilometres apart.

And that is not the case with the OPC! We may live on the same continent, but in terms of church life we are still far apart. We do not really know each other. We do not completely understand each other. And then to apply to them the rules of correspondence? These rules are very far-reaching. They include taking mutual heed of deviations in doctrine, liturgy, church government, and discipline. They include informing each other of changes and additions in confession, church order, and liturgical forms. They include accepting each other's attestations and permitting each other's ministers to preach the Word and administer the sacraments. Are we ready for that? Is it wise to move in the near future in such a direction? I do not think so.

Let us be honest and admit that, although what unites us in the faith is

far greater than what separates us, nevertheless, a gulf of history and tradition separates us. Between us and the OPC there exist different reformational confessions, a different church polity, a different church history, a different liturgical practice. To assume in such a situation that correspondence is the magic formula for dealing with each other is to assume too much. We are not ready, maybe the OPC is, but we are not ready to exchange attestations and ministers. Some day we hopefully will be, but not in the near future. We need time to grow together and understand each other.

What then? What are the options or alternatives? Is it correspondence or nothing? No, rather let us look in terms of making ecclesiastical contact a *permanent* relationship with the OPC. Let Synod have a choice in the matter of relationships with other churches. We are part of the English-speaking world, and our contacts in the future will most likely be much more in that direction, and possibly in the direction of other faithful churches that also have the Westminster Standards. Let us be realistic about this and plan for it now.

As for the rules governing this alternative relationship, let us look in the direction of our existing rules with the OPC. The first rule for ecclesiastical contact is "to invite delegates to each other's General Assemblies or General Synods and to accord such delegates privileges of the floor in the Assembly or Synod, but no vote." The second rule is "to exchange Minutes and Acts of each other's General Assemblies and General Synods as well

as communications on major issues of mutual concern, and to solicit comments on these documents." Should these existing rules not be deemed sufficient, they can be altered.

This, then, is my suggestion with regard to the OPC. In this way we are simply stating that we recognize each other as true churches, that we want to help and assist each other, and that by growing exposure to each other we hope to grow closer together. In that way, we are sensitive to our differences as churches of Jesus Christ, but we yet express the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.

But what about our differences? Will we still have to deal with them or can we forget about them seeing that ecclesiastical contact would be permanent anyway? There are a number of approaches possible here. We can continue to talk to the OPC in the hope that they will be ironed out. We can also reassess our differences in the light of this new relationship, recognize them, and leave it at that. We can deal with them in an altogether different way, namely, within the context of the Reformed International Synod that is being organized. In this way the differences between true churches having the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards could be dealt with on an international level. Finally, we can also change our approach to differences with the OPC. Up until now we have been asking a lot of questions and doing a lot of wondering, but why not give a committee the mandate to draw up positive amendments to the Westminster Standards and Polity and

to submit these to the OPC for consideration and adoption? That might be doing them an even greater service.

WHAT ABOUT KOREA?

In light of the above, it would also be beneficial if we consider our Korea situation from the direction of permanent ecclesiastical contact. We are not that far yet and I realize that; however I whole-heartedly concur with the view that Dr. J. Faber expressed in *Clarion* (June 16, 1979). He stated, "We ought to consider whether, instead of such correspondence, we should not create a less-comprehensive 'ecclesiastical contact,' similar to the contact we now have with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, but in a more permanent manner" (p. 263).

It is a known fact that our sister churches in Australia and Holland have correspondence with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koryu-pa). Does it function and operate as it should? Not really. A careful perusal of their Acts reveals that in this case the differences in confessions, church polity, and church history are augmented by differences of a social, linguistic, and cultural nature. For many years now our deputies for Correspondence with Churches Abroad have been trying to "get a handle" on the Korean church situation. We have finally achieved some understanding, but it is ever so small. We receive communications that we do not comprehend fully, reports that we cannot read, and mandates that are hard to implement. Let us recognize this fact and give subsequent Synods a realistic alternative with regards to our mutual relations. In that way we do not promise what we cannot fulfill. In that way we do more justice to the catholic character of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray that the Lord will grant much wisdom to the General Synod that will soon meet in Smithville. May its decisions, also in the area of inter-church relations, be to the glory of the Lord.

J. VISSCHER

INTERNATIONAL — Continued from page 473.

that "we Arab Christians are not concerned" with the col. Qaddafi's call to Arab Christians to embrace Islam, on the grounds that being both Christian and Arab involves a contradiction. The Libyan leader, who considers himself as "the guardian of Arab nationalism and of Arab unity," made the assertion in the course of a recent interview with the Beirut, Lebanon, newspaper *El Safir*.

Bishop Haddad, whose family — the oldest Christian family in the Middle East — traces its ancestry back to the fourth century, pointed out that there are about 10 million Arab Christians in the world today. He said that Col. Qaddafi's viewpoint about Arab Christians was "against the Qoran,

which commands fair treatment of and tolerance towards the people of the Book (Christians and Jews)." (CC)

BUDAPEST (EP)

For the first time since the communists took over Hungary in 1948-49, the country's teenagers will soon be able to study the Bible in school.

The "Bible as literature" — not as a "holy book" — is being introduced at the next semester of Hungary's lyceum-type secondary schools. Even with this carefully defined structure, however, introduction of the Bible in Hungary high-school curriculum marks a unique step in Eastern Europe and the Soviet bloc at large. (CC)

vO

OUR COVER

Mr. E. De Haan of Surrey, B.C., took this cover picture on one of the rare occasions that the top of Mount Robson in the Canadian Rockies was not hidden in the clouds.

The Canadian Scene 2

An appeal to the Canadians to join the revolt against England by the Thirteen Colonies failed, and English and French Canadians fought side by side to repel the Americans when they invaded. The latter managed to capture Montreal, but they failed to take Quebec City and soon withdrew when they did not get any local support. On July 4, 1776, the leaders of the Thirteen Colonies signed the "Declaration of Independence" and a few years later the British lost the Colonies officially by the Treaty of Versailles.

There had been many British settlers in the colonies who did not support the revolution and remained loyal to England. Many of these people came across the border because they were being mistreated by their fellow-citizens. Some were tarred and feathered, many were beaten by mobs, some were lynched, murdered, or executed. Many lost their homes and possessions. During the War of Independence in the States some 40,000 of them fled north into British Territory. Most of them settled in Nova Scotia and present-day New Brunswick, and a lot of them went to Southern Ontario, at that time called Upper Canada.

For the first time now there was a sizeable English-speaking population in Canada. This fact was recognized in the Constitutional Act of 1791, which created an English-speaking Upper Canada and a French-speaking Lower Canada.

In the meantime the exploration of the West Coast had only begun. The sea voyage from Europe to the West Coast was so terribly long and dangerous that few ventured that far, and the real discovery of the coast of British Columbia had to wait until explorers could set out from harbours that were relatively close, which, in practice, meant from Russian ports in Siberia, or Spanish bases in Mexico and present-day California.

The Russians were the first to begin serious exploration. In 1728 Vitus Bering, a Dane in Russian service made his first trip to Alaska. By the middle of the eighteenth century Russian traders were active in the fur trade on the Aleutian Islands and the Alaska Coast. Word of these activities filtered

through to Spain, and they became afraid that the Russians would come farther and farther south and encroach on the territory that Spain considered hers. In April 1773 the Viceroy of New Spain was ordered to explore the Northwest Coast and to safeguard the Spanish interests there. From then on the Spanish explored large areas of the West Coast from California to Alaska.

Next on the scene in Beautiful B.C. was the famous navigator James Cook. The British were still vitally interested in a passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific and Captain Cook was to search for it from the west side of the continent. James Cook had made the long voyage via Cape of Good Hope and Australia, and he made the first recorded landing of Europeans on the West Coast of Canada when he landed in Nootka Sound where the rotted masts of his ship were replaced. Cook's account of his meeting with the natives at Nootka Sound was unquestionably the best description made by any expedition at the time. Cook's voyage was to have enormous consequences, for, when his crew reached China, they found that the furs they had traded casually with the natives in B.C. had an amazing market value in China. Poor Cook, however, never saw that day, because he was murdered by the natives in Hawaii, where he stopped to winter in February 1779. The many thousands of tourists from our province that winter in Hawaii now don't realize that there was a time when it was rather dangerous to visit those beautiful islands. From that time on, the fur trade became very important in the development of the Coast. It was the sea otter which was the most sought-after fur on the coast and the competition was strong between the Russians, the English, the Americans, and the Spanish.

The Overland Fur Trade was centered mainly in Montreal. Traders fanned out all over the Canadian West to the Rockies and north to Hudson's Bay. In 1784 the famous North West Company was established by the combination of a number of independent trading partnerships. This new company that was started in competition with the older established Hudson's

Bay Company was very ambitious and aggressive. The partners and clerks were mostly Scottish, but the men who did all the heavy physical work were almost all French Canadians. Some of the great explorers working for this company were Alexander McKenzie, Simon Fraser, and David Thompson. Each one of these was instrumental in the opening up of British Columbia, and three great rivers were named after them. In 1821 the two companies merged in what was, in effect, a takeover by the Hudson's Bay Company. The new company now enjoyed the trading rights between Hudson's Bay, the Great Lakes, and the Pacific Coast as far south as Astoria, Oregon. Captain George Vancouver's name is remembered for his exploration and his mapping of the Pacific Coast.

Some of you may not realize that Canada has actually been at war with the United States in the War of 1812. The war, in effect, was a by-product of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. Britain in a high-handed way searched American ships on the high seas to make sure that they were not carrying arms for the French. The Americans resented this and decided to punish England by taking Canada away from them. At the same time this would give them more room for expansion. In this connection Major General Isaac Brock should be mentioned. He rallied the forces around him, and it was under his leadership that the troops managed to repel the invaders who badly outnumbered them. The war ended in a stalemate that restored the pre-war boundaries. French and British Canadians had fought together to defend their country.

The old order came under attack in the 1820s. In French or Lower Canada Louis Joseph Papineau led radicals in a nationalistic agitation for ethnic autonomy. In Upper Canada it was William Lyon Mackenzie who led a demand for a republican form of government. Both movements ended in a rebellion, and they were swiftly quelled by the army. Both leaders crossed to the States and found refuge there. The British appointed the Earl of Durham to find a solution to the colonial ills in Canada. In the Durham Report (1839) he recommended the reunification of Upper and Lower Canada, the anglicization of Quebec, and the creation of an executive responsible to the elected legislature. The Act of Union was passed the following year by the British Parliament, joining the two

Canadas into one, and giving each equal representation in the joint legislature. Finally, ten years later, in 1849, responsible government was granted under Colonial Secretary Earl Grey. A year later the colony of Nova Scotia also was granted responsible government.

The following two decades witnessed a gradual liberalization of colonial life. Municipal corporations were organized. Anglican church privileges and the seigneurial system in Quebec were established. A Reciprocity Treaty negotiated with the U.S. facilitated industrial and commercial development.

Ethnic tensions and friction also increased. The large-scale immigration of Irish Catholics, due to the Irish potato famine, did not help matters either. The new settlers brought their strong anti-Protestant prejudices with them, and that in turn inspired anti-Catholic bigotry among the English Protestants. In addition, the friction between the French and English also increased greatly, and no party could bring any stability to the political scene, not even by way of coalition. There was also the fear that the Northern States, which emerged victorious out of the American Civil War, would retaliate against British sympathies for the South by invading Canada.

Out of all these concerns grew the pressure for the unification of all the North American British colonies. George Etienne Cartier and John A. McDonald of the Conservative Party and George Brown of the Liberals put their differences aside and formed a coalition to work towards confederation. A delegation of French and English-Canadian leaders travelled to Charlottetown, P.E.I., to undertake the difficult task of convincing the leaders of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island that they should enter into a federal union with the two Canadas. The conference was continued the next month, in October 1864, in Quebec City to work out the details of an agreement. Tupper and Tilley, the leaders in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, did manage to bring their provinces into confederation. Prince Edward Island rejected the proposal but joined in 1873. Newfoundland did not join the confederation until 1949, when Joey Smallwood brought the "Newfies" into the Canadian union.

It was on July 1st, 1867, that the

British North America Act was proclaimed in Canada, the first time in history that a colony had achieved virtual independence and responsible government without leaving the empire. The B.N.A. Act is considered the written part of the Canadian Constitution. The Dominion of Canada continued to be subject to the authority of the British crown. The Act spells out the distribution of powers between the federal parliament and the provincial legislatures, the independence of the judiciary is insured, and the provincial ownership of

crown lands is established. The B.N.A. Act can be amended by an address to the British Parliament upon a resolution and address of the Parliament of Canada. Many attempts have been made at Federal-Provincial conferences to get the provinces and the federal government to agree on a formula to "bring the Constitution home," but so far without success.

(To be continued.)

A.C. LENGKEEK

PRESS RELEASE

of Classis Ontario-North of the Canadian Reformed Churches on September 11, 1980, held at Thornhill, Ontario.

1. On behalf of the Church at Burlington-East Rev. M. van Beveren calls the meeting to order. He requests the brethren to sing Psalm 146:1, 3, reads Psalm 146 and leads in prayer. He welcomes the brethren, especially br. R. Aasman who accepted the call from the Church at Guelph and who is present for the peremptory examination. Also welcomed are Rev. J. Geertsema and Rev. Cl. Stam who are present as Deputies ad Article 49 Church Order with a view to the examination.

2. The delegates of the Church at Brampton examine the credentials and report that they are in good order.

3. Classis is constituted. The moderamen is: Chairman: Rev. W.W.J. VanOene; Clerk: Rev. M. Pouwelse; Assessor: Rev. M. van Beveren.

4. The chairman congratulates Rev. J. Mulder on the occasion of his 25th wedding anniversary and his 25th year in the ministry.

5. After br. R. Aasman has read his sermon proposal on Micah 6:1-8, Classis continues to peremptory examination. Classis decides to admit br. R. Aasman to the ministry of the gospel. The chairman expresses Classis' thankfulness to the Lord for the decision and extends its congratulations to br. Aasman and to the Church at Guelph which is to receive a minister of the Word. Br. Aasman confirms his agreement with the Subscription Form for ministers.

6. The classical appointments for preaching in vacant churches are as

follows: for Ottawa: Sept. 14, Rev. W. Pouwelse; Sept. 28, Rev. J. Mulder; Oct. 12, Rev. M. van Beveren; Oct. 26, Rev. W.W.J. VanOene; Nov. 9, Rev. W. Pouwelse; Nov. 30, Rev. J. Mulder; Dec. 21, Rev. M. van Beveren; Jan. 11, Rev. W.W.J. VanOene; Feb. 1, Rev. R. Aasman; Feb. 22, Rev. W. Pouwelse; March 15, Rev. J. Mulder; Apr. 5, Rev. M. van Beveren; Apr. 19, Rev. W.W.J. VanOene; May 3, Rev. R. Aasman; May 17, Rev. W. Pouwelse. For Brampton: Sept. 14, Rev. W.W.J. VanOene; Nov. 2, Rev. M. van Beveren; Jan. 11, Rev. W. Pouwelse; March 8, Rev. R. Aasman; May 10, Rev. J. Mulder.

7. The Church at Burlington-East gives an oral report re the Archives. The brethren appointed to audit the books for the Fund for Needy Churches ask some questions about their work. The Church at Guelph, appointed for the Fund for needy Students requests and receives advice re a request for financial assistance.

8. It is decided to maintain the appointments made by Classis March 20, 1980.

9. The Church at Guelph invites the Churches to attend the ordination and inauguration of br. R. Aasman as their minister on Sunday, September 14th.

10. The next Classis will be held, the Lord willing, on December 11, 1980 at 9:00 a.m. in Thornhill. The convening Church is Burlington-West. The moderamen will be Chairman: Rev. J. Mulder, Clerk: Rev. W.W.J. VanOene; Assessor: Rev. W. Pouwelse.

11. The Assessor leads in thanksgiving and prayer.

For Classis,
M. VAN BEVEREN

From Childhood to Adulthood

"... until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried by every wind of doctrine..." (Eph. 4:13, 14).

This theme and Bible passage were the focal points of the first Emmanuel Christian High School Grade 12 graduation. Supporters, members, staff, family, and friends from Fergus and Guelph gathered together on Friday evening, September 12, to celebrate this joyous occasion. To a non-informed outsider, this would seem just a mere formality in bestowing the Secondary School Graduation Diploma to Otto Bouwman, Monica DeVries, John Hutten, and Wayne VanVeen. However, in his opening words, the vice-principal emphasized that this was a *first*; an expression of the hard work, effort, and prayers that went into establishing a school system from Grades 1 to 12. Mr. P. Smid then introduced Rev. W.W.J. VanOene, the main speaker for the evening. Mr. Smid pointed out that Rev. VanOene was active in the school society for many years, as well as being the pastor of the graduating students.

Rev. VanOene began by saying that the small number of graduating students might draw a chuckle from the world. They would ask, "What is the need for a separate education for these students?" However, this was a real graduation and a moment of real gratitude. Students who are graduating look at the school building in June with some relief. It signals the end of homework, the end of being subject to school rules; they now belong to the adult world. Their diploma dissolves the bond with the school. But that was exactly the purpose of all their work at school — to reach this stage of adulthood. The graduates begin to realize that "... we learn not for school but for life."

Rev. VanOene pointed out that the teachers also look forward to this graduation. It was their purpose to bring the students to the stage where they had outgrown their children's shoes and now enter society. But does

not every other public school attempt to do this? The difference is that our students are taught on the basis of the Bible so that they may face life as Christians. As was quoted from Ephesians 4, the students are taught to withstand the winds of change and false doctrine. They learn to oppose and overcome dangers. The parents have realized the need to stand on solid ground. This realization is now being passed on to the graduates. The students will also begin to realize that graduating from a Reformed high school is an enormous privilege. It was there that they were shown the Truth in every subject so that they might prepare for true adulthood. Rev. VanOene concluded his address by expressing the hope that they would demonstrate that they are part of the adult world by standing and continuing on the foundation of God's Word. By acting like true adults, the graduates would plot a steady course through life.

Following Rev. VanOene's address and congregational singing,

the time came for the official presentation of the diplomas to the four graduates. Before the actual presentation, the principal spoke briefly to the graduates. Mr. N. Vandooren recalled another significant event — when the doors of the high school were first opened in September of 1977. However, he stated that this graduation was an even more important event. The evening's ceremonies gave everyone a glimpse of the fruits of Reformed education from Grades 1 to 12. He recalled that the school board soon realized that adding a high school was more than just adding grades to the elementary school. It involved a totally new format with increased specialization in all areas. However, we continued to receive His blessings. The school helped the students to grow spiritually and guided their path to fulfill the will of the Lord. The teachers also learned from the students, and Mr. Vandooren concluded, "We miss you already, graduates."

Otto, Monica, John, and Wayne were introduced separately by Mr. H. VanDooren. Their strength of character was revealed by being able to smile away the gentle "ribbing" from Mr. H. From Otto's debating abilities to Monica's analytical mind to John's "poetry in slow motion" to Wayne's



Left to Right: Otto Bouwman, Monica DeVries, Wayne VanVeen, John Hutten, Mr. N. Vandooren.

speed around the track, we were all reminded of the uniqueness of each graduate and their contributions to the school.

In her valedictorian address, Monica reminisced about the years from early grade school to the present graduation. Looking ten years into the future, she humourously speculated on the graduates' various occupations. The teachers then got their turn for the "ribbing": Mr. N's trying to explain why people react as they do; Mr. H's never being able to understand that students don't like homework every night; and Mrs. Ysselstein who could meet every problem with a smile. Monica concluded by thanking the parents, school board, and teachers for fulfilling the promise at baptism. Nothing can be achieved "... unless the Lord decides to bless . . ."

The lights were then dimmed, and Mrs. Ysselstein presented a slide and music portrait of the high school. The mood of the pictures were aptly captured with the accompanying music. The flashing images led us from a sunrise picture of Guelph's famous landmark, to the teachers and students arriving at the school, to faces of students and teachers at work, to everyone leaving at the end of the day. The final slide, showing the front view of the high school, was accompanied by the 1812 overture. What a spine-tingling way to remind us of our pride in our school and the blessings the Lord has bestowed upon us.

Ninette Knegt represented the present Grade 12 class by poetically describing the graduates. Then the chairman of the board, Mr. K. Sikkema, spoke on behalf of the board. He stated that the evening's graduation was a great fulfillment and a crown of many hours of hard work. Many dared not think it possible fifteen years ago. Everyone has sacrificed, but still nobody suffered. We thank the Lord that this was made possible in a world that turns its back to God. Mr. Sikkema's final advice to the graduates was, "Make your Christian education be known."

Following Mr. Sikkema's closing prayer, the spirit of the evening was captured in the concluding hymn:

"Now thank we all our God
With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done
In whom His world rejoices . . ."

H. VANDOOREN

THE CONFESSION CONCERNING THE CHURCH: "CONSENSUS OR CONFUSION?"¹ — *Continued*

in duty bound to employ their gifts readily and cheerfully for the advantage and salvation of the other members. Christ gathers, and we must let ourselves *be* gathered as living members in the unity of faith.

So, I would submit, the teaching of our confession is indeed simple. Christ gathers in the unity of the true faith and thus constitutes the communion of saints. We must obey Him and maintain the unity of the Church, being living members who are active in employing their gifts for the other members. We need not diffuse matters by starting out from God's secret counsel or decree of election and create an invisible Church, but *yh* shall begin concretely with His expressed norms, joining the assembly where the marks are clearly maintained according to God's Word. There is the true Church, for us and for everyone (Art. 28).

Cl. STAM

(*To be continued.*)

NOTES

¹ Adapted version of a speech delivered at the Opening Meeting of the Men's and Women's Societies of Smithville, September, 1980.

² J. Kamphuis, *In Dienst Van De Vrede*, de Vuurbaak, 1980.

³ Joh. Francke, *Varia De Ecclesia*, Uitg. Boersma, 1980.

⁴ *Nederlands Dagblad*, June 20, 1980.

⁵ Committee Report to Classis Alberta Manitoba, April 18, 1979, p. 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ K. Schilder, *De Kerk* (III, p. 246).

⁸ Observations, *Acts*, Classis Alberta-Manitoba, April 18, 1979.

⁹ K. Schilder, *De Kerk* (I, p. 154ff.).

¹⁰ Committee Report, p. 11, sub Cl.

¹¹ K. Schilder, *Christelijke Religie*, p. 88ff.

¹² Joh. Francke, *op. cit.*, p. 26ff.

¹³ Rev. D. de Jong, *Two Sermons on L.D. 21*, p. 11ff.

¹⁴ K. Schilder, *Preken* (III, p. 230).

¹⁵ Rev. D. de Jong, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 13.

¹⁶ Committee Report, p. 2, IIA, 2, 3; Counter-report Neerlandia, pp. 1, 2.

¹⁷ Joh. Francke, *op. cit.*, p. 46ff.

Letters-to-the-Editor

Groningen, 5 september 1980

Geachte Redactie, *

Op zondag 5 oktober 1980 zal door Radio Nederland Wereldomroep een kerkdienst worden uitgezonden vanuit de Geref. Kerk te 's Hertogenbosch. In deze dienst zal voorgaan Ds. S. Braaksma van 's Hertogenbosch. Voordat Ds. Braaksma zich in 1979 aan de gemeente van 's Hertogenbosch verbond, was hij van 1967 tot 1979 als zendeling werkzaam te Curitiba in Brazilië.

Aangezien Uw blad voor een belangrijk deel wordt gelezen door uit Nederland afkomstige immigranten, zouden wij het op prijs stellen als U in Uw blad een aankondiging aan deze dienst zoudt willen wijden. Veel immigranten horen nog graag weer eens eendergelijke dienst uit Nederland, terwijl vaak niet bekend is dat deze wordt uitgezonden. Aangezien de ontvangst van een dergelijke niet in alle delen van de wereld even goed is, heeft de Werkgroep ook gemeend van deze dienst een cassette opname beschikbaar te moeten stellen. Deze cassette is verkrijgbaar door een briefje te zenden naar:

Werkgroep Radio en T.V. Kerkdiensten
Postbus 1703
1200 BS Hilversum.

De kosten bedragen Hfl. 5,= per cassette, incl. portiekosten, terwijl verzending plaatsvindt per luchtpost of per SAL. Betaling in buitenlandse valuta of d.m.v. een Money Order is uiteraard ook mogelijk.

Onze Werkgroep, die uitgaat van het Landelijk Verband van Evangelisatie commissies, heeft gedurende haar ongeveer 1 jarig bestaan, naast diverse andere activiteiten, reeds meer dan 2000 cassettes verzonden van door de Radio of T.V. Kerkdiensten. Een groot aantal van deze cassettes werd verzonden naar o.a. Australië, Nieuw Zeeland, Canada, de Ver. Staten en nog andere landen.

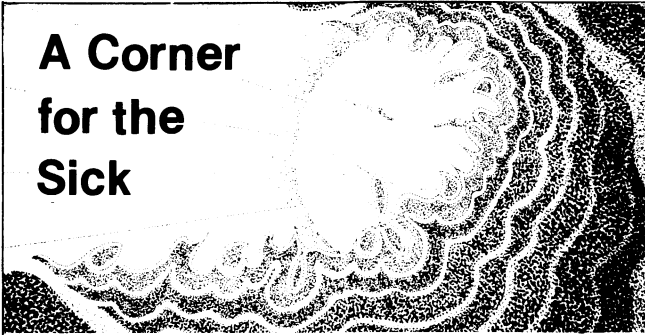
Wij hopen in dezen ook op Uw medewerking te mogen rekenen. Voor nadere inlichtingen kunt U altijd terecht op onderstaand adres.

Met vriendelijke groeten,

Hoogachtend,
G.J.W. HUBERTS
A. v.d. Leeuwlaan 23
9721 TE Groningen
The Netherlands

* Wij ontvingen deze brief pas op 22 september, maar plaatsen hem toch, omdat sommige lezers misschien gebruik willen maken van de gelegenheid een cassette te bestellen.

A Corner for the Sick



“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Hebrews 13:8

If we want to understand the full meaning of this text, we will have to know who the Lord Jesus Christ was yesterday. I believe we may interpret yesterday as meaning the past, the Old Testament time. We believe, as we confess it in Lord's Day 1 of our Catechism, that God is a triune God. This confession mentions the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in one sentence. They belong together. The one does not exist without the other.

When it is asked in Lord's Day 1: “What is your only comfort in life and death?” each of us answers, “That I, with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my HEAVENLY FATHER not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation; wherefore by HIS HOLY SPIRIT He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him.”

In Hebrews 13:7, the believers are urged to remember their leaders, those who spoke the WORDS OF GOD to them. They have to consider the outcome of their lives and imitate their FAITH. In order to do so we must turn our thoughts to history.

“When THEY spoke to you the word of God,” reminds us of Moses, who had to tell God's laws to the people of Israel. It also reminds us of Exodus 3:13-16 where Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: this is My Name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.” “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” We should bear this text in mind, as an army would carry its banner ahead of them in battle.

Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but we must fight the good fight of FAITH.

We are strengthened with these words of Scripture. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword”? Romans 8:35. “No, in all things we are conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” We may know this from His Word.

I am the first, and I the Last,
through endless years the same;
I AM, is My memorial still,
and My eternal name.

I am the first, and I the Last;
time centres all in Me;
Th'Almighty God, who was, and is
and evermore shall be.

From: *Book of Praise*



WILMA VAN DRONGELEN,
31827 Forest Avenue,
Clearbrook, B.C.

The Lord willing, Wilma will celebrate her 23rd birthday on November 3rd. I cannot tell you much about Wilma other than that she lives at home and is mentally handicapped. I hereby would like to ask you, brothers and sisters, to send me some updated information about our Calendar children. It provides the readers with a better idea of how to help and strengthen the bond between them and to extend some “sunshine” where it is most needed.

Miss Jenny Hansman from Langley, B.C. wrote the following note: “I wish to sincerely thank all the brothers and sisters who showed their thoughtfulness in sending me their get well wishes.”

If you know of anyone who would benefit from a little extra attention, please send your requests to:

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

our little magazine

Dear Busy Beavers,

You all know that on October 31 we remember Reformation Day.

"Reformation Day?" you may say.

Yes, it's a big word.

But that's because it's so important!

When we talk about the Reformation, we are talking about Church History.

Now when we go to church nobody bothers us at all.

But it wasn't always that way! Not at all!

Our ministers preach God's Word to us in a language we can all understand.

But it wasn't always that way!

We can read the Bible at home and at school all we like.

But just before the time of the Reformation very few people could even read the Bible. Very often there was no Bible in their own language!

Just after the Reformation God's people were persecuted and many were killed just for going to church or reading the Bible.

Preachers were persecuted and died at the stake just like their church goers.

God's people suffered horribly. But even in their suffering they knew themselves to be rich because they had God's Word.

Through men like Calvin and Luther God's Word again took its right place in the lives of God's people.

That's why the Reformation was such a great gift of God.

And that's why today we still remember Reformation Day.

Who am I?

Just like in Hebrews 11 we read of the "heroes of faith" there were many heroes in the days of the Reformation. How many do you know? Maybe you have a book to help you. Or your older brother or sister or Dad or Mom. Try to name them all!

1. This "Squire George" was "kidnapped" by "robbers" while travelling. Who was he?

CLUE: He translated the Bible into German.

2. This brave soldier died in battle defending his faith against Romanist forces. Who was he?

CLUE: He lived in Switzerland.

3. This reformer was kidnapped and made a galley slave.

CLUE: He led the reformation in Scotland.

4. Who escaped Paris dressed as a vinedresser?

CLUE: He wrote many books about the Bible, many of which we still read today.

5. This fearless preacher against the corruptions of the Romanist church, although offered a safe conduct, was terribly mistreated and burned at the stake.

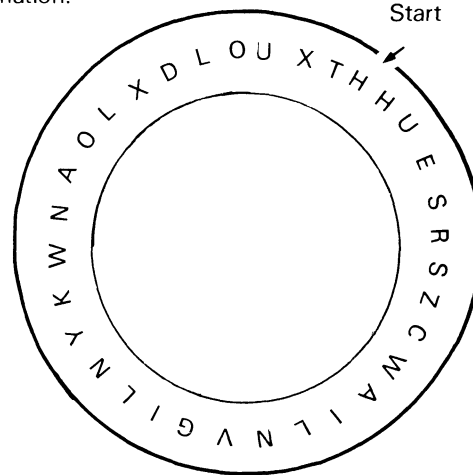
CLUE: He was rector at Prague University.

6. This Bible translator had to flee England and also lost his life at the stake.

Reformation Circle Puzzle

by Busy Beaver Sharon Knol

Every other space. Find some reformers, fore-runners of the Reformation.



FOR YOU TO DO

Have you noticed how many beautiful and interesting things there are all around in autumn? You can use some of these things to make beautiful pictures and interesting collections! Try some of these things!

1. Make a picture of a labelled collection of different kinds of SEEDS.
2. Make a LEAF collection. (Dry the leaves between sheets of newspaper or paper towelling under a pile of books.)
3. Make a bouquet of dried grasses, seed pods, etc.
4. Gather leaves to put in a hole in your garden. (Don't burn good fertilizer!)
5. When you're riding the bus or in your car have a contest to see who can see the most signs of fall, eg., autumn flowers, birds flying south, farmers plowing, people picking fruit, etc.

QUIZ TIME

Busy Beaver Theodore Kanis wants you to unscramble these:

ANIMAL NAMES

While you're unscrambling their names try to think of how they get ready for winter during the autumn

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| 1. SOEOM | 7. NKKSU |
| 2. AKWH | 8. ABRBIT |
| 3. THNROE | 9. COOCRAN |
| 4. LEK | 10. OMUSE |
| 5. FLOW | 11. LOW |
| 6. LKAJAC | 12. ERBA |

Code Quiz

by Busy Beaver Diane Smith

Code			
9 - W	1 - S	20 - L	16 - Q
2 - N	10 - K	17 - M	11 - B
13 - A	15 - V	18 - R	6 - G
3 - H	7 - Y	4 - I	12 - U
8 - E	19 - D	14 - O	5 - T