

Round About the Pulpit ³

IN THE PEW

"Give ear, O My people, to My teaching; incline your ears to the words of My mouth."

Psalms 78:1

1. To Listen Is a Verb

It may seem illogical that now already, after having only started about the pulpit, we turn our attention to the pew; that is, to the people in the pew and how they listen: "Give ear, O My people!" Yet, it is quite logical. First, the topic is "Round About the Pulpit" and not "In the Pulpit." Then, we have already agreed that preaching is a "covenantal matter": it must be seen within the framework of the covenantal relationship between the LORD and His people in the Reformed liturgy. In this liturgy there can be no pulpit without the pew. Preaching is a two-sided matter and two-way traffic.

"To learn God's Word" is the great priority in the obedience to the fourth commandment according to Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism. The question arises, "How do people-in-the-pew listen?" One is even inclined to ask, "Do they really listen?" How much do they remember of yesterday's sermons? To what extent are they not only hearers of the Word but also doers, James 1:22?

If one is a bit pessimistic here, he finds himself in the company of the Saviour. There is that well-known parable or allegory, Matt. 13:1-9 and 18-23. What shall we call it? The parable of the sower? Or rather: the parable of the seed? Or even better: the parable of the soil! The Lord started His explanation with the words, "When any one hears the Word of the kingdom . . ." He then continued to describe the four-fold reaction (or non-reaction) of the "soil": the hearts of the hearers, and *only one* of them is the proper and fruitful way of "Give ear, O My people!"

Bible-critics maintain that this parable cannot have been spoken by the Lord Himself, because it reflects conditions in the church of the second century. Although we reject this "cannot," we must agree that the parable reflects the situation or conditions among the average church-audience. Much of the seed comes to waste, by the "birds" that pick it away, by the sun burning on shallow soil, by the weeds of worldly cares. Thus this parable represents the urgent call and warning of *all* Scripture, from Moses on, throughout all the prophets, gospels, and epistles, even to Revelation, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," repeated seven times in chapters 2 and 3. Listen, listen, listen! Preaching may be "indispensable for bringing men to salvation" (Form Ordination Ministers), but listening, "incline your ears to the words of my mouth," Ps. 78:1, is no less "indispensable for bringing men to salvation."

And even that is not enough. "Be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves . . .," James 1:22. Thus again the question, "How does the pew listen?"; maybe even, "Does the pew listen?"

The preacher would do well, for himself, not to wander among the flock on the parking lot after the serv-

ice. He would see the birds busily picking away the seed, the foxes spoiling the vineyard.

Experience tells us a little about "how?" they listen. Sometimes only one expression settled in the memory. Or, one was impressed by the volume of the preacher's voice. Only very few would be able to repeat the central message of the sermon, and how it was elaborated on in the course of the sermon. Others, again, went to church with a prejudice in their hearts which made them deaf to the preaching. "Incline your ears . . ."

A brother colleague, who already passed on to the Lord, once said to me, "Bert, maybe we should preach only once a month; then people would look forward, count the days, and 'eat' the sermon; now it has become a custom to 'sit under' two sermons a week." Yes, he was discouraged at that moment, because our preaching sometimes seems to be no more than plowing on rocks.

It is not all that bad. God's people love Psalms such as 46, 84, 122, that sing of the longing for God's House. There is still a lot of good and well-prepared "soil" that receives the "seed" readily and hungrily. And . . . if one wants to criticize, why not also criticize the pulpit? The pious statement, "If only God's Word is brought," is nonsense. A sermon may be confused and confusing because the preacher is a confused man, or because he was lazy, or because he lives in an ivory tower. He may even have the unbelievable "gift" of making the living and powerful Word of God uninteresting, while droning through his manuscript. One feels a deep respect for the congregation which sits patiently through such "sermon sessions" and is even able to pick some grains!

To listen is a verb. This statement should be translated into Dutch to get the point. "Luisteren is een *werkwoord*." To listen is a work, is labour, even difficult and hard labour sometimes. The pew is not to be a lazy-boy, where one relaxes and now and then takes a little nap. The pew is the place where those dangers, expressed in that parable of the sower, seed, and soil, have to be coped with and defeated.

In the previous article we concluded that a definition of a sermon should, at least, contain four terms: *explanation* and *proclamation*; *appropriation* and *application*. Two of these, the latter pair, are to be done by "the pew," be it with the guidance and prodding of the pulpit.

"Preaching is a verb (!)"; experts say that one hour in the pulpit is equal to six hours of manual labour. But if the pew has to take on half of the "preaching situation," then the conclusion must be that to listen to the preaching in such a manner that one gets out of it all that one can, and that it bears fruits in one's life, is quite a heavy labour. The admonition, "Take heed . . ." occurs about thirty-five times in the New Testament. Most of the time it has to do with "Take heed *how you listen!*" Psalm 78:1 says it all.

That's why, in the first Form of Prayer, *Book of Praise*, p. 476, we not only pray, "Open now the mouth of Thy servant . . .," but also, "Prepare our hearts to *receive* it, to *understand* it, and to *preserve* it . . ." We italicized

these three verbs. Each is an essential part of proper listening. And, obviously, we cannot listen that way without divine assistance. "Prepare our hearts . . ." That's the work of the Holy Spirit.

2. "Let the Holy Spirit work . . ."

These words are taken from the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 38. The whole sentence is, "Second, that all the days of my life I rest from my evil works, let the Lord work in me by His Holy Spirit, and thus begin in this life the eternal sabbath."

The College Training tries to convince future preachers that the preparation of their sermons is to take the whole week. No, no, that does not mean that your minister can do nothing but prepare his sermons. He should be faithful in all the branches of his work. But, by Monday morning at the latest he should know what he is going to preach about the coming Sunday, and then work on it, meditate on it, pray on it, let it simmer, and so on. Proper preparation for preaching takes the whole week.

According to Lord's Day 38 of the Catechism, preparing for listening should also take the whole week.

Before one rejects this tall statement off hand, please listen. First, there is the prayer we just quoted, "Prepare our hearts . . ." If we pray that only during the first service on the Lord's Day, it comes a bit late (though not too late for the Lord to hear it). As much as we should pray for our minister during the days of the week, with a view to the upcoming sabbath, so we must pray that prayer of heart-preparation during the week.

But, it is always "pray and work." Having that "unsettling" parable in the back of our minds, we will be prepared to accept the words of the Catechism, "all the days of my life." The Holy Spirit works faith in my heart by the preaching of the Gospel, Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 7, 21, 25, 31, 35, 48. But this work of the Holy Spirit, during and by means of the preaching, is not to be separated from "letting Him work in my heart all the days of my life by resting from my evil works." Do you know why not? Because this "letting all the days" is equal to "begin in this life the eternal sabbath"!

The pew in which I sit with my family week after week is very close to the eternal sabbath. Or — if my "soil" is like the three kinds in the parable that do not receive the "seed" — my pew may not be far away from eternal damnation.

Two things are to be said in this context. In the first place — and that leads us back to the first part of this article — we should heed the serious warning in *Hebrews 4*. Why did Israel not enter the rest that was promised to them? The answer is clear enough. "For good news came to us just as to them; but the message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers," v. 2. A better translation is, "it was not *mixed* with faith in the hearers" (cf. KJV, NEB, etc.). That, then, is what we have to do in the pew. When we celebrate the sacraments, we have to *use* them, Lord's Day 25; when we listen to the preaching, we have to *mix* it with faith. There, again, you have the "two-way traffic" of the "preaching situation." If we do not "mix," the Gospel will not benefit us. If we do, we "let the Holy Spirit work in our hearts."

This "risky" word "let" brings us to the second remark, namely, that we, "all the day of our life," remove all obstacles that might result in building up a wall between our pew and the pulpit. There are "my evil works." If I let them run wild in my everyday life, I cannot really listen and the Holy Spirit may not be able to penetrate that

wall and prepare my heart. It was with reason that we said, "a risky word, that 'let' . . ." But it is biblical. Scripture warns us, in a variety of expressions, not "to *grieve* the Holy Spirit," Eph. 4:30; "to *quench* the Holy Spirit," I Thess. 5:19; "to *resist* the Holy Spirit," Acts 7:51; "to *outrage* the Holy Spirit," Heb. 10:29. That is the absolute opposite of to "let the Holy Spirit work in my heart," and . . . we are capable of that grieving and quenching and resisting.

Thus, in order to prepare for that "Give ear, O My people" and for "letting the Holy Spirit work in my heart," we will have to remove *obstacles*; obstacles for us as well as obstacles for the Holy Spirit. "Resting from my evil works all the days of my life" is directly connected with my listening in the pew and receiving the benefit, Heb. 4. Dishonest business practices, hidden sins, or a miserable marriage not only "hinder our prayers," Form for Holy Wedlock, quoting I Peter 3:7; but they will hinder my listening to the Gospel and my learning God's Word. "Clear the highway to Zion of stones!" Isa. 62:10. Preparation for the "labour of listening in the pew" also includes that we do not go to bed too late the evening before the sabbath; that we do not fill our minds with garbage; that we rise in the morning in time, have a decent breakfast as a family together, and prayerfully prepare for our churchgoing. This is not impractical blah-blah. It has to do with "letting the Holy Spirit work," instead of little demons who would like to ruin our Sunday mornings by fighting for the use of the bathroom, while not finding the Sunday-best shoes and ties, and so on. Little things, but "catch the little foxes that spoil the vineyards," to use, for once, an allegorical understanding of Song of Songs, 2:15.

Next time we hope to consider attempts that are being made to improve the relationship pulpit-pew. Although the Canadian Reformed community is not easily excited about things that are being done "elsewhere," we may for once be willing to listen to what others do in order that the pew may get the greatest benefit out of the preaching of the Word of God.

(To be continued.)

G. VANDOOREN

Psalm 95:1, 3

1. The LORD be praised, come, let us sing,
 And let our voice with rap-ture ring
 To hail the rock of our sal-va-tion.
 Be-fore our God with strength en-dued
 We'll come with shouts of grat-i-tude,
 With psalms and songs of ad-o-ra-tion.

press review

POSITIVE VOTES FAVOUR PRESBYTERIAN UNION

In this issue of our Magazine the reader also finds a Letter-to-the-Editor as a reaction to what I wrote in May about efforts made by three Presbyterian Churches — the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (RPCES) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) — to come to a union. I informed the readers about the fact that the General Assemblies of the three Churches had to vote on a plan to join and unite. The plan is that the RPCES and the OPC join the PCA, which is the largest and the youngest of the three. As you may know, all three assemblies voted in favour with the required majority. First was the General Assembly of the RPCES, held at Look-out Mountain, Tennessee. The vote was 243 in favour and 85 against and four abstaining. In *The Presbyterian Journal* of June 3 and of June 10, 1981, a report was given. It shows that there was concern about the matter with regard to the way of coming to a union (joining the PCA), and this especially with its possible effect on the Mission work. We read (June 3 issue):

The other major concern centered on alleged differences between the two denominations in foreign missions philosophy and practice. Leaders of the World Presbyterian Missions (WPM), the RPCES foreign missions arm, expressed fear that WPM's historic commitments might take a backseat to other concepts being advanced by Mission to the World (MTW), the foreign arm of the PCA.

Specifically, WPM spokesmen believe that some of MTW's priorities — such as placing missionaries in urban rather than in rural areas, or placing missionaries only in areas where responsiveness seems likely — might jeopardize full-hearted support for existing WPM work. They also claim that MTW tends to separate church planting ministries from other support ministries, such as medicine, education, or social service, when Scripture calls for a merging of the two types of ministry.

In the June 10 issue *The Presbyterian Journal* writes more about it:

The whole process of bringing the RPCES into the PCA almost stumbled and fell here until missions leaders in the RPCES found a suitable way to ex-

press their concerns to the forthcoming PCA General Assembly.

At issue is the RPCES's substantial commitment to its existing foreign missions enterprise, and its concern that its own style of missions strategy might have to take a back seat to the PCA's more contemporary approaches.

The RPCES leads the way among conservative Presbyterian and Reformed denominations in foreign missions investment. Per capita giving to missions in the RPCES is double that of the PCA, which has rightly considered itself a strong missionary church.

With more than 80 missionaries serving its own board, the RPCES also has about twice as many missionaries per capita as the PCA, which has 175 missionaries but about four times as big a membership.

With those factors in mind, the RPCES missions leaders have hardly been prepared to hear that their missions strategy is outmoded and less sophisticated than that of the PCA.

The article says that this is the message which the RPCES missions leaders think they also got in an interview with the coordinator of MTW of the PCA. MTW's basic concept is to reach "people groups" rather than "geographic areas," according to him. And he wrote that the PCA, when developing its own strategy "did not carry a lot of traditional baggage" with them. This point as we understand, is not a doctrinal but a practical difference. The old missions strategy of the RPCES and of the OPC has been and still is: approach a certain geographic area, and try to reach all the people in that area. That is also how the Reformed Churches have done mission work. This is also the way our Churches work in Brazil and in Irian Jaya. Geographic, very much rural, regions were sought. A different, more modern approach in a secular world is: approach certain social groups in a city. In line with this the Church at Assen has worked in Curitiba, Brazil, for many years. Its mission work was directed to students, especially of the high school and the university, the future leaders of the country. This approach has more or less been abandoned now. There is a second point of concern with the RPCES. We read:

A similarly acute concern by WPM people was that MTW might not share the point of view which says that "word" and "deed" belong together in the mis-

sionary enterprise. With medical works in Jordan and Kenya, educational endeavors in Chile and India, and a children's home in India, the RPCES wanted assurance that after joining the PCA such projects would not become orphans themselves.

Acknowledging that liberal missions boards have often emphasized "deeds" to the exclusion of the "word," WPM's board president, the Rev. John M.L. Young, stressed here that in Scripture, the "deed" is always there to validate the "word," while the "word" is essential to explain why and in whose Name the "deed" is being done MTW's own missionaries are basically church planters.

Also this point is of a practical nature, although questions of principle are very much related. What is the relation between "word" and "deed"? Can we say that the "word," the preaching of the Gospel, is a matter more of the minister and the elder, while the "deed" is more that of the deacon? Is mission aid a diaconal matter? Or must we see mission aid as the task of the believers in general? Mission aid of our Churches in Western Canada (Surrey as sending Church) is fully organized by private members of our churches, and is not under the supervision of a consistory. Mission aid is now set up in the same way in Ontario-South for the support of the mission work which the Church at Hamilton is setting up. And this is the same way it is done by our sister churches in The Netherlands. The question has been raised: Should mission aid work not also be the responsibility of the consistory of the sending church? Is that not the task of the deacons? Or is it better, indeed, to keep mission aid as a matter for the believers in general? When we look at the things that can be included in mission aid work, like helping people to buy a boat, setting up a store or a medical clinic, sending out a doctor, and so on, we can hardly maintain that this is a consistory responsibility; that is more the task of the believers in general, in my opinion. It is good to discuss these matters, if only the support does not suffer.

Now, how did things go at the 48th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church? We read about that in the June 17, 1981, issue of the same Journal:

A good night's sleep very often puts things in a different light. For a large number of commissioners to the 48th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) here, Wednesday evening, June 3, was not a good night for sleeping.

By the barest margins, the Assembly had fallen short of approving OPC acceptance of an invitation from the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) to join that denomination. The vote was 90-48 in favor of the proposition but that was two votes short of the required two-thirds majority.

The failure left many leaders of the OPC stunned — and some of them openly in tears — as they left the meeting hall Members of the victorious minority, meanwhile, quietly expressed relief that the OPC's identity would not immediately be forfeited.

The emotions of Wednesday night, however, were soon to be reversed. The following morning, ruling elder Clarence Roskamp of Cedar Falls, Iowa, moved to have the Assembly reconsider the important action. In that motion, he was supported by the Rev. Jack Peterson of San Antonio, Tex., an outspoken opponent of the OPC's joining the PCA.

Agreeing with the motion, the Assembly then proceeded by nearly as slim a margin as the previous night to undo its first action. This time the vote was 93-41, providing a 69.4 percent margin in favor of the momentous decision.

This vote makes it possible that the proposal to join the PCA will now go to all the presbyteries. And if a two-third majority of the presbyteries is in favor and also another two-thirds majority will vote positively at the 1982 General Assembly, the union will take place.

In *New Horizons*, a magazine for the OPC, the editor, Mr. R.W. Schmurr, gives a report about what happened, but also tells about the preparation of a report of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to the General Assembly. During the past year the committee had many meetings with the committees of the RPCES and PCA, where the similarities and the differences of the three churches were discussed. Then we read:

The Committee reached the conclusion that not only *may* the OPC unite with the PCA, but "putting it into the context of the biblical principles of the unity of Christ's body, that our assemblies have affirmed time and again, we can come to only one final conclusion: *we must* unite with these churches." Six considerations were presented by the Committee for this conclusion:

1. We must be obedient to the revealed will of Christ regarding our obligation to manifest the unity of His church in the truth.
2. The churches are of like faith and order.
3. Perfection is not a requirement for uniting.
4. The churches are committed to bringing their practice into conformity with their standards.
5. The PCA invited the OPC because of

the latter's Reformed commitment.

6. The OPC six years ago voted to accomplish union with the RPCES.

Norman Shepherd authored the Committee's minority report and argued against union on the basis that it was likely that if the churches united, judicial process would be begun in the PCA against himself and others who held to his views on faith and justification — effectively destroying the peace and unity of the church.

The controversy around Prof. Norman Shepherd deals with the question: "How are we righteous before God?" According to him the faith through which we are justified cannot be a dead faith, as we read in James 2. But this is a subject by itself.

In a separate article I hope to be able to give some information about the agreements and differences between these three Presbyterian Churches. Let me conclude this informational article with the remark that I agree with the first point mentioned above: We must be obedient to the revealed will of Christ regarding our obligation to manifest the unity of His Church in the truth. That is why in The Netherlands the Churches of the Secession (1834) and of the Doleantie (1886) came to a union in 1892. And I am thankful that we, as Liberated Reformed people, upon arriving in Canada and the USA, did not right from the start establish the Canadian Reformed Churches, as if the Lord had not done any church-gathering work here before we came. In seeking contact with the Christian Reformed Churches as well as with the Protestant Reformed Churches we acknowledged that work of Christ. But when the Christian Reformed Churches *de facto* compelled liberated Reformed people to say "yes" in Canada/USA by joining these churches, to what they had said "no" to in The Netherlands in obedience to God's Word, and when the Protestant Reformed Churches also came with a Declaration binding above that which Scripture and Confession bind us to, then not we, but they, made it impossible to be one church in the one faith, in the one obedience to the Word of God. This principle means that also today we have to seek unity, also organizational unity, with all who truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who are one with us in the truth, as we confess that in our Reformed Creeds. Unity in the truth.

Now all three Presbyterian denominations have committed themselves to the same Westminster Standards. We read further: "Perfection is not a requirement for uniting." This

statement as such is true. One who is not perfect himself cannot demand that the other party be perfect. That is how it is in a marriage; and it is not different with churches. Yet, I would be careful with a statement like this, too, for it can be misused. We must hold on to what Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession says: "In short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church." And it says about true Christians: "But this is not to be understood as if there did not remain in them great infirmities."

I personally am of the opinion that there is too much room in the PCA for charismatic influences.

J. GEERTSEMA



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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.

HANNOVER/VIENNA (EDP)

The Council of Evangelical Churches in West Germany sees no reason for breaking off contacts with banks that maintain commercial ties with South Africa. The West German Council thereby makes clear that it does not wish to follow the example of the World Council of Churches. The latter discontinued its contact with two Swiss banks and one West German bank because of their trade relations with South Africa. (ND)

* * *

ARNHEM

The next General Synod of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands will be convened by the Church at Heemse. The Synod of Arnhem decided to appoint the Church at Heemse as the convening Church for the General Synod of 1984. Heemse will be requested to convene this Synod on April 25, 1984. As alternate Church the one at Spakenburg-North has been appointed. (ND)

* * *

ARNHEM

The General Synod of Arnhem decided to send a letter to the Free Reformed Church in Pretoria, South Africa (the so-called "Veertiende laan gemeente"). The letter was adopted in a closed session and was not released for publication until some time later. The "Veertiende laan gemeente" is the congregation which had no ties with the Free Reformed Churches (Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke) as a result of a conflict regarding the theories about marriage of their minister, the late Dr. C. Van der Waal. (ND)

* * *

KERKNIEUWS

The Yearbook 1981 of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Synodical) discusses, among others, the number of vacancies in the Reformed Churches. A committee investigated the question of vacancies because there was fear that the number might grow to an undesirable size. The result of the study is that the vacancies are expected to be reduced from 171 to approximately 87. It was not considered necessary to urge men to study for the ministry.

The total membership of the GKN was 873,301 on January 1, 1981. That means a loss of more than 2500 during the year 1980. Since 1974 these churches lost more than 13,000 members. (CC)

* * *

VALLEY FORGE, PA (EP)

An increasing number of organizations are appealing to both pastors and church members through direct mail solicitation for funds for distribution of Bibles in Communist countries. The slick-paper high-pressure mailings are based on the assertion that Bibles are illegal and difficult to obtain in countries such as Russia and China. Recently, Christian leaders have spoken out against these deceptive tactics which are aimed at raising money for the ministries of particular organizations, according to a report from the American Baptist News Service here.

Dr. Loren Noren, American Baptist missionary in Hong Kong, speaking at the World Missions Conference in Green Lake, WI, in August, declared, "The best hope to secure Bibles for China lies in plans of the church in China to form a Bible society within its country." Dr. Noren indicated that the highly publicized efforts at wholesale smuggling of Bibles into China results in antagonism and increased surveillance on the part of Chinese government officials. (CC)

* * *

ZURICH, Switzerland (EP)

The Rev. Hans Küng, the liberal theologian banned by the Vatican from teaching, was quoted September 10 as saying he hoped for an alliance of all groups seeking a renewal within the Roman Catholic Church.

In an interview published in the Zurich weekly *Weltwoche*, Kung also was quoted as saying he regretted the "mounting polarization and growing intolerance" of the church under

Pope John Paul II. "Even more, I regret the silent, mass exodus from our congregations, especially by the women," said Küng, a Swiss who runs an ecumenical institute in Tübingen, West Germany. He has been offered a professorship at the University of Michigan. Küng told the newspaper that "many" saw contradictions in the official human rights policy of the Roman Catholic Church under Pope John Paul II. (CC)

* * *

KORNTAL, Germany (EP)

The missionary society "Light in the East" based in Korntal near Stuttgart aims to meet a two-fold need in the Soviet Union by issuing a Russian New Testament with notes: it is not just Bibles that are scarce, but also Bible commentaries. A number of experts are to cooperate in the production of the text and notes. Since its foundation in 1920, the missionary society has organized the distribution and delivery of Bibles. One of its achievements was the production of a Russian New Testament that could be mailed in nine standard letters. According to "Light in the East," the Bible supply situation in the Soviet Union is still the worst in Europe. (CC)

vO

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FROM THE SCRIPTURES

“Direct Thy steps to the perpetual ruins . . .” Psalm 74:3a

The Perpetual Moment

These words of Ps. 74 form a very bold and forthright challenge to the LORD, the God of the covenant, and are part of a bitter lament to Him. The words paint a graphic picture: it is as if the weeping poet is calling the LORD over to survey the damage done to the sanctuary. God’s holy mountain has been pillaged and robbed, and everything has been destroyed. And the words of the poet include an element of disbelief. How could the LORD let this happen?

Actually, the psalmist’s words are understandable, because he speaks with a certain right. He speaks as a citizen of the covenant community. Had not the LORD promised to Solomon concerning the house that Solomon had built for Him, “I have consecrated this house which you have built and put My name there *forever*; My eyes and My heart will be there *for all time*,” I Kings 9:3. Now, instead of a perpetual Presence, which the LORD had promised, the poet only sees perpetual ruins. What happened to the LORD’s covenant promise?

Well, it was exactly the stipulations of the same covenant that resulted in the LORD’s departure. He keeps His word and oath. Long ago He warned His children that if they would forsake Him, He would be forced to punish and abandon them. The LORD said that if His voice was not obeyed, He would make the land a perpetual ruin, an everlasting waste, Jer. 25:8. As the people turned against Him more and more, punishment was His only recourse. He destroyed the nation, and turned the land into everlasting ruins.

However, does this mean that the LORD had forgotten His promise given to Solomon? The LORD did not forget His promise. Land and nation were destroyed, but He did return to His sanctuary, according to His promise. In the fullness of time, He sent His Son into the world, in order to redeem His chosen people, His heritage of old. And the Lord Jesus Christ was the true and final fulfilment of God’s promise to dwell with His people. In Him, the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, John 1:14. He came to fulfill the temple service, and declared Himself to be in His body the new temple of God. When He offered His body to be destroyed on the altar, the curtain of the temple was torn from top to bottom, Matt. 27:51. A new temple was to be erected, according to God’s promise. That temple was to be the bride of Christ, God’s people, made up of people from all tribes, nations, and tongues.

Christ’s coming and work forms the answer to this

prayer, and the fulfilment of this prayer. The poet pleaded on the basis of the covenant, and his words make a strong appeal to the promises of the covenant. But, in his time, not one person had been fully faithful to the *demands* of God’s covenant. Precisely that universal unfaithfulness gives this prayer its tension and uncertainty, despite its boldness. For him the ruins are unbelievable, and they have been around so long, Ps. 74:10. He fears that the LORD has completely abandoned His people.

But the LORD did not abandon His people, even though He had a full right to do so. In a new and miraculous way He returned to His people, the remnant of His choice. He returned in Jesus Christ, His only Son. In Christ the perpetual ruins are all cleared away, and the LORD sets up a new and everlasting sanctuary, in which His presence dwells. In Christ, He now makes His home among God’s people, and dwells in their hearts through the Holy Spirit, given to the Church.

In fact, what the poet saw as *perpetual* ruins was really only a temporary devastation. To be sure, in a sense the land has remained an everlasting waste. But the LORD did return to His people, and did not delay. What was perpetual to the poet was only a moment to Him. He says, “For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my faith from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer,” Isa. 54:7, 8. The LORD quickly shies away from His own wrath, and wants to forget it. And He promises that His coming mercy will be great.

Now that is our share and inheritance today. We know that the LORD’s anger only lasted for a moment, but that His steadfast love is from everlasting to everlasting. We live under the shelter of rebuilt ruins that never will be torn down again. For they have been built in the Spirit, with the price of blood, the precious blood of the Lamb. That is why this prayer has so much more depth for God’s people today. In struggle and persecution, we may know and be assured that God will never again leave His sanctuary, His dwelling place. He has directed His steps to us. He has granted renewal and life, and has promised to abide with His people until the last day. That is solid assurance in the face of any kind of uncertainty. Praise God who has visited His people!

J. DEJONG

The Third International Conference of Institutions for Christian Higher Education ²

Some Impressions

d. Institutional Reports

The presentation of reports by a number of institutions which took the greater part of the time of the last two days of the conference, gave not only some welcome relief from the top-heavy scholastic part of the conference but also proved, just as at the second conference in Grand Rapids, very enjoyable. Over against all the manifestations of anti-Christian ideologies and power structures it showed something of the work of God in the field of education around the globe.

"Serviceable insight": that, according to its representative, is what *Dordt College* stands for, i.e. insight which is not just theoretical in nature but prepares for and manifests itself in the service of God and neighbour.

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"Koinonia": that, according to its president, Dr. Sidney De Waal, is what the recently established *"The King's College"* in Edmonton is after, i.e. a fellowship rooted in the living communion with the Lord and extending to all the spheres of life.

A threat noticed by The King's College is the danger of traditionalism wherein Reformed people are still active in the field of education but much of it is done "out of custom" and not out of hearts burning for the Lord.

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"Redeemer Reformed Christian College," which hopes to open its doors in 1982 in Hamilton seeks *"the advancement of learning and dissemination of knowledge on the*

basis of the Reformed confessions, traditions and perspectives."

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Dr. Kun Sam Lee, well-known (if not in person, then anyway by name), presented *Kosin College and Korea Theological Seminary*. "The institution," he stated, "originated with the purpose of standing, first, for the Reformed faith against surging liberalism in the church and, second, for repentance and purity as necessary conditions of church existence and peace." The 35-year-old institution added a graduate school in theology and education, and was enriched this year with a medical faculty to which the Gospel Hospital is attached. The basis of the institution's teaching is the Reformed faith, and the motto under which the work is done is *"coram Deo"*, i.e. in the presence of God. The highest objective as a Christian institution is seen in the establishment and the expansion of the kingdom of God on earth, rendering Christian service to mankind. Since its founding, 750 ministerial workers have been turned out. As the undercurrent of Korean society is Buddhist and Confucian, Christian higher education is confronted with a formidable challenge. Secularism is on cross purposes with the educational endeavours of the institution. Close government supervision of all education, including education in private schools, leads to strains and puts restrictions on planning and carrying out Reformed educational policies. Nonetheless there is constant growth, and Christian service is rendered to church, nation, and mankind.

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An institution not all that familiar to many of us, but worthy of be-

coming better known, is *Kobe Reformed Theological Seminary*, on whose Christian identity the Rev. Ryuzo Hachimoto reported. This seminary was established with the aid of the Japan mission of the Presbyterian Church in the United States in 1907 when liberal tendencies made inroads on the existing seminary. In 1928 a fusion with the Osaka Theological School, a Presbyterian seminary was carried out. Up to that time 150 students had graduated, all educated by teachers who maintained the Calvinistic position of the school. The united seminaries continued in that line but got into trouble with the government because of their refusal to participate in Shinto Shrine worship. It led to the closing of the school in 1942 (mark the year). The end of the war left the seminary with the loss of bombed-out buildings, but with the enormous gain of freedom of religion which for the first time in its history was enjoyed by the Japanese church. In 1947 the seminary was reinstated as the Kobe Reformed Theological Seminary.

Moreover, a Christian college was established. In 1952 the Seminary came under the care of the Reformed Church of Japan. Basis of the Seminary is the maintenance of the Reformed faith, as contained in the Westminster Standards, for the purpose of defending, proclaiming, and teaching. Its position is to fight academically every kind of unbiblical theological thought and to refuse compromise in any way with pagan principles or customs like Buddhist, Shinto, or Confucian.

As to existing dangers, "the threat to the church is a threat to the seminary." This threat is the relation to the state. Shintoists try to restore the pre-war totalitarian national Shintoism. The state supports them, if not yet by legislation then anyway by the example of worship at the Yasukuni Shrine. In 1968 and once more in 1976, the Church protested this development. In spite of it the threat has become even more serious in the past years.

Let us not forget in our prayers these small churches and this seminary which have to wage such a big struggle. The LORD does not need many to deliver. He can do it, as Jonathan said, just as well by few. The Japanese brothers are well aware of that: "We believe that the greatest contribution which the Christian church can make to the state and society is establishing the church as the pillar and ground of the truth."

Being the minority of a minority of less than one percent Christians in a pagan country does not change that.

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Zamba Theological College was represented by the Rev. A.G. Kapenda. Zamba is located in Malawi, one of the nations in central Africa. The College was founded in 1977 by the General Synod of the Presbyterian Church of central Africa as a fusion of three Presbyterian colleges which had been in existence since 1963. For the doubtful sake of a better training for the ministry, close cooperation has been sought with an Anglican and a Roman Catholic seminary. It is striking that Rev. Kapenda told that a degree program is desired to strengthen the position of the College and to prevent the situation where the institution would be held in contempt in the land. On the other hand, the overestimation of theological knowledge in comparison to the ministerial training is seen as a threat for the College. Pastors may have grown in theological knowledge, but, in many instances they did not enter into a closer relationship with God. Besides, there is the economic threat. No government support is received and the contributions of the churches are insufficient to maintain the institution and help needy students. A new building and textbooks are badly needed. What is even more needed, it seems to me, is the Reformed spirit characteristic of the Korean and Japanese sister institutions.

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From Asia via Africa we come to Europe. *Acte de présence* was given by *La faculté Libre de Théologie Réformée*, i.e. The Free Reformed Theological College at Aix en Provence, France.

The professor of dogmatics, Paul Wells, tells in his presentation that "the Reformed faith has been smothered in our country successively by persecution, secularism, and theological liberalism" whereby the past history of the Reformed churches in France has largely been forgotten. The College, for that reason, has to be very clear on what it believes, confesses, and stands for. "... We seek to maintain," Dr. Wells reports, "a confessional character through the content of the curriculum and the complementarity of the various disciplines."

Neutralism, which pervades the entire French educational system, also influenced the students who at-

tend the College. "Christianity is limited to a very narrow faith-domain." And because students of Reformed background hardly know what Reformed faith is and students of evangelical background are not interested in a confessional stand, the maintenance of the confessional character of the College is threatened from within. It calls for a strong commitment to the Reformed confession. Everything is done to promote such a commitment among the students and to maintain it among the faculty.

Although the contribution which the College can make to society as a whole is very limited, nonetheless, by lectures, by the publication of a Reformed magazine and of a new edition of Calvin's *Institutes*, and, of course, especially by providing Reformed theologians for the small Reformed churches a small contribution is made. The College hopes to do something in the future for Franco-phone Africa by training candidates for the ministry in Africa and loaning teachers for short term work in African institutions. While typing this report I was reminded of Psalm 124: "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side ... then they would have swallowed us up alive ..., then the flood would have swept us away"

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Drs. K. Veling, Lecturer at the Theologische Hogeschool of our sister churches, made a presentation on behalf of "*Het Gereformeerde Wetenschappelijk Genootschap*," i.e. *The Reformed Society of Arts and Sciences*. As the name indicates, the society is not an institution of Christian Higher Education, though it is involved in study, and it wants to use the results of its work to teach others. Its aim is that its members, who belong to the Liberated Reformed churches, on the basis of God's Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, in the tradition of Kuyper and Dooyeweerd and others, stimulate reflection on the nature of scientific theorizing which may lead to a radical reformation of theoretical thought. The reason why it wants to stand on the basis of the creeds, and does not try to derive a set of foundational principles from the Bible, is, first of all, the wish to prevent "any loosening of the direct and unconditional authority of the Scriptures"; in the second place, that the Bible is not a book of science and should not be used for it either. The third reason is that scientists, like other Christians, have to listen to what God says to His

people in communion with the church.

Avoiding isolation, the society wants to maintain a close relation to the church by serving its members with the result of its work. A magazine, *Radix*, is published for that purpose, lectures are given, conferences organized, and other means are sought to make the work of the 250 university graduates who, since 1967, have joined the society, more fruitful for the communion of saints. Perhaps the society could take the initiative to establish a Reformed liberal arts college and develop a curriculum for it.

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There were, of course, a lot more institutions represented at the Conference than the ones whose presentations are mentioned. The above were singled out because they were new at this Conference or did not get their turn yet at previous conferences. It was too bad that there was no time to discuss the various presentations and to be of mutual help that way. But even without discussion it was a meaningful and enjoyable part of the conference program.

e. *Structural Meeting*

As my impressions have already grown out of proportion, I will be short on the matter of the structure of the Conference. It was the University of Potchefstroom for Christian Higher Education which took the initiative for the first Conference held as well in Potchefstroom. Our College was not represented by any observer because the costs were forbidding. The purpose of that first Conference was to form an Association of Reformed Institutions which, among other things, would organize the next Conference and would promote mutual cooperation and, if necessary, mutual help among its members. The Association never came off the ground, neither at the first nor at the second Conference, and it did not materialize either at this third Conference. The reason is not hard to guess. No true unity of faith existed between various institutions which may have been Reformed in origin, but a number of which no longer stand for the Reformed faith. Another obstacle on the road to the establishment of an Association was the "Apartheid" issue. The Free University did not want to participate in a conference at which the University of Potchefstroom was represented. On the other hand, institutions which wanted to be faithful to the Reformed heritage
(Continued on page 407.)

View of History and Revelation

The following summary was prepared for CLARION by John deVos. Prof. Ohmann is not responsible for the contents.

On Wednesday, September 2, 1981, Prof. Drs. H.M. Ohmann commenced his charge as the new professor of Old Testament subjects at the Theological College of our sister-churches in Kampen, The Netherlands, to succeed Prof. Drs. H.J. Schilder.

On this occasion he delivered his inaugural speech which has the nature of an introductory lecture.

The title of this lecture was: Some aspects of the relation between History, view of history, and divine revelation in the prophecy of Isaiah.

A summary of this lecture follows here.

History — View of History and Revelation

Three concepts in the title need elaboration: History has to do with facts, their succession and cohesion, the influences which cause them to be, as well as the development process towards an end result. The concept "history" does not only include the past; it involves the present and the future just as well.

"View of history" as meant here is not in the first place a matter of philosophy for academic specialists. The book Isaiah shows time and again that Israel was called, and also equipped, to develop a view of history. The question whether this calling of viewing history was fulfilled rightly or wrongly is a matter which returns continuously in this book.

Divine revelation is the message of what is right and what is wrong, which the prophet, upon the instruction of his Sender, must bring to the people of Israel.

The God of Israel had made the bond with His people in the revelation of salvation. We can see that in the promises to the patriarchs, then in the law given to Moses, later still in the special pledges to David and his house. And now, in the era of the pro-

phets, He begins more and more to reveal Himself through means of events, during which the prophet Isaiah, acting in his capacity of ambassador, has established a continuous rapport with his time, and in those surroundings he speaks the words of his God.

This can be demonstrated with a number of highlights from the prophecy.

The very first verses of the book already bring God's work in history into focus.

The rearing and bringing up of sows in v. 2 is to be seen as the long road which Yahweh goes with His people through the centuries, which serves to bring them to maturity and to impart to them a wisdom which is unto salvation. Therefore, the reproach of unfaithfulness is most serious. Such apostasy leads to an abasement below the level of the animals, an ox or a donkey, which becomes apparent in a lack of understanding, the absence of a practical perception of history, formed by a view of history in obedience to the God-given revelation of salvation.

In Isaiah 5 we find another example of this general statement. After having called the woe of v. 11 over the community of the gluttons and tipplers (probably the rich upper class of society) Isaiah claims that "they do not regard the deeds of the LORD, or see the work of His hands" (Isa. 5:12).

There are several opinions about what must be understood by the term "deeds of the LORD," ranging from "ordeal" via "synonym for history" to the idea of "reality of the unseen."

For our own interpretation we may point to 5:19 which sheds more light on v. 12. Assuming that these are the same people as in v. 12, we notice a progression in the decline. Instead of a lack of concerns, we now encounter an active mockery. In this mockery the Holy One of Israel is challenged to let His purpose draw near. From the sentence structure it is clear that behind that work there is

a Person, capable of taking decisions and of executing them. Thus the expressions "deeds of the LORD" and "work of His hands" are not outright synonyms for what we call history, but they indicate more than an incident or a sudden judgment. Therefore that person is wise who discerns the signs of the times. That which is urged by the mockers to make haste is already underway. The woe is proclaimed also over their caricature of the view of history.

The chapter in which Isaiah describes the vision of his calling (chapter 6) again shows historic perspective.

The instructions may even strike us as unsympathetic: "make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn to be healed."

Thus, lack of perception, which had first been a reason for reproach, has now become purpose of the prophecy. In order to understand this seeming contradiction, we have to turn to Matt. 13 where our Saviour quotes and explains this passage for His disciples. Even though Isaiah repeatedly complained about lack of knowledge and understanding, in the light of Matt. 13 we know that repentance is not excluded beforehand. However, the spiritual discernment shall only break through within a part of the people. Thus separation results. Also in the calling to establish an obedient view of history shall a "rest" be projected against the "whole."

Realization in the days of Ahaz . . .

How this difficult task was realized, and how in this realization actual history was made, can be seen in a few episodes from the first part of the prophesy. In chapter 7 we meet Ahaz, around 734 B.C. He has been called the most apostate king ever to have reigned over Judah, who is remarkably referred to in v. 2 as "the

house of David." This king faced a planned invasion by two powers — Syria and Israel — a threat which was the result of his own policies. The news about this plan and its execution causes a complete panic in Ahaz: "His heart and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind" (7:2). But Isaiah then instructs Ahaz: take heed, remain quiet (v. 4). So, no sharp rebuke for the ungodly, but a word of advice to be considered, which calls for reflection: let the man from David's house consider the history and so establish his policy; to this end he is even invited to request a sign.

In this course of quiet reflection, the evaluation of the two adversaries is fitting: "Smoldering stumps of firebrands," no reason for panic.

After all, this is a matter of faith (v. 9): "If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established."

Is the fact that Ahaz rejects the offer of the sign and the good counsel, not an affirmation of the instruction received by the prophet, "Make his ears deaf . . . lest with his heart he understands . . ."?

Faith was required. But faith manifests itself in a purposeful reflection on the issues at hand, considering the present in the light of the past. Faith is not blind. It sharpens one's vision.

That the rejection of prophecy and the offer of a sign does not remain unpunished, is revealed as the doing of the LORD (v. 7).

In the darkness of that situation, where the prophet notices the initial fulfillment of his "call to obstinacy" in a king who, foregoing good counsel which was freely given, heeds poor counsel which costs him dearly, shines the bright light of the sign that was given notwithstanding the rejection: Immanuel, God with us.

Within this context his title is remarkable: Wonderful Counselor (see 28:29).

. . . and in the days of Hezekiah

The days of Hezekiah were typified by a trend to join forces against Assyria. In contrast, the prophet shows how Assyria is regarded by God (10:5): a tool in God's hand, useful as long as it functions. Assyria is simply a player in the world drama, although it does not accept that role of just being an actor (10:13). Then we learn how the LORD also considers other nations and so makes use of

Assyria as long as it benefits Him in His Counsel, but who throws it away when it has lost its usefulness as a tool.

This greatness of His Counsel, this plan-of-history of God, is shortly and pointedly worded in 14:24-27, which probably stems from the same period: The LORD is the only one who can make plans and also execute them.

In the same verses: the Assyrians, the breakers of the people, shall be broken in God's land and those who walked over His people shall be trampled under foot (v. 25). Again, rich material for reflection on history is given here.

A second phase, from Hezekiah's reign — the years 701 to 705 B.C. — should have our attention. This was the time when Sennacherib had mounted the throne of Assyria. Among those who desired to shake off the yoke of Assyria, Judah was not the least. And this was Judah, then under Hezekiah, a King who did what was right in the eyes of the LORD (II Kings 18:3).

In the same chapter, II Kings 18, we read that he rebelled against the king of Assyria and served him no longer. The Bible gives this information without further comment, and it is not quite possible to establish whether this happened upon the advice of the prophet or against his word.

But one thing is certain: Isaiah opposed the formation of coalitions, a practice which was so common in those days. This probably resulted from the influence of the political leaders. However, as a believing king, Hezekiah had to find his strength in quietness and trust (30:15).

Again this quietness which leads to reflection: take stock of the situation and then arrive at a sound judgment.

Isaiah, the prophet, appears time and again as one who desires to instruct the people, to impart to them knowledge and understanding: Do not put your trust in Egypt, for Egypt fails you. But according to chapter 28 he finds the priests and prophets opposed to him and so is confronted with the false prophecy which orders him to play along or otherwise keep his mouth shut.

They do not accept the prophecy. They boast of their own insight and the covenant they have made with death (28:15), probably a word-

play referring to Egypt where Osiris, the god of death, was actively adored. That, then, is for them the summit of wisdom.

Conclusion

What the God of Judah thinks of all this is revealed in Isa. 29:14-16: "I will again do marvelous things with this people, wonderful and marvelous; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hid. Woe to those who hide deep from the LORD their counsel, whose deeds are in the dark and who say, 'Who sees us? Who knows us?' You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay; that the thing made should say of its maker, 'He did not make me'; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, 'He has no understanding?'" We do not know whether Hezekiah has understood this. But regardless of that question, these are the conclusions we can draw:

1. Central in the book of Isaiah is the call to the faith which clearly underlines God's majesty and man's dependence.
2. This faith leads to and becomes apparent in a clear insight into what the LORD actually performs, into the nature of the works of His hands in contrast with the works of men, especially wicked men who do not pay attention to God's deeds.
3. In turn, that insight is strongly affected by the passing of time and history. In the time of the prophet Isaiah God's work in history is a theme, which does not reduce the importance of previous themes, e.g. promise, law, house of David, but rather turns back to them and uses them as leads on the way to the future.
4. It is now the calling of Israel/Judah to know the LORD's works in history and to perceive their own special style, in order to be the better prepared for what He will do in the future.
5. The promises to the house of David and the so often disappointing reaction of the representatives of that house, is time and again used as the starting point for the Messianic prophecies which make this book so beloved.

news medley

Honestly, I don't know what is going on in the Post Office. I used to get an envelope with *Clarion's* new issue, sent to me by first class mail, on the Tuesday or ultimately Wednesday after it had been printed. Last time it arrived even after the official date of issue; this time I still haven't received it on Friday and, since this coming Monday is a holiday, it won't be here before Tuesday, if then. Thus I do not know what is in that issue and whether there are any couples I have to congratulate on behalf of the brotherhood.

The growth and the growing militancy of public service unions is a disturbing thing. It seems that the power and influence of labour unions in general is declining somewhat; in the civil service sector, however, things seem to develop into the other direction. And what we lack here is someone who — as President Reagan does — lays down the law and sticks to it. The only thing our Prime Minister seems to be able to stick to is his ideas concerning the Constitution.

From the Toronto bulletin I learned that brother and sister Stassen were to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary on October 15. That will be past by the time you see these lines. Half a century as husband and wife is a great blessing from the Lord. We cannot keep and preserve ourselves; we cannot remain faithful to each other in our own strength. Thus we are grateful with them and their family that they may receive this great gift. I do not know what their state of health is, but am convinced that their rejoicing in God's mercies and favour will have been the dominating factor.

Also from the Toronto bulletin I learned that the Rev. H. Versteeg and family were scheduled to return to the mission field on Tuesday, October 6. I even had the privilege of bidding them a personal farewell on October 4 after the afternoon service in that Church. Many members of the Toronto Congregation shook hands with them and wished them the Lord's blessing. It must be very encouraging for them that they can return with the sure knowledge that many of the brothers and sisters on the home front are thinking of them and constantly remember them in their prayers. They know that not only of the brotherhood in Ontario but also about those who live in Alberta and other provinces. That I mention especially Alberta is because the bulletins of some Churches there mentioned a visit by the Versteegs and expressed appreciation for the evening with them, during which they spoke about their work and let the audience see something of that work. May the Lord bring them safely to their destination and strengthen them to their beautiful but also difficult task.

From the Houston part of the *Bulkley Valley Echo* I learned the following regarding mission and mission workers.

Mission Aid of Cloverdale has received word that the Glas family has received a visa to enter Brazil. They plan to arrive in Canada on October 7, and then leave for Brazil a week later. We are thankful for this development. The Lord has heard our prayers. This will probably enable the Kuik family to return to Canada on schedule, that is, by the end of the year. That is indeed a development for which we all can be very

grateful. The doors for the preaching of the Gospel are still open: the Lord is the One who opens and no one closes. That also encourages us to keep on asking of Him that the missionaries may receive permanent visa as well.

A report on the visit which the appointed committee brought to the mission field in Brazil will be forthcoming. At least, that is to be looked forward to, as not much opportunity was given at the Surrey Consistory meeting! This may become evident from the following item in the Consistory report: "Foreign Mission. Br. J. VanderLinde receives five minutes to inform Council briefly of the team's experiences. A full report will be tabled in a few weeks time." What can you say in five minutes? Only masters of the word can say a lot within such a short time. We are looking forward to the report.

A further item from Surrey's Consistory report is that word was received that a new cassette tape deck was needed for recording the services. "The purchase of a new cassette recorder is approved and consideration will be given to a recorder that can tape three cassettes at the same time, if necessary."

Our cassette recorder is one of such a kind that we can tape three cassettes at a time. The first one is the "receiver cassette" and records; at the same time it acts as a master and from it two other cassettes are recorded. We "make" three every time and are very satisfied with the set-up. If we should not have enough cassettes of one service, we simply insert a recorded cassette into the first slot and from it record two more cassettes. We purchased it from an address in the States, but I haven't seen the like of it in later catalogues of the company from which we obtained it. Perhaps it has been discontinued and been replaced by more expensive machines. In any case: I can recommend a recorder such as is being contemplated by Surrey.

The Surrey Consistory also received a request "to reinstitute the singing of the Hymn 'Ere Zij God' during the Christmas worship service. This request is not granted since outsiders visiting the worship service as well as too many of our younger generation are excluded from sharing the contents with us."

Apart from my objections to that song as such, I am flabbergasted to read that after more than thirty years of our life as Canadian Reformed Churches, such a request is still made. If anyone wishes to sing the "Gloria" — and who would not wish to do so? — there is ample opportunity with the singing of Hymns 16 and 17.

We remain in the Fraser Valley for a little while.

The Chilliwack Consistory reports that "the matter of members of the congregation standing up during the singing at Baptism is discussed. The consistory decides to ask the congregation to remain seated." I mention this decision because I made a remark about a similar matter a previous time.

The Consistory also "received a request from a group of brothers and sisters living in the Okanagan Valley to accept them as an official house congregation under Chilliwack's guidance and supervision. After some discussion it is decided to approach the next Classis Pacific in October for advice in this matter."

Although there is nothing against lending a helping hand without the broader assemblies becoming involved, the Chilliwack Consistory apparently kept our Church Order in mind in which we have agreed that places where no Consistory can be formed as yet shall be placed under the care of the neighbouring Consistory, and that this shall be done by Classis. I do not doubt that Chilliwack's

request was favourably received by the Classis Pacific of October. Shall we finally be able to welcome a sister Church in the Okanagan Valley? I certainly do hope so.

In the report on Houston's Consistory meeting I found a correct formulation — although, in my opinion, not yet complete — of the manner in which a Consistory ought to deal with the Acts of the broader assemblies. "General Synod. The opportunity is given for discussion of Articles 50-100 of Acts of Synod 1980. None of the brothers has anything which he believes to be contrary to Scripture, confession or Church Order."

As I said, in my opinion this is not yet complete. I think that the following words should have been added: "or of which he is convinced that it should be changed." But that is a minor point. The main point is that from the above formulation it is evident that the brethren started from the conviction that the decisions are binding and "only" have to be examined on their faithfulness to the agreed upon conditions. The latter is a very responsible task, and all our Consistories and Church members should acquit themselves of it to the best of their ability.

In nearby Smithers the contact with the native youth is continued at a steady pace. About the "Native Youth Club" it is reported that "we had another successful Get-Together on Sept. 25, where a total of 26 children showed up. We now have 7 homes where smaller groups first meet for Bible study . . . with this number it will work fine even when one of the homes is not available for one reason or another."

Herewith we leave British Columbia and move on to Alberta. It is the Immanuel Church in Edmonton which demands our attention.

A Congregational meeting was held at which the plans and possibilities were discussed regarding the erection of a church building. This meeting was prepared in the previous *City Guide* by means of a long list of questions and answers in which various aspects of costs and possibilities were discussed. The building committee received a resounding "vote of confidence" as it was called, and plans were discussed with much interest. As soon as I read definite information I'll pass it on.

No Church building is complete without a good organ. That was felt in Immanuel Edmonton as well. However, one can jump no further than one's strength allows. That caused the following decision.

The Organ Committee reported on different types of organs that were checked out. The recommended one was a pipe organ for the price of \$88,200.00. Council decided that due to the financial burden this would create on the congregation, not to go ahead with the purchase of an organ at this time.

That is disappointing, most of all for the Congregation. However, all hope is not lost, for the same Consistory report tells us that there is an Organ Committee and this Committee has its instructions. We'll see what they will be able to achieve. Success!

From the Rehoboth Church in Burlington comes word that the contract for the finishing of the balcony has been awarded. Thus the seating capacity of the Church building will be increased sufficiently to accommodate the worshippers for some time to come.

I received the new directory for the Rehoboth Church of Burlington West and learned from it that the membership grew by eighteen. That is a little over two percent. It now stands at 732! Do they ever need a second minister! If they don't want to split the Congregation, that is. You don't have to ask what yours truly considers the more advisable course.

60th Wedding Anniversary



Mr. and Mrs. Nanne and Petronella Brandsma hope to celebrate their 60th Wedding Anniversary on November 4, 1981, D.V. They were married in 1921 in Sauwerd, Groningen. They emigrated to Canada in 1952 and settled in Edmonton, where they have lived ever since. They received 14 children of which ten are still living. Two daughters are still in Holland. They also have 48 grandchildren and 35 great-grandchildren. They are both in very good health and Mr. Brandsma still loves gardening.

"The property committee proposes to have the driveway of the church lot paved since with a paving company working in the area it can be done considerably cheaper. The consistory decides to study this matter some more as to the actual savings before making a decision in this respect."

From the *Family Post* of Smithville I learned something about the *Book of Praise*. It is a strange feeling that, after so many years of involvement, one has to learn something about it from other sources; but that's life.

I mean the following passage.

At this point it may also be wise to inform you that the revised *Book of Praise* with the new Hymn section, liturgy, prayers and forms, etc., will *not* be available before the next general synod in 1983. This report was given to me by members of the synod committee who were given the mandate to publish the *Book of Praise*. It therefore seems reasonable to me not to expect *new revised Books of Praise* before early 1985!

This is the first thing I hear about it, and I do not know what the reasons are why a printing of the revised *Book of Praise* will not be available before the next Synod. Personally I am happy about that, as I have to admit. Now the Churches have the possibility to change the severely criticized decisions of our latest Synod regarding Hymn 2, to mention only that one. If the appointed committee had seen a possibility of having the revised book printed before next Synod, we would have been stuck with obvious mistakes and it would have caused lots of confusion later on, when these mistakes are corrected in subsequent printings. Now there is a possibility of having everything right right away. It is a disappointment, I must admit at the same time, that we have to wait for some more years; but a delay and then doing things correctly is

better than rushing into an enterprize and having to change things afterwards.

Whether it will be entirely impossible to have our new *Books of Praise* before the end of 1984 is something of which I am not convinced, but perhaps early 1985 is more realistic. Time will tell.

With this not-so-encouraging note I have to leave you for this time.



A Ray of Sunshine

The following is a quotation from the book, *THE WONDERS OF CREATION*, by Alfred M. Rehwinkel.

Thou, even thou, art Lord alone. Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and *thou preservest them all.* Nehemiah 9:6

When God had completed the creation of heaven and earth, He inspected, as it were, the things He had made. And we read: "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." "And God saw that it was good" had been the refrain at the end of every creation day, but at the end of it all He again said, "It was very good."

When God pronounced it "very good," it was good in the absolute, not only relatively good. God had created a perfect world, perfect in all its details. There were no thorns and thistles in that world. The earth brought forth abundantly of everything that was needful to provide for the wants, comforts, and pleasures of man. There was no struggle for existence by man or beasts. There were no Saharas, no barren wastes, no bleak and sterile hills, no rigors of the Arctic, and no disease-breeding marshlands of the tropics. The most enchanting islands of the South Seas today are but an imperfect replica of the world which had received the verdict "very good" from its Creator. In the earth there were no disorders, no earthquakes or tornados, no decay, and for man there was no aging process, no suffering, and no death.

But something happened to this perfect creation of God. Sin with its curse and blighting effect entered this world. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Rom. 5:12). Through the disobedience of Adam and Eve the intimate fellowship of man with his Creator was broken, and disharmony and disorder in all creation followed in its wake. Since Adam had been given dominion over all things on earth, the consequences of his sin and the effect of its curse became a blight on all creation. Now the ground is cursed for his sake. It now brings forth thorns and thistles instead of nourishing food, and in the sweat of his brow man must now wrest from the earth his livelihood. Now there is sorrow and pain, aging, deterioration, and death in the world. And man eventually returns again to the elements from which his body was taken.

CORRECTION

The faulty grammatical structure with which the sixth paragraph of the News Medley in the issue of September 25, 1981, p. 358, 1st column, begins was not found in the copy. The copy read, "I hope not that I violate trust . . ." and the grammatically incorrect "I do not hope . . ." must have crept in from another source.

vO

But even now, despite the curse and the blight of sin upon it, the world is still a wonderful world. The devil was not able to destroy it completely or rob it of all its beauty. It still proclaims the glory of the Maker.

* * * * *

God's Gift

The water shimmers
A sparkling blue
Shining, reflecting
Blinding my view.
The trees are swaying
They stand strong and tall
The leaves are whispering
Just think: GOD made them all.
Orange, golden leaves
Cascading, fluttering, flowing
Forming a sloped, soft blanket
The wind gently blowing.
Dancing, flittering, insects and birds
Softly, sweetly singing with glee
Harmonizing a melody
Delicately winged and free.
Clouds, fluffy and bouncy
Rain, ready to fall
They're all wonderful sights
And God made them all!
Heartwarming, spectacular
They appeared at His call
Such bountiful gifts
Let's thank God for them all.

Written by *Carla VanderSluis*
February 27, 1981

* * * * *

For the month of November we have on our birthday calendar:

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

The Lord willing, Wilma hopes to celebrate her 21st birthday on November 3. Wilma lives at home, and to my knowledge, daily attends school or workshop. We wish you a very happy day, Wilma! May you receive many best wishes for your special day!

* * * * *

Send your requests to:

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

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE — Continued

could not recognize as fellow members institutions of learning which did not do so or which by their practice showed that they no longer took the creeds seriously. As the value of a forum was generally felt, "Het Gereformeerde Wetenschappelijk Genootschap" proposed to forget about an Association and to come together as representatives of Christian institutions once every three years. At the previous conference a structure committee was appointed to make a recommendation to the third conference. That was done, and in agreement with the advice of this committee it was decided not to aim at the present time for an alliance but to establish an INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE PROMOTION OF CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION. This Council is based on the authoritativeness of Scripture for education and scholarship. Its purpose is cooperation among those scholars who are committed to and involved in Christian education and/or research, to promote the critical analysis, from a biblical perspective, of distortions of the truth in our contemporary world, to sponsor conferences, and to publish a regular newsletter.

So the institutions are out, but in another way they are (or rather they are hoped to be) in, namely, for the financing, of future conferences and for giving financial support to scholars whose institutions are not able to pay the costs of attendance. How high this support bill can run the financial report shows. It mentions an amount of \$45,000.00. An association of scholars cannot foot a bill like that. The only bodies which can do so are (and have been so far) the bigger institutions which have funds available for special purposes. The 45-thousand-dollar question is, of course, whether these institutions are willing to pay in the future, now that there is not an alliance of Institutions for Christian Higher Education — which never came off the ground — nor a conference of such institutions, as the three conferences which were held were. The majority was quite optimistic in this respect. The Colleges and Universities, the reasoning was, may not be officially represented anymore, but the scholars are for the greater part educators at these institutions. So, indirectly, these Colleges and Universities reap the fruit of the conferences and other activities. This may be true with re-

spect to the larger schools of learning, but I am not so sure that this will also be the case with the smaller institutions and societies which paid the expenses of their representatives so far.

And that is the financial side of the matter, but there is, of course, a more important aspect to the whole thing. The reason why the new structure was chosen, was not that this way the cause could be served better, but simply that only in this way the objections against participation of particular institutions could be eliminated. That might not be a problem any longer, but the *cause* of that problem — the lack of the unity of faith and practice — is also present in a society of scholars convened under a council. That remains the basic weakness of the end-result of a wonderful initiative. I write "end-result," because I cannot see how the original goal can be reached yet, unless something does not just happen to the University of Potchefstroom or to the Free University, but unless the Word of God and the Creeds based on

it again receive their foundational place in *all* institutions for Christian higher education.

f. In Closing

I do not want to end these impressions on a negative note alone. A lot of positive things may be said as well. I have mentioned them throughout this report. Let me close with one other one. It is a wonderful thing to meet and to get around for a week with Christian scholars from all over the world; to talk to them, to listen to them, to learn from them; to find out that there are fellow Christians who sometimes in very difficult situations give their talents and their whole life for the cause of true Christian education and who do so in small institutions of learning, struggling along from day to day. It is a precious thing to learn and to experience that all over the world the good fight is still being fought and the faith is kept in spite of all the odds. It is encouraging and comforting in a time of ongoing secularization to see something of the works of God which He does in His church, which He will also do in the field of education.

L. SELLES

Psalm 146:1-5

1. Praise the LORD, who reigns for - ev - er!
O my soul, bring him your praise. I will
bless my God and Mak - er And ex - alt
him all my days. Prais - es to my God
I'll sing; While I live I laud my King.

5. 'Tis the LORD who watches strangers;
Waifs and widows he maintains,
But he thwarts the wicked's pathways.
Praise him who forever reigns.
Zion's children, sing his laud.
Hallelujah, praise your God.

Letter-to-the-Editor

Dear Mr. Faber:

I write to you to correct some serious errors in the "Press Review" section of the May 22 issue of the *Clarion*. The article dealt with the proposal of three Presbyterian churches in the United States to unite. Several inaccuracies in the article tended to put the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in a bad light, so I will attempt to make some corrections.

First of all the article stated that the General Assembly of the OPC of 1980 "did not really deal with the matter." In fact, the opposite is really true. Our Committee on Ecumenicity came to the assembly with a proposal that we accept the invitation of the Presbyterian Church in America to unite with it. After a lengthy debate, however, the assembly instead directed the Committee to pursue union talks with the PCA throughout the next twelve months. Then our Committee was to prepare a statement indicating the similarities and differences among the three churches and to distribute it to all of the OP churches. Throughout the year extensive meetings were held with the PCA and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod.

The article continues by saying that some years ago the OPC and RPCES had merger talks which yielded no positive results "because of objections especially on the side of the OPC to millennialist ideas in the RPCES." This is inaccurate. In fact, the OPC voted to join the RPCES in 1975. The OPC was willing to accept slight changes in the Westminster's Larger Catechism in order to ensure eschatological liberty in the united church. Although the OPC discussed with the RPCES matters dealing with the millennium, Christian liberty and dispensationalism, the OPC judged that there were no problems serious enough to stop union. The reason that the union did not take place is that only 57% of the Assembly of the RPCES voted for the union, whereas they needed a two-thirds vote to bring it about. So the union was stopped by the RPCES and not the OPC.

The article further states that the document listing and discussing the differences among the churches was sent to ministers and elders in the three churches but "it has not been made public." That is not quite accurate. In fact, it was the intention of our Committee on Ecumenicity to make the document public by sending it to the ministers and elders. Many of the sessions of our churches reproduced the document for distribution within their churches. And information about the document and the proposed union was carried in several issues of our denominational magazine of which I am editor, *New Horizons*. I have included the last three issues and marked in red some of the sections that deal with all of these matters. Furthermore the February 11, 1981 issue of the *Presbyterian Journal* contained in-

formation about this paper which compared the three churches.

The reason that I write is to ask you to make it clear to your readers that the OPC has been studying the matter of union with these churches for many years and has tried to make public as much as possible all of the matters that should be taken into consideration.

Cordially in Christ,
ROGER W. SCHMURR

Remarks

I am grateful to Mr. Schmurr for the corrections which he made on my article in this Letter to the Editor. I may add a few remarks. In the first place, when I wrote that the General Assembly of the OPC of 1980 "did not really deal with the matter," I meant what Mr. Schmurr says and tried to express that with the word "really." I meant to say that this assembly did not come to a concluding decision yet as to whether or not to unite. But now what is meant is clear.

As for the second point, here I was wrong and did not give the correct picture of the history. Another question, however, now is: Was it a strong point of the OPC to be "willing to accept slight changes in the Westminster's Larger Catechism in order to ensure eschatological liberty in the united church"? That is opening the way for acceptance of pre-millennialism (a thousand year reign of Christ on earth at the end of time). I am very strongly convinced that this eschatological view of pre-millennialism is in conflict with the Scriptures. Many an article of Prof. Ohmann and also articles of Rev. W. Huizinga against this pre-millennialism have appeared in *Clarion*. Officially giving liberty to this view as a legitimate possibility of interpreting the Scriptures does not strengthen a church, in my opinion.

In the third place, there is the remark which I made about the fact that the differences between the churches were not made public. I am glad that I was "not quite accurate," and that "it was the intention of our [= OPC's, J.G.] Committee on Ecumenicity to make the document public by sending it to the ministers and elders." But that is now exactly what I meant as my objection. A document that is meant for ministers and elders is not really made public, in my opinion. When something is made public, then it must be available for everyone, and not only for a select group. It is a good thing that "many of the sessions" of the OPC "reproduced the document for distribution within their churches. That was making it available for everyone, in those churches, anyway.

But, once again, thanks for the clarification and correction.

J. GEERTSEMA

PRESS RELEASE

of the Classis Pacific (Classis Contracta) of September 9, 1981 in Chilliwack, B.C.

On behalf of the convening Church of Chilliwack, the Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar calls the meeting to order. He requests to sing Ps. 98:1 and 2. He reads Psalm 98 and leads in prayer. The brothers are welcomed, especially the Rev. J. Geertsema, who is present in connection with the approbation of his call. The Rev. Tiggelaar also briefly mentions the call which he himself has received from the Church at Barrhead, Alta.

The brothers delegated from the Church at Abbotsford examine the credentials and report that the Churches of Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Cloverdale, Langley, and Surrey (Maranatha) are lawfully represented.

Classis is constituted. As officers are appointed: Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar, chairman; and Rev. M. VanderWel, clerk.

The agenda is adopted as it was proposed by the convening Church.

On request of the Maranatha Church at Surrey, Classis deals now with the call which has been extended to, and has been accepted by, the Rev. J. Geertsema. Having examined the necessary documents which were submitted, and having taken note of the good testimonies therein, Classis approves the call extended to and accepted by the Rev. J. Geertsema. The chairman congratulates the Maranatha Church at Surrey with the fact that she may again receive a faithful minister of the Word.

The Rev. D. VanderBoom is appointed by Classis to represent Classis at the worship service on Sunday, September 13, 1981, in which Rev. J. Geertsema will hold his inaugural sermon. The brothers of Surrey (Maranatha) inform Classis that on Friday, September 11, 1981, a welcome evening will be held for the Rev. Geertsema and his family.

The Acts are read and adopted. The clerk will publish a Press Release.

After Ps. 105:1 has been sung and Rev. VanderWel has led in prayer of thanksgiving, Classis is closed.

On behalf of Classis,
M. VANDERWEL, clerk e.t.

OUR COVER

*Canadian Olympic, Regatta
Kingston, Ontario. (Photo Courtesy
Ontario Government.)*

FOR THE READER'S INFORMATION

This issue of *Clarion* was mailed from Winnipeg Central Post Office on October 20, 1981.

The Small Beginnings



Full-time staff and students of the C.R.T.C.
 Front row (left to right): Miss D. Breukelman (Chatham),
 Miss J. Veenendaal (Carman), Miss L. Vanderzwaag (Hamilton),
 Miss J. Koster (Chatham).
 Back row (left to right): Mr. T.M.P. Van der Ven (Principal),
 Mr. E. Slaa (Winnipeg), Mr. C. Oosterhoff (Lincoln), Mr.
 W.F. Horsman (lecturer).

Even though a 50% enrolment increase during the first week of operation is certainly not an easy thing to deal with in most schools, it was most gratifying to receive these young people at the C.R.T.C. The Teachers' College was off to a smooth start: the planned time-table is operative (having undergone the usual last minute changes!); courses are being taught as designed; the facilities in the Hamilton church basement proved to be well adequate. Dr. W. Helder appears weekly to lecture in English, while Mrs. S. Bethlehem has been found willing to introduce these young people to the mysteries and enjoyments of arts and crafts.

A number of young people have already indicated their intention to enroll in the near future. This will enable the Board to work further towards planning the extension of the College.

In addition, some 18 practising teachers assemble weekly in the Guido de Brès High School library for studies in the foundations of education — the first of (hopefully) many part-time courses which will assist teachers in their daily task at Reformed schools.

May the Lord God bless these endeavours, and increase our understandings of the spirits of our times, so that the education at our schools may remain truly Reformed.

CORRECTION

Standing: H.J. Homan, Smithville, Ont.; R. Klaver, Smithers, B.C.; P. Vanderpol, Surrey, B.C.; C. Wiersma, Chatham, Ont.; T.M. Veenendaal, Carman, Man.; C. Hoff, London, Ont.; G. Nordeman, Burlington, Ont.; J. Gelderman, Burlington, Ont. (treasurer); A. Witten, Hamilton, Ont.; A. Vanoverbeeke, Orangeville, Ont.; B. DeVos, Chilliwack, B.C.; W. Gortemaker, Winnipeg, Man.; (Missing: Mrs. C. Meliefste, Coaldale, Alta.; S. Tuininga, Neerlandia, Alta.)
 Seated: T.M.P. VanderVen, Mrs. VanderVen, E. Kampen (chairman), Mrs. Horsman, W. Horsman.



Actions of the 48th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Rejoining the Presbyterian Church in America

That in view of the invitation of the Presbyterian Church in America to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, in accordance with the Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America 14-6, to apply to join with them for the purpose of effecting and perfecting one church among us, the 48th General Assembly begin the application process to join the Presbyterian Church in America on the basis of the Word of God, and the Confession of Faith and Catechisms and Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America, and that to this end the Assembly propose to the presbyteries, in accordance with the Form of Government Chapter XXXII, Sections 3 and 4, that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church apply for reception by the Presbyterian Church in America, and that the form in which the proposal should be voted on by the presbyteries be:

That the Orthodox Presbyterian Church apply for reception into the Presbyterian Church in America on the basis of the Word of God, and the Confession of Faith and Catechisms and Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America.

That if the Ninth (1981) General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America approves the application of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Committees on Christian Education, Foreign Missions, Home Missions and Church Extension, and Pensions, and the Trustees of the General Assembly, be instructed to engage the services of legal counsel to make a preliminary investigation of the legal steps that would be necessary for their corporate entities in the event that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church would join the Presbyterian Church in America; that if and when the proposal to apply to the Presbyterian Church in America is approved by the requisite number of presbyteries of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the proposal to receive the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is approved by the requisite number of presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in America, the said Committees and Trustees be instructed to have the necessary steps taken promptly to prepare, for approval by the 49th General Assembly, all instruments necessary for the proper transfer of the assets and liabilities under their juris-

dition to the appropriate jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church in America, and that these Committees and Trustees be instructed to consult with the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations from time to time with regard to these matters.

Grounds

- (1) If the OPC should join the PCA the future of the various legal entities would have to be determined legally.
- (2) With June 1982 as a possible date for implementation of the proposal, some legal preparation would be required well in advance of that time.
- (3) A two-stage preparation would keep expense at a minimum while making full preparation possible in time for final implementation.
- (4) The Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations will be in consultation with the PCA during the year and the above-named Committees and Trustees should seek to coordinate their procedures with unfolding developments.

That the Assembly request, urge, and implore the sessions, ruling elders, and ministers, to send to the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations at the earliest possible time documented information that they believe bears upon the question of accepting the invitation to join the PCA; that the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations be instructed to prepare information on the matter of joining the PCA to be distributed to the congregations beginning September 15, 1981, such information to include the biblical principles concerning union with other churches and the specific application of such principles to the potential difficult problems of this joining and receiving; and that the Assembly further instruct the Committee to make available to the presbyteries a member of the Committee and, where possible, a member of the PCA's Ad Interim Committee, and/or teaching or ruling elders of local PCA congregations, when they discuss the Assembly's proposal to accept the invitation from the PCA, and that the presbyteries be advised to make use of that opportunity.

That the Assembly urge the presby-

teries to make diligent effort to hold consultations with PCA and RPCES presbyteries in overlapping geographical areas as soon as possible after this Assembly for the purpose of learning each others' interests and functioning.

That the presbyteries be encouraged to make a free interchange with each other of their evaluations of this prospective union, especially with respect to the faith, life, and practice of their presbytery.

That if the Ninth (1981) General Assembly of the PCA approves the application of the OPC, that the Committee on Ecumenicity be instructed to meet with its counterpart committee in the PCA for the purpose of formulating specific provisions for the just treatment of those teaching and ruling elders and deacons who may not be able, for reasons of conscience, and those congregations which may not be able, on principial grounds, to participate in the acceptance of the invitation; that such provisions shall include the acceptance of the formation of a church structure by those individuals and congregations in view above; that these provisions include at least the following: the orderly transfer of ministerial credentials, the recognition of the ordinations of ruling elders and deacons, and the orderly transfer of church memberships; that, in addition, provision be made for the just distribution of contributions to the Pension Fund made by both churches and individuals; and that provisions be made for home and foreign missionaries not entering the PCA and salaried in full or in part by the agencies of the OPC, and for congregations and individuals also not entering the PCA who may have loans with the agencies of the OPC.

That the Assembly propose to the General Assembly of the PCA and to the Synod of the RPCES that, if the constitutional steps to the joining and receiving of the OPC and the RPCES into the PCA be completed by the time the highest courts of those churches complete their business in 1982, that the effective date of that joining and receiving shall be not earlier than January 1, 1983, in order to permit the orderly accomplishment of the following: (a) the publication and distribution of the minutes of the 1982 General Assembly of the OPC and the Synod of the RPCES and carrying out of the decisions of those bodies; (b) preparations for the integrating of the presbyteries, and transfer of affairs of the predecessor presbyteries to their successors; (c) preparations for the transfer of the affairs of the agencies of the OPC and the RPCES to their successor agencies and the continuance of their ministries under their new auspices; (d) the collecting of statistics from congregations and presbyteries as of a common, predetermined date for all of the churches and for the various purposes for which those statistics are needed; and (e) preparations for, and apportionment of commissioners to, the 1983 General Assembly of the PCA.

JOHN P. GALBRAITH
Corresponding Clerk

Report of delegate of the 48th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, held May 29 - June 4, 1981, at Beaver Falls, PA.

The undersigned attended the 48th General Assembly of the OPC, from June 1 to June 3. He was well received. He offers the following report:

1. Your delegate was introduced to the General Assembly, and on motion duly made and seconded, and approved, was accepted as a corresponding member of the assembly. He addressed the assembly once to bring our brotherly greetings, to assure them of our hearty prayers and to express the hope that the Spirit of the ascended King and Head of the church would direct all their deliberations and discussions. Your delegate addressed the assembly in the midst of its discussions whether or not to apply to join the Presbyterian Church in America. Consequently, he not only expressed our keen interest in this whole matter, but also briefly sketched from our Reformed church history the Union of 1892, in order to impress on the assembly our understanding of the difficulties of the decision which it faced.
2. a) In its report to the 48th General Assembly the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR) gave a full report of their contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches as well as a report of their delegate to our 1980 General Synod. b) The report of the CEIR also included a section about the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands [Liberated — RCN (lib.)] who have corresponded with the CEIR. The CEIR recommended "to continue correspondence with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated) and to take steps that may lead toward full correspondence." This recommendation was mentioned because our committee suggested to the Deputies for Correspondence with Churches Abroad of the RCN (lib.) that they open contact with the OPC, but that they do not proceed more quickly than our churches.
3. The revision of the Book of Discipline came up for discussion. Chapter II, B, 2d was an interesting new addition. It states that someone who desires to become a communicant member of the OPC must first undergo a thorough examination by the session (local church), after which he/she would publicly profess the faith before the congregation. Owing to the number of revisions, the whole process will need more time.

4. The overriding matter at this general assembly was the recommendation of the CEIR to accept the invitation of the PCA to apply to join the PCA. This matter received a full and balanced discussion even though about 135 commissioners attended the general assembly. Matters such as the determination of like faith and practice, the call to unity, the boundaries for the various presbyteries, the amalgamation of the various church-bodies, the theological question of justification by faith in the Philadelphian Presbytery of the OPC, the issue of masonry in the PCA, the presence of charismatic gifts in the PCA, differences between the Form of Government of the OPC and the Book of Church Order of the PCA, and the method of achieving unity, had all been covered in the extensive report of the Committee on Ecumenicity.

The final vote on this recommendation was 93 in favour and 41 against (about 70 percent). A two-third majority was necessary, so there is now an application by the OPC to join the PCA. Now two-thirds of the presbyteries of the

OPC must approve and the next (49th) General Assembly must again approve it by at least a two-third majority vote. It could be mentioned that the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, also decided by a vote of 73 percent in favour of applying to join the PCA. These rapid developments in favour of unity (Ephesians 4 is often cited) add a whole new dimension to our ecclesiastical contacts with the OPC.

5. Your delegate appreciated the privilege of attending this important General Assembly of the OPC. Not only he himself, but especially the Canadian Reformed Churches are warmly received. Time and again commissioners requested more information about the history of the Reformed heritage of our churches. This is due probably in part to the increasing attention paid to our churches at their General Assemblies. Moreover, the church magazine of the OPC, *New Horizons*, in the May/81 issue, included an excellent introduction to our churches.
6. Your delegate conveyed the assurance that we do pray and will pray for the OPC churches while they deliberate further on the application to accept the invitation of the PCA and to be received by the PCA. Since we as churches have recognized the OPC as a true church of our Lord Jesus Christ, it would be good that prayer, to the effect that the Spirit of our Lord direct them by His revealed will, be made in all our churches.

Your appointed delegate,
REV. W. HUIZINGA

Enclosed in this issue you will find our new 1981/82 catalogues of books

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A Reformed Social-Political Magazine

Watertreading

Anybody who has had swimming lessons will remember that early in the pursuit of this art he was instructed to master the skill of watertreading. This technique consists of creating a great disturbance in the waters, with the net result that you are not moving one inch in any direction, east nor west, up nor under, especially not under.

Are we watertreading with our magazine? Certainly not according to the above description. We are not creating a great turmoil and we are moving in the desired direction: the publication of our first issue. A great amount of preparation is necessary before the moment can come that the first bundles of volume 1, number 1, are ready for distribution.

Most of that work is invisible. But it is happening. However, one thing is certain: we cannot meet the initial target date of mid-November. The response to our requests have lost some of their momentum after the mail strike. Therefore we have decided to postpone publication for a few months, to allow all the preparation to be properly completed. Further details will follow in the next issue. We are convinced you will understand. After all, it is better to postpone than to take to the water while not capable of staying afloat, let alone keeping a steady course.

Dear John

We all know the song "Dear John, how I hate to write." It is so well-known that anybody whose engagement is terminated in writing is said to receive a "Dear John letter."

As reported before, we prepared a list of potential writers to whom we sent an initial invitation to become contributors.

To these letters we received quite a few replies. Fortunately, nobody answered "how I hate to write." So, at least in that respect we did not choose wrongly. At this moment we have enough promised copy to fill the first two numbers, but they would not be very balanced. However, with a staff of minimal as ours, we must be able to rely on free lance writers, so that we can direct the course of the magazine. Otherwise it becomes an aimless affair, publishing whatever happens to be at hand. Many magazines function in that manner, but to us that is not good

enough. Since we do not need to react immediately to the latest world event, we have the possibility to spend more time reflecting and bringing together a variety of aspects of a topic for an issue. This is called "a theme number," and we would like to have important themes woven into all our issues.

Anybody can understand that such a plan will only function if a well-organized body of writers is available. It is with that organization that we are presently busy. Naturally, we cannot ask any one person to contribute a constant stream of literature. We need therefore a good number of "occasional" writers in the different departments to fill our pages. That provides variety. That also makes the task of the writers lighter, so that it does not become a heavy burden. So that nobody has to send the letter: "Dear John, how I hate to write"

Reading Habits

The art of writing and speaking properly is in today's fashion called: "communicating effectively." Knowing the reading habits of your public is most important for any communication to be effective. Think of the letter of the mother, recited at weddings and parties: "Dear John, I am writing this letter slowly, because I know you cannot read very fast." It would be a great thing if we knew precisely what kind of readers we were addressing. It might be an idea to be explored: researching readership habits. *Nederlands Dagblad* conducted such a research and found that their readership spent more than average time reading matters with greater than average complexity. Could we count on a similar pattern? As ideal for our magazine we had set the goal to be: "attractive to our teenagers and young adults without becoming patronizing. Therefore, the language should be bright but sober, varied but not academic." Much of this will, of course, depend on the temperament and personal style of our contributors.

The message is what counts. That message is the treasure. But the medium is also important. That medium is our language. Earthen vessels did somebody say? Yes, but let nobody use the apostle Paul's reference to human weakness as an excuse for poor workmanship. Earthen vessels are in the first place functional. And there is no prohibition against an occasional flower.

our little magazine

Dear Busy Beavers,

At the end of this month comes a special day.
Yes, I know you're thinking it's Hallowe'en.

That's right, of course.

But that's not all!

Even more important, it's also Reformation Day.

Maybe you'll say, "Nobody ever talks about that!"

And you're right about that, too, of course.

Not too many people talk about October 31 as Reformation Day.

But to God's children it is a day to be happy and thankful that God always cares for His church.

Long ago when everything looked dark and hopeless in the church, God gave leaders like Martin Luther and John Calvin.

These leaders (reformers) showed God's people once again the riches of God's Word and His promise of forgiveness in Christ.

We have many more Bibles in our homes than people in Reformation times.

Let's read them and treasure them!

* * * * *

Now, here's a quiz for you to see how much your family members remember about the Reformation and the Reformers.

Share this quiz with your family and see if you can come up with all the answers!

If you manage to get all the answers write and tell me, and I'll send you a little reward for being a good puzzler.

Reformation Day Quiz

1. Which Reformer was once called "Squire George"?
2. Why was John Hus killed long before the Reformation?
3. Which city in Europe served as a centre for the work of the Reformation?
4. Who was the English fore-runner of the Reformation?
5. Into which language was the Bible translated at the Wartburg, and by whom?
6. Which Reformer once fled Paris disguised as a vine dresser?
7. What document was quickly and widely circulated in Germany in the month of November in 1517?
8. Who was the English Bible translator who lost his life in Europe?
9. What were the French Protestants called?
10. Which Reformer lost his life in a military battle?

(Answers below)

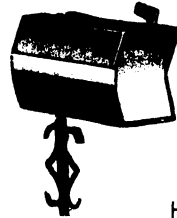
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Let's be early this time with our Birthday Wishes!

To all Busy Beavers who have their birthday in November we all wish a very happy day and many happy returns.

May you all have a thankful and fun time celebrating, and may the Lord bless and keep you in the year ahead!

Tanya Harlaar	November 1	John Linde	November 15
Geraldine Tamminga	3	Bernice Vandenbos	17
Paul Mulder	4	Debbie Vandergugten	17
Margaret Oosterveld	4	Veronica Post	20
Jennifer Van Woudenberg	8	Hilda De Vos	21
Carla Griffioen	10	Cathy Van Delden	21
Joanne Lodder	11	Lorinda Barendregt	22
Lucy De Boer	12	Glenda Bulthuis	24
Michelle Van Egmond	12	Charles Doekes	27
Bernice Van Overbeeke	14	Annette Van Andel	28
Brian Bosch	15	Sylvia Foekens	30
Leona Dam	15		



From the Mailbox

Hello, *Brenda De Boer*. It was very nice to hear from you. Thank you for a nice chatty letter, and the puzzle too. I'm happy you had such good holidays. Your trip sounded interesting! Bye for now, Brenda.

QUIZ TIME

Unscramble, Please!
(Old Testament Words)

from Busy Beaver *Theresa De Boer*

1. H R T U =
2. A E R Z =
3. B O J =
4. Y D M E O U N R E T O =
5. S P B R O E V =
6. S A I H A I =
7. E O J L =
8. H M N U A =
9. R C A I E A H C Z H =
10. H O A N J =

Answers: Reformation Day Quiz

1. Martin Luther; 2. He preached the gospel with zeal and fearlessly attacked the deformation in the church.
3. Geneva; 4. Wycliff; 5. German, by Martin Luther; 6. John Calvin; 7. Luther's 95 Theses; 8. William Tyndale; 9. Huguenots; 10. Ulrich Zwingli.

Answers: Unscramble, Please!

1. Ruth
2. Ezra
3. Job
4. Deuteronomy
5. Proverbs
6. Isaiah
7. Joel
8. Nahum
9. Zechariah
10. Jonah