



Clarion

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Presbyterian Merger?

One aspect of the so-called Shepherd controversy deserves special treatment. It is the impact it has made and possibly will make on ecclesiastical contacts. First of all we think of the attempts in Presbyterian churches in the United States to come to organic unity. One could argue that a dismissal of a professor by the Board of an independent Seminary does not have to influence decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies in any way. Is the case of Prof. Norman Shepherd not different in this respect from the deposition of e.g. Klaas Schilder in The Netherlands in 1944? Dr. Schilder was professor at the Seminary in Kampen that was completely controlled by the general synods of the Reformed Churches. In March 1944 the synod not only suspended him as professor, but at the same time imposed on him a suspension as emeritus minister of the Reformed Church in Rotterdam-Delfshaven. This was a hierarchical action and therefore a flagrant deviation from Reformed church polity. We do not forget the role played by doctrinal synodical decisions, but it is clear that this suspension and deposition of Dr. K. Schilder evoked much indignation, protest, and resistance, that issued into the liberation movement (“Vrijmaking”). The dismissal of Prof. Norman Shepherd will have a similar result.

Nevertheless, Prof. Shepherd is an ordained minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and a member of the presbytery of Philadelphia. In ten sessions this presbytery discussed his Thirty-Four Theses on Justification in relation to faith, repentance, and good works, submitted in November 1978, and at the latest meeting, in October 1981, there was an announcement of legal charges against Shepherd because of deviation from the Westminster standards. The Philadelphia presbytery, therefore, will have to deal with the case once more.

Past and future actions of this presbytery and of general assemblies of the OPC in the Shepherd controversy have made and will make some inprint on the endeavors to obtain more organic unity among some Presbyterian denominations. The case was mentioned in a publication of the Ad Interim Committee on Inter-Church Relations of the Presbyterian Church in America. This publication is called *Information Introducing and Comparing The Presbyterian Church in America, The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, The Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, and The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*. It is an excellent introduction especially for Reformed people who are often as baffled by the Presbyterian peculiarities, just as Presbyterians undoubtedly are struck by our Reformed specialities. The *Information* gives a brief history of the denominations listed, a comparison of areas of similarity

and differences among the churches, and a statement of the distinctives of polity as held by the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Last but not least, there are statistical summaries of each denomination with maps, by which one is able to determine the size and location of each of these Presbyterian denominations.

When we first have a look at those maps, we immediately see that the distinction between Northern and Southern Presbyterians is still visible. In the mainline Presbyterian churches a separation between Northern and Southern Presbyterians came about in 1861. The PCA, the youngest and largest of the four denominations that we now discuss, is typically Southern Presbyterian. When it was constituted in 1973, the constituency for the most part had separated themselves from the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS), the Southern denomination of which James H. Thornwell was the spiritual leader in the nineteenth century. The geographic situation makes its Southern character evident: of the 460 churches at the end of 1979 there were 104 congregations in Mississippi, 75 in Alabama, 29 in Georgia, 78 in the Carolinas, and 38 in Florida.

With regard to church polity in the PCA, there is still a strong emphasis on the parity or equality of ruling and teaching elders, and the use of committees instead of boards to carry out the church's work. These aspects appeal to Canadian Reformed people. They recognize their own struggle against “dominocracy” — when ministers lord it over the congregations — and against hierarchism when broader or major assemblies lord it over consistories. The PCA is of the opinion that there are just two kinds of officers in the New Testament polity: namely, elders and deacons. Within the office of elders there are two classes of elders: ruling and teaching. The minister, or teaching elder, does not have any more authority than the ruling elder does. In a manner similar to that of our Canadian Reformed church polity, there is a balanced number of ruling and teaching elders in both the general assembly and the presbyteries. While in our general synods a minister is chairman, in the general assemblies of the PCA it is the custom that ruling and teaching elders alternate as moderators. Ruling elders also participate in the laying on of hands of the presbytery at the ordination of teaching elders. Anyone who has studied the Kampen dissertation of Dr. Huh about the position of the elder in Presbyterianism recognizes in the PCA church polity the result of the teaching of J.H. Thornwell. I have the impression that the “Northern” presbyterians as represented in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (RPCES), and in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are less rigid in following the church-

political ideas of Charles Hodge. Church polity, therefore, will not be an impediment for the merger between the PCA, the RPCES, and later the OPC. Our readers know that the latest general assemblies of PCA, RPCES, and OPC had decided to let the presbyteries vote on a plan of "receiving and joining." It means that RPCES and OPC would join the PCA. Because this will happen on the basis of the Book of Church Order of the PCA, it is important to know the characteristics of the polity of the Presbyterian Church in America. With interest I read the following exposition in *Information*, p. 14:

Ultimately, the authority of the courts of the church in the Presbyterian system is the same throughout the system. Each court is made up of the same kinds of persons, ruling and teaching elders. Christ is the Head of each court. Thus, when any court acts in accord with His will, that action is authoritative. Of course, in matters of debate the graduated court system allows for review by a larger body of the church, until it reaches the General Assembly, the highest or broadest court of appeal. *Though the action of the Assembly is inherently more authoritative than the session, but only because it represents the largest portion of the church* (emphasis mine, J.F.). That is, the Assembly is not more authoritative because it is made up of persons of higher rank or authority in the church than in the presbytery or session but only because it represents the *broadest* thinking of the church at large.

No less important than the church political agreement between PCA, RPCES and OPC is the doctrinal basis of these churches. They all are committed to the Westminster standards. As far as specific doctrines are concerned, the Working Comparison specifically mentions eschatology, inerrancy of Scripture, charismatic gifts, and justification by faith alone.

With respect to eschatology, the remark is made that the emphasis historically and *de facto* may vary in different denominations, but the practice is one of millennial neutrality. All are committed to the inerrancy of the Holy Scripture both confessionally and explicitly via ordination vows. In the issue of charismatic gifts the positions appear similar, though occasional PCA and RPCES practice may be more tolerant of charismatic tendencies. Nevertheless, it may be thankfully noted that the Book of Church Order of the PCA expressly affirms cessation of "extraordinary gifts," related to new revelation of God. The Form of Government of the RPCES states that "special gifts of demonstrative miracles . . . are not given to the church in all ages." The position of the OPC is the strongest. Their Form of Government declares that when the testimony of the prophets "was completed . . . the powers and signs that endued and sealed their ministry ceased." Moreover, there is in the 1975 Minutes an excellent report: "Baptism of the Holy Spirit," written by Dr. Richard B. Gaffin Jr., New Testament Professor at Westminster Theological Seminary. It affirms cessation of all miraculous gifts. It is almost impossible for an outsider to decide whether occasional PCA tolerance of charismatic tendencies should constitute an impediment for the brothers of the OPC to join.

It seems that the so-called Shepherd controversy has played a role in the discussions of both the PCA and the OPC. *Information* reports that on April 25, 1978, the Faculty of Westminster concluded "that Mr. Shepherd's position does not contradict the system of doctrine taught in Holy Scripture and summarized in the Westminster Standards." This publication also mentioned "related issues are now before the Presbytery of Philadel-

phia." It is a well-known fact that especially PCA members of the Board of Westminster Theological Seminary distrusted the doctrinal position of Prof. Shepherd. This distrust was heard in the latest general assembly of the PCA, while it was also voiced in some presbyteries that had to decide whether the invitation to join would be issued not only to the RPCES but also to the OPC.

One may easily surmise the gist of the reasoning. Even if persons would not want to doubt the orthodoxy of the OPC itself, one could suggest that it would be better that the OPC first deals with the controversy about justification by faith alone, before the enlarged touchy doctrinal controversy. Be this as it may, we know the result of the discussions. An approval by three-fourths of the PCA presbyteries has been obtained for the Reformed Presbyterians but not for the Orthodox Presbyterians. They will not be invited to join as yet.

Nobody can tell the motives of the teaching and ruling elders of the PCA in voting the way they did. Often the difference between yeas and nays was not great at all, but it is evident that the Shepherd case had some effect. In the providence of God it has been an instrument to prolong the independent existence of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. On the other hand, Orthodox Presbyterians in the community of Westminster Theological Seminary who were strongly in favour of the merger with the PCA may have been influenced to take a position that led to the dismissal of Prof. Shepherd.

As for the ecclesiastical debate on the merger, the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the OPC had been divided. In its report to the 1981 General Assembly it reached the final conclusion that the OPC *must* unite with the Presbyterian Church in America. Prof. Norman Shepherd, however, 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. During my stay in Philadelphia in the Fall Semester of 1981 I became aware of the fact that those who want the continental Reformed influence in the OPC maintained and strengthened are defenders of Prof. Shepherd's orthodoxy, without agreeing with him in every specific formulation. They are also the ones who do not eagerly look forward to merger with the PCA. They fear that the thoroughly Reformed character of the OPC will be erased and that a broader and bleaker Presbyterian evangelicism will prevail. They would rather strengthen the bond with truly Reformed churches. There is a possibility that the merger of PCA and OPC will be realized during the eighties but that a minority will continue the ministry of the OPC in a different formation and with an even stronger Reformed character.

The Canadian Reformed Churches do well to follow the developments with rapt attention. They have entered into a provisional relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church which they acknowledged as a true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. A merger of the OPC with the PCA would raise the question whether we have to offer a similar ecclesiastical contact to the enlarged Presbyterian Church in America. It would be a completely new and somewhat different situation.

Apart from this discussion of future contact with the PCA, the so-called Shepherd controversy may now already have effect on our ecclesiastical contact with the OPC. But that is a topic in itself.

J. FABER

To Associate or Not to Associate

A little while ago we received a letter with some questions, and we appreciate that. Many years ago we even opened the possibility for our readers to submit any questions they might have, and we promised that we would do our best to answer them to the best of our ability, even though we realized that we could never do it in such a manner that everyone would be satisfied with the answer. A special column for this purpose was even mentioned as a possibility and we envisaged that it could grow to become a regular feature should questions come in.

Thus far we have not been swamped with letters to this effect. Now one came in which deserves to be dealt with. The only point we don't like is that the letter now received was not signed. For that reason it should have been deposited into the wastepaper basket without having been read even, but the contents are general and therefore we shall deal with the questions. There may be more brothers and sisters who struggle with the same "problems."

First we give you the letter.

When, in the past years, a few times the form for excommunication was read during our worship service, a few questions arose in my mind. When the minister read the following sentence: "Further we exhort you, beloved Christians, to keep no company with him (her), to the end that he (she) may be ashamed!" What does it mean not to keep company with him (her)? May I in the circumstances not visit or celebrate a birthday party with my own brother or sister? And would there have to be any difference in treatment in this respect between those who have been excommunicated and those who have voluntarily left the church and turned their back to God? And what about those who left our church and joined another denomination?

Thus far the letter.

1. What does it mean not to keep company with him? May we not visit or celebrate a birthday with our own brother and sister?

2. Will there have to be any difference in treatment between those who have been excommunicated and those who have voluntarily left the Church and turned their back to God?

3. What about those who left the Church and joined another "denomination"?

What is this "not to keep company"?

These words have been taken from 1 Cor. 5. In the RSV they read, "Do not associate with." This, Paul states, does not apply to associating with sinners in the *world*, but if anyone who bears the name of a *brother* is guilty of immorality or any such gross sins. With such a one, the apostle admonishes us, we should not even eat.

The apostle speaks here about the attitude we are to have towards those who harden themselves in sin and have to be excommunicated from the Church.

On May 26, 1947, the late Prof. B. Holwerda delivered a speech at the League Day of Reformed Young Women's Societies. The topic was "De Reformatie van onze omgang," (*The Reformation of Our Association with Others*) and he dealt especially with I Corinthians 5.

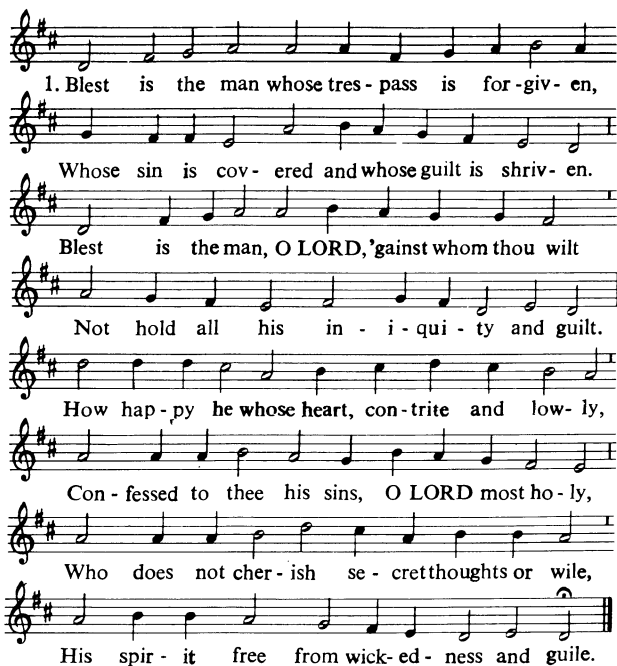
As the questions raised and dealt with in our above mentioned letter are practically the same as those dealt with in this address, I'll pass on some of the relevant passages. Actually, the whole speech is relevant, but it would be too much to insert it in its entirety. Besides, it was very much up-to-date with respect to the questions of the day, some of which are not directly related to our situation. A few passages, however, should not be withheld from our readers.

"We just went through an ecclesiastical crisis Can we, in spite of everything that drove us apart in the Church, remain good friends as soon as we meet one another outside the Church? In any case: can we act as if what happened in the Church does not have any effect on all other forms of association? Can we act *outside* the Church as if nothing happened *in* the Church?

"We have to go back to God's Word. Only then life can be truly healed and only in that manner shall we be able to obey the command that we shall love our neighbour as ourselves.

"I think that we cannot do better than by listening to what the apostle

Psalm 32



1. Blest is the man whose trespass is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered and whose guilt is shriven.
Blest is the man, O LORD, 'gainst whom thou wilt
Not hold all his iniquity and guilt.
How happy he whose heart, contrite and lowly,
Confessed to thee his sins, O LORD most holy,
Who does not cherish secret thoughts or wile,
His spirit free from wickedness and guile.

Book of Praise

Paul says about these things with his apostolic authority.

"Paul says . . . when I wrote this to you (about associating with a persistent sinner) I was not thinking of fornicators in the world; breaking off any 'association' with them would mean that you have to go out of the world. But I had in mind such cases in which someone who is called a *brother* falls into such sins. Overagainst such I maintain the rule: 'do not associate with him,' break off your going around with him; in the second letter to the Thessalonians it says, 'withdraw from him,' 3:6, and he gives the command 'in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' With the same emphasis he puts it here, and leaves no doubt whatsoever even for one moment how far that goes: with such a one you are not allowed to eat. You can no longer sit at one table with him.

"Where is here love? Does this not mean that the one who fell is left on his own without mercy? Is this discipline that will heal and that seeks salvation.

"Paul could love, for he knew what the church was, what her discipline aims at and means. He has to protect the Church against contamination. Then there is only one way: to remove the sinner radically out of her midst. He must try to save that man. This is possible only in one way: make him experience the deadly seriousness of the discipline. For the discipline means a foretaste of hell, the end of all communion and the beginning of the complete loneliness and of the total isolation. Discipline means excommunication out of the Church and consequently out of the kingdom of God. And when Christ enjoins His Church to exercise discipline, she must see to it that she drives the sinner into solitude where all communication is broken. They have to experience discipline as a horrible thing in order that they understand how terrible it is to be unable to go anywhere and no longer to have a bond with anyone. Discipline must be so penetrating that everyone who is under it says, 'I cannot bear this!' But when one goes and treats an excommunicated person genially, when one goes and cosily has dinner with him, one covers up hell, and breaks the seriousness of discipline. Then such a person says, 'Well, I am no longer a member of the church, but that is not hard to bear; I still have my old group. On Sundays I no longer belong, but from Monday through Saturday I am completely included.' Then discipline

is paralyzed beforehand and deprived of its effect."

* * *

Thus we have a direct command in Holy Writ which shows us what must be our attitude towards those who have been excommunicated. The Lord does not forbid us to have any contact with them; what we are to abstain from is the social association with them. At no time should the imprecation be given as if the excommunication does not have any or has only very little effect on the relations and the rest of life.

The question which is to be answered first of all is, "What is the Church and what does membership in the Church mean to us? Is that all-decisive, or is it something which comes in the second place?"

I have to think here of what the Lord Jesus said when He was told that His mother and His brothers were waiting for Him outside. "Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?" the Lord said. And He continued, "Here are My mother and My brothers." He said this while "stretching out His hands towards His disciples." "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister, and mother."

These words of our Saviour are to be repeated by us. We also are to bear in mind what the Lord said at another occasion, that whoever is not prepared to leave father, mother, brother, sister, fields, and all things for His sake cannot be His disciple.

Which ties are considered more important and dominating? The ties of blood or the ties of the communion of saints?

The answer to this question will also determine our attitude towards those who have broken with the Church, either while being under discipline or for no such reason. Here the command which was given with respect to those who have been excommunicated is not heard, and thus we are not bound. We can, however, not act as if nothing has happened and as if everything is smooth and honey-sweet.

It does indeed make quite a difference whether one joins the so-called Jehovah Witnesses or another "denomination" which to a large extent adheres to the same confessions which we believe to be the correct summary of the Word of God; the former cannot even be considered Christians. Such difference will also determine our whole attitude and behaviour towards them.

What we should never forget, however, is the main point: every one who breaks with the Church, for whatever reason and wherever he may go, cuts that specific bond with us which is the most precious bond that exists and which is not confined to this life but is a bond forever.

Whoever cuts the bond with us should experience that the relation is no longer what it was and that he has put up a barricade which makes association either impossible or very difficult. Except in the case where one has been excommunicated — for which we have an express command from the Lord through His apostle — there are so many possibilities that each and every one has to decide in which manner he has to show his allegiance to the Lord and to His Church in his association with others.

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Ministers' Workshop

On Jan. 4, 1982, ministers, professors, and students of theology gathered at our college building in Hamilton for a bi-annual workshop. After prayer in which we remembered Rev. H. Scholten, we read Ex. 28:15-30. Our convener, Rev. J. DeJong, welcomed us all.

In the morning, Prof. C. Van Dam introduced highlights of his master's thesis on "The Urim and the Thummim." Hopefully, his "expanded" thesis, as a doctoral thesis, will be published in the future, but meanwhile we will give you some highlights from his introduction.

Liberals and critics see the influence of heathen religions in the Old Testament use of the Urim and the Thummim. In heathen cults the priests manipulated "revelation." They were great deceivers. Priests, as carriers and manipulators of revelation, are apparently also at work in the Judaistic cult, these critics claim.

However, the LORD condemned divination and heathen forms of so-called revelations. Consequently, the Urim and Thummim occupy a unique place. To interpret them we must go to the Bible and not to heathen religions. For Israel's faith, too, is unique.

The ephod of the high priest (cf. Ex. 28) served mainly to hold the breastpiece of judgment. The material to hold the breastpiece was folded double. Since the Urim and Thummim were placed "in the breastpiece," it is understood that this folded material formed a pouch for the Urim and Thummim (U + T).

Most probably the U + T were precious stones. Since both terms (Urim and Thummim) have definite pronouns it is conceivable that there were two such stones.

In Num. 27:18-21, Joshua is commissioned to lead Israel in Moses' place. If there be any need for special and extra revelation concerning something not covered by the revelation of God through Moses, the procedure to follow is outlined in these verses. Joshua must consult the high priest (Eleazar) and no one else. The high priest would employ the U + T to inquire of the LORD. Through the U + T God would make known His judgment. For example, Num. 27:21 mentions that the use of the U + T would decide when they should go out and when to come in.

This inquiry of the LORD through U + T must be done "before the

LORD" (Num. 27:21), most probably then in the tabernacle or temple near the ark of God.

The phrase "to inquire of the LORD" becomes a technical expression for asking God's direction by means of the U + T (cf. Judg. 20:18, 23, 27; I Sam. 22:10, 13; 23:2, 4, 6, 9).

In most cases the detailed answers of the LORD were long and not simply yes or no, as many critics claim they were. Often I Sam. 14:41 ff. is mentioned to show how the U + T were actually used like dice, or like the casting of lots. However, the Hebrew text here does not support it. The RSV follows the Vulgate which depended on the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The latter translations are not reliable. Keeping to the shorter Hebrew text, there is no need to see the U + T as dice which were cast for a decision. The answer in I Sam. 23:10-12 and II Sam. 5:23 ff. are too detailed to allow the U + T to be explained as a lot, or an oracle by a lot.

In I Sam. 14:18 ff. we see that the high priest put his hand into the breastpiece to make an inquiry. Since Urim is derived from terms meaning light, and since there is a strong Jewish tradition that the stones glowed when handled and when revelation was given by the LORD to the high priest, it is assumed that the stones lit up when God gave answers to the high priest. Such glowing stones would authenticate the answers as God-given and prevent any form of divination. Though Levites tried to copy the U + T (think of counterfeits like the teraphim in the time of the Judges), these glowing stones would prevent copying.

The growing importance of the prophets and the unfaithfulness of the priests were two basic reasons why the U + T, as one means of God's revelation, stopped.

A lively discussion ensued. Since there are many probabilities, owing to the scanty information about the U + T, speculation must be resisted, and our new professor did just that. We all learned much from this informative and stimulating address.

While an excellent lunch was served by professors' wives and sr. Teresa Bouwman, we enjoyed good fellowship together.

In the afternoon session, Rev. R. Aasman introduced the subject, "Care for the Aged." For practical

purposes an aged person can be described as one 65 years or older. But to set a rule is dangerous, for one can suddenly become "old" and "useless" in this way. Retirement is a term that conjures up either good and pleasing images or it can be viewed as a curse.

Three scenarios showed varying reactions to old age. One couple was relaxed, enjoyed hobbies, participated actively in church life, but could be described as only mildly busy. Another couple was extremely busy. He was busier than otherwise, and it showed! A third couple saw the husband bored stiff. He was a plague to his wife. There had been no planning for retirement.

Of course, the first scenario is most ideal.

The church should tap the resources of our older members. For it is foolish to assume that old age is only for leisure.

Mandatory requirements to retire at a certain age were viewed as biased in many cases.

Old age is the age of "no mores": no more health, no more active jobs, no more good eyesight, and no more vitality (cf. Eccl. 12). Yet it is important for aged persons to know that the best is still to come.

The prospect of facing death as an aged person can cause much anxiety. Old people still clutch to the straws of human delights. We must learn to be able to lose our lives and to see that "to be with the LORD is much better by far." Guilt feelings often accompany the prospect of facing death. We must believe that the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin.

Sex in the aged is often mistaken as a sign of dementation. Nursing homes often segregate husbands and wives. Yet this is a wrong attitude and practice.

In the free discussion, points the institutionalization of the aged, the characteristics of the aged, the employment of the aged, the plea not to shelve the aged, the demands of the aged, and the biblical commands for and to the aged came up. It was a very worthwhile and practical discussion.

The next workshop is scheduled for June 7, 1982. Prof. L. Selles will introduce a topic in the morning (many subjects were suggested), and Rev. J. DeJong will introduce a practical topic in the afternoon.

Rev. G. VanDooren closed the workshop in thanksgiving prayer.

For the workshop, W. HUIZINGA

FROM THE SCRIPTURES

“For a long time I have held My peace, I have kept still and restrained Myself; now I will cry out like a woman in travail, I will gasp and pant.” — Isa. 42:14

At The Brink

We are confronted with a very unusual way of speaking in this Scripture passage. In our feminist age, we are quick to reject any comparisons between God and a woman. We always think of Him as masculine. It is rather surprising to read that the LORD compares Himself with a woman, and does not hesitate to choose one of her least graceful moments, the time when she is in labour. That is a time when a woman is often not quite on top of things. In the birth process — at least the process without the modern day conveniences that hospitals offer — a woman is at some point forced to draw on resources that she never thought she had. And often at some point there is the feeling that things are getting out of hand. Remarkably, this is the image that the LORD has chosen to describe His speaking to His people.

What accounts for this image? Why is the LORD so restless and animated in His style? Is He not the free, sovereign God who controls all things and who speaks when He wills? Why does He speak as if He is at the brink, and as if things might be getting out of hand? He has been holding back, but now He is going to break out and gasp. That gasp includes an element of drama and suspense — there is something frantic and desperate about it. The LORD is on edge and cannot hold back any longer.

There is good reason for this way of speaking at *this* point in history. Here we are confronted with the covenant God, whose steadfast love burns for His people. He is the free, sovereign God. Yet He had willingly bound Himself to the terms of the covenant and promised to fulfill all His obligations in the covenant. More than once He was on the verge of annulling it; His people kept stretching things to the limit, putting Him to the test. Because of their foolhardiness, the whole arrangement threatened to be overturned. Finally, the LORD sent His people into exile. In sending this punishment, the LORD was only fulfilling the sanctions of the covenant, as He had previously set them.

However, the punishment of the exile put an added strain on the covenant. Suddenly it seemed as if there were a lot of loose ends. The exiles began losing confidence in their covenant God and turning to the idols of their captors. And why not? The LORD certainly did not seem to be any more powerful than the idols of the nations. Naturally Israel's captors praised their idols and attributed the turn of events to the power of their gods. They, too, did not think much of the LORD God of Israel, or of His people. What had the LORD done to make Himself stand out?

You can image the situation. The LORD's people were being ridiculed and abused, and His name and reputation was

mocked and joked about. His honour was at stake; His covenant was on the line. Indeed, here everything is at the brink. The LORD had held back — He had too. But that, too, did not produce any good result. His silence made Him and His people the objects of ridicule; His silence made His people abandon Him. And the covenant was left hanging in the air.

And, at a certain point, the LORD cannot stand it any longer. The ridicule, the abuse, the injustice — it is all too much. Everything is getting out of hand. He cannot abandon His covenant. He must be faithful, and longs to be faithful. So He cannot but speak out. He is going to make one final attempt. He musters all His energy and speaks; He gasps and pants, because He cannot hold back. He speaks for the sake of His covenant, and its promises. He cannot forget His people, even though they have forgotten Him.

And the message that finally broke the silence was the birth and work of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Messiah. The image the LORD chooses to characterize His speaking reaches ahead to the manger, where Christ was born. In Him the LORD makes His last definitive statement. In Him the LORD proves His faithfulness, and vindicates Himself. In Him the LORD brings justice and righteousness to the oppressed (Israel), and the oppressor (Babylon). In Him every wrong is made right, and in Him true faithfulness and peace are made manifest.

Jesus Christ is God's answer to the world, to Israel and the nations. He proves God's faithfulness and demands our faithfulness. His death and resurrection have opened the way of reconciliation and peace. Now God has spoken and His peace has come! Now we are confronted with the fullest statement of love, the frantic cry of the LORD, the ultimate measure. And the proclamation of the cross remains the proclamation of God's ultimate and definitive measure — the measure which, as it were, drains Him of all His love. In the ongoing cry of the cross, the LORD puts everything into it. He has stretched it to the limit — nothing can be added. His urgent cry is also His last cry, because, once having broken silence, He cannot go back and say it all over again. There is one voice, one appeal, one message, one cry, and it is *urgent*; believe in the revelation of God's love and faithfulness and be delivered!

And if the LORD has spoken in *this* way, with the fulness of His being and with the full *intensity* of His love, how can anyone sensibly refuse to listen? If we have received so much, how can we avoid giving our hearts in return? Who cannot but praise the wonder of His grace and the depth of His steadfast love?

J. DEJONG

news medley

The first thing that we are to mention this time is the passing away of our brother, the Reverend Hendrik Scholten. After many months of serious illness our brother was taken away by the Lord who answered our prayers and granted us what we asked of Him. Although I have not yet received the previous issue of *Clarion*, I am certain that attention was paid in it to his passing away, his passing on from this earthly scene to the heavenly, where with all God's saints he is awaiting the appearing of our glorious Saviour.

As we did with the passing away of the Rev. H.A. Stel, so this time we wish to pass on to you what was written in Smithville's bulletin, the Congregation which Rev. Scholten served last and of which he remained the minister till his death.

In Memoriam
Reverend Hendrik Scholten, M.Th.
October 31, 1913 - January 15, 1982

The first time I met Rev. H. Scholten was on a Sunday in New Westminster, B.C., when I was yet a lad. It was a memorable occasion when he appeared on the pulpit that day — at first (it seemed) somewhat nervous, but certainly not out of place. During the service one was struck by his forceful vitality and his lively manner of expression. I can still remember some of the sermon which was on Hosea 1:8-10: "That is the place where it was said to them, You are not my people, it shall be said to them, You are the sons of the living God." Impressively, Rev. Scholten showed not only how the Lord would judge His people, but also how He would restore them to His favour — a sermon filled with that certainty of the covenant! Such was his preaching: powerful, yet mild; exhortative, yet comforting. It has been a great pleasure for the church at Smithville to have heard this preaching for many years.

Later, when I myself was minister in Smithville, Rev. Scholten became a much more familiar figure to me. Often I encountered him by the roadside, or on the parking lot, cane and all, as he sought his way through his daily exercise. On Sundays, during the worship services, we often saw his form gliding past the windows outside. After that he was no longer able to attend the services. Once in my time he did appear during a service: when we heard that he suffered from terminal cancer and that his course here was almost done, it was his wish once more to celebrate the Lord's Supper with the congregation. He came and went that Sunday, not with a heavy heart, but in the certainty of faith.

During the two years in Smithville that we knew him, we had many conversations, some even of considerable length. He would speak of many things, of his ministry, of his work at the college, of his sympathy for the members of the congregation. In all these conversations I was struck time and again by his sincere concern for the Canadian Reformed Churches which he dearly loved. It was not easy for him no longer to

be able to serve actively in the midst of these churches. In his own frank and authoritative manner, he would emphasize various matters of importance. So I have my own fond memories of Rev. Scholten.

October 31 was always an important date in Rev. Scholten's life. He was born on October 31, 1913. And he became minister-emeritus on October 31, 1973 at the age of 60, after 30 years of active ministry. October 31 was also the date on which we remember the reformation of the churches. It is striking that one of Rev. Scholten's prime interests was exactly the history of the church and its reformation! Church history became his specific field of study, in which he majored for his Master's Degree at Knox College in Toronto, and after which he was appointed as lecturer at our Theological College. How he loved the work there, the fellowship and the teaching!

Rev. Scholten was a teacher at heart. A teacher of profession as well. He began as a teacher and only afterwards entered the ministry on the basis of Article 8, C.O., meaning that he was blessed with "exceptional gifts." His conscientiousness and drive is shown in the fact that he later proceeded to amass the academic degrees which he considered necessary for his work. As a teacher, Rev. Scholten excelled in catechetical instruction. He was a skilled instructor and a basic disciplinarian whose concept of teaching was based on simplicity and repetition. So he helped to shape a generation of professing Christians also in Smithville. His love for the good instruction of the youth even prompted him to write a question book on the Heidelberg Catechism, the only publication which really came from his hand. During his last years he was still busy with revising this book, carefully weighing each word so that the intention would be absolutely clear.

It is impossible to oversee a man's life, to note all the highlights, to savour all the disappointments. But we might characterize Rev. Scholten's ministry as follows: He was not in every respect an easy man, yet he did not fill his own cause, for he was zealous for the house of the Lord. He began his ministry in the turbulent years after W.W. II and the Liberation, when much needed to be rebuilt. He continued his ministry in a new land among immigrant people when, again, much needed to be rebuilt. He was a master-builder, but always on the one foundation laid by his Saviour and Lord. So his work has eternal value.

During our time in Smithville, we also learned to admire and respect the unselfish love and patient care which sr. G. Scholten gave her husband. These last years have also been difficult for her, yet it is a crowning of a marriage thus to serve one another until the end. May the Lord comfort our sister, her children, and her grandchildren, so that they may be at peace. We do not mourn without comfort; we do not live without hope. May the heavenly Father give strength and courage to continue on in the one true faith to the glory which lies beyond.

One of Rev. Scholten's last statements to me was: "I stand at the threshold." Now he is over that threshold. A lifetime of service culminates in an eternity of glory. A child has gone to his Father; a servant has gone to his Lord. He leaves behind a saddened, but grateful people, who know the truth of the Word.

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.” Heb. 13:7 & 8

Servants fall away, the Lord remains.

We thank God for what we have received in

REV. HENDRIK SCHOLTEN

On behalf of the Consistory,
Rev. Cl. Stam

As for other ministers, the Rev. M. VanBeveren was unable to do his work for a few weeks due to a kidney infection, but according to the last-received bulletins he was picking up and resuming some of his activities.

And a last personal item: “The John Kuik family has returned to Canada after ten years in Brazil. In the *Mission News* as well as in the *Church News* they were welcomed and the gratitude was expressed for what the Lord enabled them to do in the mission field. They will be sorely missed by the people with whom they became acquainted in the course of the years, and it is a reason for thankfulness that the work can be continued. We wish them a speedy acclimatization which may not be all that easy in this time of the year. It is good that they stayed in the southern Fraser Valley for a while, for moving on to the center of the country right away might be too much of a shock in January. Anyway: welcome back!

In various bulletins I read about letters received from The Netherlands with the request for information concerning immigration into Canada. Perhaps it is the same letter which asked for the reaction of all these consistories; possibly there were communications from more families. In any case: it might be wise to revive our immigration committees to deal with incoming correspondence. These committees have been dormant for many years and, with the approach of the spring and summertime might awake from their hibernation to prepare dens for others.

* * * * *

“A brother of the congregation enters the meeting to confess his sin against the fifth commandment. The brother publicly confesses his sin of cheating in his tax return last year and informs the consistory that he is heartily sorry for his sin. The minister reads Mark 12: 13-18 and Romans 13:1-5, and he addresses the brother. Further discussion takes place. The matter is brought before the Lord in prayer and the brother leaves the meeting.”

“A sister of the congregation enters the meeting to confess her sin against the ninth commandment. The sister publicly confesses her sin of gossiping and informs the consistory that she is heartily sorry for her sin. The minister reads Psalm 141:3, 4, and James 3:6-13, and he addresses the sister. Further discussion takes place. The matter is brought before the Lord in prayer and the sister leaves the meeting.”

“A brother and sister of the congregation enter the meeting to confess their sin against the seventh commandment. The brother and sister publicly confess their sin of using birth control devices, including pills, and inform the consistory that they are heartily sorry for their sin. The minister reads Psalm 127 and Matthew 19:13-16, and he addresses the brother and sister. Further discussion takes place. The matter is brought before the Lord in prayer and the brother and sister leave the meeting.”

“A brother of the congregation enters the meeting to confess his sin against the seventh commandment. The brother publicly confesses his sin and informs the consistory that he is heartily sorry for his sin. The minister reads Psalm 51:1-4 and Psalm 130:3, 4, and he addresses the brother. Further discussion takes place. The matter is brought before the Lord in prayer and the brother leaves the meeting.”

Only one of the above quotations or alleged quotations is real.

What is wrong with *all* of the above publications?

This: that they should *not* have been made under any condition. The Lord tells us in His Word that we have won our brother when he confesses his sin, that we have won our sister when she comes to the conclusion, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Then the matter is *finished*. No publication or announcement whatever should be made.

Our Consistories have received by now the provisional report on the revision of the Church Order. I should like to quote from that, but shall confine myself to the Church Order as we have it right now, for that is the one all have promised to uphold and follow.

From what we have agreed upon it is clear that it should be our endeavour to protect the brother or sister to the utmost. Consistories oftentimes take on “cases” which should have been kept off the Consistory table as they have not yet reached the stage at which the Consistory becomes involved. There is still a vast difference between a secret and a public sin.

When a sister gossips at birthday parties and otherwise, this is not a public sin, even though quite a few people are aware of it. If the matter is in such a stage that the Consistory becomes involved, *nothing* may be made known to the Congregation — neither hardening in sin nor repentance — unless the stages of discipline have been followed: barring from the Lord’s Supper and announcement without name. If after *that* repentance comes, *then* the Congregation has to be informed of the repentance. Otherwise it is totally wrong to make an announcement.

If a boy and girl had intercourse and “have to get married,” a Consistory will talk with them and endeavour to bring them to the confession that they did wrong. But when they admit to that, that is the end of the matter and no announcement is permitted to that effect, for no announcement was made of their hardening in sin either.

If a brother boasts that he made quite a few dollars by cheating in his tax return and that in a manner which cannot be traced, he has to be admonished, privately first, of course, but perhaps in the long run also by the Consistory. When he confesses his sin, promises to make up for it, and is really sorry for it, no announcement may be made to the Congregation, for no announcement of his having been barred from the Lord’s Supper was made either. When the road has not been followed in the one direction, one cannot follow it the way back either.

And the Congregations are to trust that the Consistory has done what it had to do according to the command of the Lord, even when no announcement is made.

* * * * *

Where shall we start with our other news? Let us go to the Fraser Valley, then other regions come into view almost “naturally.”

The Rev. Geertsema tells us of his visit to the Okanagan Valley. He has seen quite a bit of British Columbia already in the few months he has been there. However, let us listen to him.

"Last week I preached in Kelowna. The group is still very small, but I heard that three families in Manitoba and Ontario have definite plans to join them. Being with them confirmed me in my conviction that we have to help and support these brothers and sisters in the Okanagan. They said that it was stimulating and strengthening to have a minister every month."

Under the heading "News from the Okanagan Valley" the *Church News* contains a special column. There we read the following.

"The Lord has answered our prayer and blessed our endeavours so far. We were thankful to have started the new year with Rev. Geertsema and Elder Breukelman leading our worship services on January 3rd. In the future, the Lord willing, we will have a minister the first Sunday of every month.

"A congregational meeting was held January 8, 1982. The budget for 1982 was set up . . . Members were reminded that all attestations should now be sent to Chilliwack. Due to travelling distances, Catechism classes were arranged for the same evening as Bible Study for the adults. These will be held Friday evenings. It was agreed to support the work of both Missions through the churches at Surrey and Smithers."

In connection with the above, we turn to Chilliwack. The Consistory there received a "report on their visit to the brothers and sisters living in the Okanagan Valley . . . After hearing the report the Consistory decides to accept the advice of Classis Pacific October 21, 1981, and take these brothers and sisters living in the Okanagan under its care."

There is only one thing wrong in this decision. That is, that the advice of the Classis mentioned was already binding and that it should not need a special Consistory decision to accept it. The only thing the Consistory should have done is come to the conclusion that it was feasible to do so. It was not doubtful at all whether they were going to do it after the classical decision was made; only whether they would be *able* to do it. A broader assembly can never do more than advise; but such advice is binding by virtue of the federation into which we have entered voluntarily.

"At the moment," Chilliwack's report continues, "three families and two single persons live there, nine communicant and 11 non-communicant members, with the prospect of two more families moving in there in the near future.

"Classis further expressed its willingness to grant immediately classical preaching engagements to the extent of two services per month . . . The consistory further decided that each time a minister will preach there an elder will go along until the time the consistory deems it feasible to appoint and ordain an elder."

With the latter decision the proper way is shown and followed. Only when there is supervision of elders, the Word can be preached in a service and the sacraments can be administered. This will also prevent that anyone gets the impression that the brothers and sisters are "playing Church" without any real basis for it being present.

At times yours truly is surprised at the influence which is ascribed to him, an influence which — no doubt — he is alleged to have through his news medleys. Sometimes it even seems as if he can instill fear into the hearts of some. Don't take this too seriously, please, but sometimes there are remarks in bulletins which clearly point in the direction of this well-read column. One such a remark is found in a piece which the Rev. J. Visscher wrote under the Cloverdale heading.

"This being the first issue of the *Church News* for 1982 you will find in it the statistics for the past year. They reveal that whereas there has been some change with respect to the ratio of communicant to non-communicant members, the total number of members remains the *same*. Now some may find this strange, especially an Editor somewhere in the East, but let me assure you that after checking and double-checking, it is indeed so."

Our readers can rest assured that, when the Yearbook has appeared, there won't be a remark about Cloverdale's figures. It is clear, however, that I would not have made a remark anyway, for it is sufficiently clear that the figures are not last year's when the ratio of communicant to non-communicant members is different from last year's. Anyway, the danger has been averted in this case for sure.

From the Fraser Valley we move on to the Bulkley Valley.

The Smithers' part of the *Bulkley Valley Echo* tells us "Although we have passed the suggested deadline on January 1st, only six Churches have responded so far, of whom four will support our proposal. It is too early to give any further evaluation of our feasibility study at this stage, as you will understand." The proposal Smithers is talking about is, as you understand, the proposal to have a special missionary to work among the Carrier Indians. Abbotsford decided to support it; Carman was scheduled to discuss it at the Congregational meeting on Jan. 25.

A sad piece was the following.

"We were all shocked to see the incredible chaos a few juveniles managed to leave behind after they broke into the school building. But it was heartwarming to see the many willing and also able hands cleaning up the mess again so that classes could resume two days later. (Fortunately insurance will cover most of the damage to the building and equipment.) Let us remember that such outbursts of violence and vandalism are not isolated events but the tip of an iceberg of a corrupt and immoral society of which often young people have become victim who no longer see any reason or purpose to restrain evil lusts and desires. Returning to the norms of the Bible and the purposeful life in the Lord is the only remedy."

From Smithers we go to Houston.

"The possibility and price of installing ten new lamps in the upstairs of the Church is discussed. The same is done with respect to ten new songboards. In principle, both are agreed upon, but we will wait until the budget is drawn up with the final decision."

What puzzled me were the ten songboards. The Houston church building is not that large that two would not be sufficient. Perhaps a few for the local supermarket?

Houston's Consistory also received "a report . . . with respect to the possibility of purchasing another organ.

The Congregation will be heard on this matter at the upcoming congregational meeting."

On our way to Carman we stop over in Edmonton.

The Consistory received "a letter from the Bulletin Committee with the recommendation to no longer permit for publication in the *City Guide* any matters promoting education via the Edmonton Society for Christian Education, thus upholding a previous Consistory decision (1978) to work towards the goal that all the children of the congregation be educated in our own Canadian Reformed School." The Consistory agreed with this letter. "However since this request was for a joint decision of both Immanuel and Providence Consistories, it was decided to inform the Providence Consistory of the above and request its agreement." From these lines you can draw the conclusion that it was the Immanuel Consistory that took the decision, something I failed to mention.

For the longest time we have had the standing rule that only messages from societies within the Churches shall be published either in our weekly bulletin or on the bulletin board at the entrance of the building. Fortunately, we do not have any society in our midst which works against the goal that another society has set for itself and its activities. The odd time someone comes and requests permission to put up a poster for a performance of Handel's "Messiah" or something like that. As for the rest, we too confine ourselves, to announcements from our own societies that work for our own people in our own midst. In this manner all sorts of difficulties and sensitivities are avoided.

We said already that our stopover in Edmonton was interrupting our journey to Carman. That's where we visit next.

"A small percolator will be purchased for consistory meetings. Coffee, cream, and sugar will also be bought by the Church." Especially when the brethren meet frequently and have lengthy meetings a cup of coffee is a welcome interruption of the strenuous labours at a Consistory meeting. Orangeville, too, got a percolator from the Ladies' Aid and it is safely stored in the Consistory room.

Another point in Carman was a combined meeting of the Home Mission Committees of Carman and Winnipeg.

"In regard to Radio Broadcast we learned that many people from the Winnipeg congregation had difficulty tuning in to CISV. The Carman committee will get into touch with CISV to find out if anything can be done to correct this and Winnipeg agreed to give us their financial support at least for the next three months and then go from there."

That various members of the Winnipeg Church have trouble tuning in is not all that important, for the broadcasts are intended for those who are without. However, if the Church members cannot hear the broadcast, others cannot either, and that is important, for then it means that a large part of Winnipeg is not covered, and that the goal is not achieved. I always thought that on the flat prairies the radio waves go much farther than in mountainous British Columbia or even Ontario, and that a stretch of one hundred kilometers could easily be bridged. I am doubtful that anything can be done at the station; it will not be prepared — even if such were possible — to boost its power for the sake of one quarter of an hour broadcast. However, we shall see.

From the Burlington Ebenezer Church we quote that there was a "Report Planning and Expansion Committee. The consistory invites feedback and comments from the congregation on where to go from here as far as overcrowding in morning services, instituting or splitting and related matters."

In Smithville "two members of the John Calvin School Board entered the meeting, to request the use of the large Catechism room for the projected kindergarten. After a short discussion this request was granted." A meeting was scheduled for January 27 where a decision was expected regarding the question whether such a kindergarten should be started.

Perhaps we all could make much better use of the facilities which we have than we are doing. If anyone has a suggestion, I shall be glad to pass it on.

Herewith we have come to the end of our medley for this time.

Thank you for reading it.

Till next time, the Lord willing.

vO

BOOK REVIEW

Doctrine and Discipline in Soul-Care

C. Trimp, *MEDIA VITA, De Betekenis van de Gereformeerde Ambtsleer voor de "Humaniteit" in de Kerkelijke Zielszorg; KAMPER BIJDRAGEN, XXIV, De Vuurbaak 1981.*

This booklet contains the oration that Dr. Trimp delivered on the yearly "birthday" of the Theological Seminary, Kampen, The Netherlands. "Zielszorg" is the Dutch word for the German "Seelsorge," literally translated "soul-care," pastoral care, or what on this continent has lately been called "counselling."

The title is borrowed from an old hymn, cf p. 66 note 166, the first line being, "In the midst of life (*media vita*) we

are surrounded by death." I missed here that M. Luther preferred to turn it around: "In the midst of death we are surrounded by life."

The main thesis is: Christ has provided His office-bearers with the means to take care of souls, i.e. the *keys of the kingdom*, cf Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 31: the double power of the double means, preaching and discipline, namely, to open and shut the kingdom of heaven. This "Reformed doctrine of the offices" is then confronted with a flood of German publications (only some Dutch and English sources are referred to) in order to get an answer to Dr. Trimp's central question." In

this age with its many models of soul-care, is the Reformed doctrine of the key-power in preaching and discipline sufficient to define the task of office-bearers in pastoral care efficiently?" And, related to this, how can scientific theology support this task of the offices in a time in which, on the one hand, the number of those who need special care has multiplied, and, on the other hand, the Reformed position or doctrine of the keys is challenged and attacked on all sides?

Chapter 4 offers an overview of modern concepts or "models" in which Reformed doctrine is replaced by humanistic philosophy about man and his "humanity" (Dutch: *humaniteit*). The conclusion, page 36, is "that in our consideration of the relation 'key-power — Soul-care' we cannot expect any cooperation from these modern concepts."

Chapter 5, *Intermezzo*, makes reference to K. SCHILDER, who in a 1929 publi-

cation also stressed that there is no affinity between the humanistic doctrine of man and the Reformed doctrine of the keys. I question the parallel that is drawn in this part between what is done in *homiletics* and thus may also be done in *poimenics* (the former: theology of preaching; the latter: theology of pastoral care). Reformed homiletics has been borrowing for centuries the rules for preaching as public speech from ancient and pagan rhetorics. Although I, for one, became more and more critical of this uncritical "spoiling the Egyptians," as L.J. CRABB calls it in his *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 1977, remembering the warning of Jude, "Hate even the garment spotted by the flesh," v. 23, I deny that borrowing from "pagan" theories in this matter is only "formal." What is usually borrowed by many Christian authors in the field has to do with methods, resources, goals in counselling. There is no fellowship between the two, II Cor. 6.

Chapter 6, then summarizes his description of pastoral care as administering the keys of the kingdom in preaching, advice, conversation, comfort, and exhortation. In this the Word of God is the only source. There is no fellowship between this source and the philosophical-anthropological analyses of secular origin and character.

Four "Excursions" have been added by Dr. Trimp. They are important and challenging and evoked from the present writer some critical remarks. The first Excursion deals with the discipline as taught by J. CALVIN. On that basis a whole list of aspects of discipline is given. I missed what on this continent is considered the primary and ultimate meaning of discipline, namely, training in discipleship. In accord with Matt. 28:19, "making them disciples," and Eph. 4:12, "for the equipment of the saints," the purpose of the keys, including pastoral care and counselling, is to restore the member of the body to this discipleship.

The last Excursion has as title "Counselling." Here we missed any distinction between good and bad, biblical and unbiblical counselling. The impression is given that *all* counselling *per se* is what men like Mowrer, Hiltner, etc. made of it: "to help man to help himself." All counselling is lumped together here in "using secular psychological and psychotherapeutic methods," pp. 77/8.

The reason why these additions were read quite critically is that this review was — not on purpose! — preceded by a second look at the articles written by Dr. Trimp in *De Reformatie*, 1974/5, in which, next to the same uncritical lumping together of all counselling in the first article, quite a sharp attack was launched against the model of counselling as developed and practiced by Dr. JAY E. ADAMS, whose name and many publications are not mentioned once by Dr. Trimp in this booklet.

I was anxious to find out if Dr. Trimp had modified his opinion about what by many on this continent is considered a



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.

ROANOKE, VA (LCUSA, December 11)

A Lutheran Church in America congregation takes Jesus' call to heal the sick seriously: it helps support a free medical and dental clinic for those who are too rich for Medicaid and too poor to be able to afford private care.

The clinic is staffed by volunteer doctors, dentists, nurses, laboratory technicians, pharmacists, mental health counsellors, prehealth care "screeners," and dieticians. There are two paid administrative staff people.

The clinic began in rent-free premises provided by the church in a

reformation in counselling. On the one hand, yes! Dr. Trimp has fully joined Adams in two respects. First, in all "zielszorg," or soul-care, one must handle the keys of the kingdom, that is the Word of God. Secondly, Dr. Trimp has also stated: no bridge or cooperation here between the Reformed doctrine and those modern concepts. Conclusion: no mixture of the two, or no "tossed salad" as Crabb, quoted previously, calls it.

Office-bearers in their pastoral care have to use the *doctrina et disciplina* of the Reformed faith, and both are rejected by modern anthropology which teaches the autonomy of man. But then, on p. 58, one reads, again (!), that we may expect much support from "*de psychologie en de psychopathologie die in onze eeuw tot grote ontwikkeling zijn gekomen*" (tr.: "*the psychology and the psychopathology which have come to such great development in our age*"). Thus the position of '74/5 is maintained: all existing theories in this field are lumped together without any differentiation between; to mention a few: Freud, Adler, Mowrer, Hiltner, Carter,

two-story frame house in the inner city, with some odds and ends of medical equipment, one doctor, one nurse, four volunteers, and \$250.

Today the dental clinic alone has 29 volunteer dentists and averages 50 phone calls a week. Requests for medical help are also rising, in part due to Reagan administration cut-backs. (CN)

HONG KONG (EWNS)

Chinese authorities recently arrested 14 Christians for distributing New Testaments and other Christian literature, informed sources report. Five have since been released.

Six bicycles (used to transport Bibles) and 1000 New Testaments were confiscated, according to sources in China. (CN)

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HONG KONG (EWNS)

Leaders of an unofficial Christian organization in China say there presently are 67,100 house churches throughout China. This unofficial body known as United Christian Movement Committee is composed of leaders of churches which operate surreptitiously or at least semi-surreptitiously. (CN)

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SALT LAKE CITY (RNS)

Under the ambitious leadership of Spencer W. Kimball, the Mormon Church has nearly tripled its number of converts and is nearing the five million mark in total membership.

Crabb, Adams, and so on . . . The surprise became even greater when we heard Dr. Trimp use the same weapon that on this continent is used against Adams: "he despises the positive fruits of *common grace*." One expects that here, but not from "Kampen." To conclude on a positive note: Dr. Trimp refers to those many German authors who, just like here, as a matter of principle refuse to go any farther in counselling than being a sounding board, reflecting and repeating what the counsellee himself has said, without any guidance, let alone (biblical) command, because "man must help himself." This is rejected. Reference is made to *Proverbs* as a rich resource, just as Adams told us. It could, of course, have been brought out that, when one uses the term "counselling," one should think of the Counsellor or Paraklete given us by Jesus Christ, whose weapon and guide in counselling us is the Word of God, the testimony of the Holy Spirit. When one says, "counselling," one says "the Word of God"!

G. VANDOOREN

World membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon) has increased from 3.3 million in 1973 when Mr. Kimball became president to an estimated 4.9 million in 1981. It is expected to hit the 5 million mark in a few months, says Mormon spokesman Jerry Cahill. Convert baptisms increased from about 80,000 in 1973 to an estimated 230,000 in 1981. The number of missionaries rose from 17,000 to 29,500 in the eight years.

With the eight-year membership increase, the number of wards (parishes) and stakes (dioceses) have doubled. The number of wards has increased from 7,500 to 12,600 while the number of stakes has increased from 630 to more than 1,275. (CN)

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TURNU SEVERIN, ROMANIA (EWNS)

A Romanian court sentenced the leader of a Bible transport and circulation network to six years imprisonment and fined him 68 thousand lei (\$6,100 U.S.) December 17, 1981 at a quickly convened trial, family members in Romania report. The prosecutor claimed 600,000 Bibles entered the country through Klaus Wagner and his associates during the past six years. Wagner's October 1, 1981 arrest, in fact, came shortly after 13,000 Bibles were confiscated from a ship in Turnu Severin.

Wagner has 14 days to appeal according to Romanian law. A lawyer in Turnu Severin had sought to represent Wagner. It is not known if this lawyer, a friend of the family, was permitted to defend the sentenced Bible distributor. If this lawyer was not granted permission, then the state appointed representation. (CN)

* * *

"We now affirm."

With these words . . . the U.S. Supreme Court backed a lower court's decision that public universities cannot ban religious worship and discussions from their buildings. The ruling on *Widmar vs. Vincent* — eight to one in favour of an evangelical student group — may affect school regulations at 40 percent of America's universities. It basically means religious groups should be given the same access to university facilities as nonreligious groups.

The *Widmar* case began in 1977 when the University of Missouri at Kansas City (UMKC) told a Christian student group, called Cornerstone, that it could not use a classroom for

its meetings. Cornerstone admitted it would be praying, singing hymns, and discussing the Bible. The university cited a policy prohibiting use of university facilities for "religious worship or religious teaching."

The legal arguments began at the federal district court. That court held the university was correct not to allow religious meetings because it would advance religion and thus violate the separation of church and state. The federal appeals court, however, disagreed, saying such a ruling violated the religious group's right to free speech.

The Supreme Court's decision was to affirm the appeals court. (CT)

* * *

White Protestant congregations in Miami, Florida, are going to have to reach out more to Latinos and blacks to survive. That was the conclusion of a study by the Miami District of the United Methodist Church; it showed a net loss of 10,000 members over the last decade. The heavy influx into Miami of both races has significantly altered the city's population. Its black population is now larger than any city in the South except Houston. (CT)

* * *

LOS ANGELES

By any standard of growth, Christianity in Korea has been spectacular. After several years of missionary labour the first Korean was baptized in 1886. Today, less than a hundred years later, there are more than 8 million Korean Christians, of which about 4 million are Presbyterian. Three years ago Christians constituted 15% of Korea's total population of 37.5 million; today they constitute 22%. This growth, likely unparalleled anywhere in the world, occurred particularly after the Korean War (1950-1953, during which 600 pastors and 10,000 church leaders were killed). In 1953 Korean Presbyterian Churches numbered not quite 300,000 members; today they total about thirteen times that much. In the capital city of Seoul alone there are more than 2500 congregations.

Initially Christianity was proscribed in Korea. The Korean government and foreign rulers attempted to stop the new religion by persecution. Today Christianity basks in the favour of the government, at the expense of the traditional religions, notably Buddhism, Confucianism and Shamanism.

Only a little less than the phenomenal growth of Korean Christianity, but not so thrilling, is the immense variety of Presbyterian denominations. Four million members are distributed over at least 39 different denominations. The two largest are the Hap Dong Church with approximately 1.3 million members and the Tong Hap with close to a million There are about 120 theological seminaries in Korea which train 2,000 graduates annually. (RES NE)

* * *

CHATHAM, NEW JERSEY

The Russian people are indeed being reached by religious broadcasts, says Alex Leonovich of the Slovak Missionary Service. On a recent visit to his native Russia, Leonovich, a Russian broadcaster for Trans World Radio, was told by Christian leaders that out of 12,000 recent baptized converts 80% came into contact with the Gospel through radio. This initial contact led them to seek out churches or believers who were able to instruct them further in their newfound faith. Religious radio programs are also instrumental in helping Christians continue to grow in the faith. Leonovich spoke with Christians who told him that there were villages where radio programs were the sole source of spiritual strength. (RES NE)

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ORANGE, CALIFORNIA

In a survey in 1977 in Soviet Ukraine of over 1,200 people, 35.7% stated that they would like to have a copy of the Bible. This indicates potential demand for 13 million Bibles in Ukraine, and as many as 70 million copies for the whole Soviet Union.

As reported in *The Right to Believe*, in association with Keston College, this figure includes those interested in reading the Bible if it were freely available. But all the evidence points to a widespread real thirst for the Bible. Almost every Western visitor to a Soviet Baptist Church was asked for one. The black market price is over half-month's salary, a sure indication that supply comes nowhere near demand. To find a Bible or New Testament on sale in a church is an extremely rare experience: each congregation gets such a tiny quota from the limited printings or imports that supply usually sells out at once or is distributed to those known to be seeking a copy without ever going on sale. (RES NE)

vO

A Letter To My Father

Dear Dad,

I think the topic we were just talking about on the phone is a serious enough topic to tell you some more about, because it's something that's really important to someone like me, or Janet, or all those young people in all the congregations, who live by themselves and who maybe don't go to church quite as often as we ought to.

I told you that Janet and I used to bitch about all the people who said: "Come over any time; you're always welcome." Two weeks before she left here, a couple asked her over for lunch on Sunday. It just happened that we were going somewhere else, so she had to say no. The woman said: "Two years in Ontario and you've never come over." Janet said: "You've never asked me," and the woman replied: "We've asked hundreds of times." Now I know from Janet that only twice did they ever say: "Come over today." But whose "fault" is that situation? — if you can call it a "fault."

You say you don't want to be pushy, but if someone says, "Come over some time," to ME that says "I can't really have you today, but . . ."

I know they are being sincere, Dad, but I feel like I'M being pushy if I say: "How about today?" I figure that if they meant "today" they would have said "today." Maybe they mean next week, but then why not say so? Next week I'm not going to say: "Can I come over?" because if they've made other plans, then I'm being pushy and intruding in their lives.

I hate to think that you were also guilty of issuing vague invitations, but I guess if you don't know that you're doing it, then it's MY fault for not telling you my side of the story.

So on Sundays make sure there's enough soup for one or two extras. And ask Janet or Suzan after church, "Are you coming for coffee?" And if she can't she'll say "No," but she'll be happy that you asked. And if you then say, "Okay, maybe next week then," make sure you ask again the next week. I've had too many times that someone said, "Okay, next week," and then I thought they meant it, only to find out the next week that they were only saying it to be polite.

And if the next week Janet has other plans, no problem; you've got

the extra soup, ask someone else. All they can do is say no, and then you can eat the soup on Monday!

Dad, you and Mom have a lot going for you as far as this kind of thing goes. You both speak really good English, you're both outgoing — you can talk. And — something that's important — I don't think you're really "pious and Reformed." You know what it's like to be the so-called "black sheep" in the C.R. Church. You're open-minded, you know what the world is like outside the C.R. circle. You have kids who are not perfect, who don't do everything the typical, Reformed way.

You talk about all the young people, the ones who don't have too much to do with church anymore. Mom! Dad! Don't look at them as just young people — they have names and feelings! Two of the names are Jean and Lucy, your own daughters! And you say it's hard for the office-bearers — I don't deny that — but do you think it's easy for us?

I really can't complain perhaps. Who decided I should live here, who decided I should separate myself from my family? ME, only ME! So then, whose responsibility is it if I get lonely and depressed because there's no one around — I guess only ME again.

So what happened to the communion of saints? They sit there in church and they know who is going to talk to whom about what after church, who's going to whose place for coffee, etc. And, yes, they are friendly at first, and they invite you along, but what if you don't know how to ski, so you can't talk about skiing, and on Saturday you can't go skiing with them because you can't afford it and you don't know how and no one can be bothered to take one or two Saturdays to show you the basics. And you don't go to Society on Sunday nights because most people are younger and I really don't feel comfortable discussing things with them, and I quit going with the young people for coffee every Sunday, because all they ever do is play cards — and play to win — but I'd rather play for fun, so I don't enjoy it. And then one Sunday morning you feel like you'd really like to sleep in, so you do — and guess what? Nobody notices!! There is not ONE person out of the

600 odd members who cares enough to see if you're sick.

A couple of weeks ago I sat in church thinking, "Nobody here cares if I'm here or if I'm not, if I'm happy or if I'm sad." The truth was I was sad. Very depressed. All I wanted to do was cry, and sitting there I thought, "No one sees how sad I am; no one can comfort me because no one even sees it. And here I sit among all these people — my brothers and sisters — and what would happen if I started to cry right here — now would everyone react? They'd probably have my head checked out!"

So I phoned Lucy, and she laughed. It was so nice, Dad, she knew exactly how I felt and exactly what I was going through — and here I thought I was going a little nuts.

There is one person — only one — who calls to see if I'm sick when I miss church. He's also doing a lot of other nice things. He cares! He's also one of the "black sheep" because he married a non-C.R. woman. Kids go to the Christian school. NEVER ever misses church — and yet . . . black sheep.

I guess I'm starting to ramble a little bit. What I'm really talking about is single people away from their families. How and where do they fit into the Canadian Reformed Church?

Some time ago I read a book about "single Christians," and the same things always came out, things that I know. Paul was a "great Christian," he was single, and happy that he was, and he felt that his singleness enabled him to work for Christ unhindered by family responsibilities. Fine, I know that. I know I have oppor-

Church News

CALLED to Chatham, Ont.:

REV. J. VAN RIETSCHOTEN

of Carman, Man.

* * *

CALLED to Chilliwack, B.C.:

REV. J. MULDER

from Toronto, Ont.

* * *

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar

From: 9713 McNaught Road
Chilliwack, B.C. V2P 6E9

To: Box 1627 (mailing)
Barrhead, Alberta
5317 - 54 Avenue (residence)
Barrhead, Alberta T0G 0E0

tunities to do things that married people could never do. So where are all the potentially active single people in the C.R. Church? I'm not saying that the church drives them away, but it sure doesn't encourage them to stay. We are different — not better or worse — but definitely different from the norm in the C.R.C. And this church is a great one for conformity. Either you conform, or you are left out. It's that simple. And when I go out with people from work, who's to blame me? And should I get married to someone from "outside," you know what they'll say. I've heard people say: "Well, she was always a bit different anyway." And, Dad, that's what they'll say about me, too, if it ever comes to that. (Don't worry, I have no intentions of that happening!)

But that's what they'll say. And conformity — they want conformity in the things I DO, not the things I think. Maybe my belief conforms, but it's better for me in the C.R. Church if my life-style conforms.

I don't agree with some more liberal churches who change their doctrine to go along with changing ideas — they feel they have to change with the times, not only their

doctrine, but also their stand on things like abortion, homosexuality, etc. But I think that the C.R. Church has got to realize that young people are going to move away from home and that not all are going to get married. The attitude has got to change towards single people. We get written off before we have a chance. "Oh, well, she's single; she wants to go out and have a good time; she won't want to come here for supper."

So what happens? That's where you're losing everyone, Dad.

When they're first on their own they're not like that, but after a while you turn to that, because you meet friends that way and you can find people who care for today, or for this month. Maybe the brothers and sisters in the faith will care forever — but then . . . why don't they show it?

Like the man said about all those people who said: "We pray for you every day." He said: "Pray a little less, write a little more."

Sorry, Dad, perhaps I shouldn't mail this letter, but I sure feel a lot better already having written it all down.

I love you,
JEAN

cause they have to, because they NEED it.

Of course, there are also people who go to church to show how perfect they are, but that is not the rule. You know what the form for the Lord's Supper says. We do NOT go to the Lord's table to demonstrate that we are perfect in ourselves.

Now the question is: Why do YOU go to church? Do YOU need it? Perhaps I could stop here and let you simmer on that for a while, but I won't be that short. There is some more room on this sheet of paper, so I might as well make use of it.

I probably needed your admonitions although I knew most of it. I am indeed guilty of all the things you mentioned. And as such I am glad that you haven't given me up yet and that you took the time to write this, be it was at the same time meant mostly for your own "feeling better," as you mentioned yourself.

But I do feel in your letter the same attitude that you accuse other people of. You seem to imply that your brothers and sisters should be perfect just like you. Well, they aren't. It's as simple as that. Neither are you. That's simple also.

Look, Jean, I can understand everything you wrote. I was young myself. I went through the same "teen-age cycle" and sometimes I have a feeling that I never completely grew up. Weren't you sometimes telling me to act my age? Young people have the tendency to be somewhat egocentric. They seem to think that they are the centre of the universe and that everything that happens and is done, should be done for their interest and benefit. And most people, just like me, never get completely over that. Of course, I am generalizing, but so were you.

Young people are also very critical and most people never get completely over that. You want me to go on like this for a while?

You know the story about the sliver and the two-by-four.

Go on, Jean, be egocentric and be critical, but turn your attention to the two-by-four. The Lord will take care of the sliver and if, when you have discovered that the two-by-four is too much for you, you ask Him He will also remove the two-by-four.

Love, DAD

A Letter to My Daughter

Dear Jean,

Thank you very much for your revealing letter. I can see by the language used and by the way you used it that this came straight from your heart.

Thank you especially for the first part which may come in handy some time; we have in fact started to use it already.

I was not going to elaborate on this part, because it is so very simple, but yet . . . MY side of the story is also very simple.

Perhaps you remember my way of life. If I want to visit somebody I go; and if or when I find out that my visit is not at the right time I say: "We passed by here and I thought we'd say 'Hi'; we'll drop in for a visit some other time," and then we go on and visit someone else or we go for a drive and return home whenever we feel like it.

The other side of the story is, of course — and you should remember that — that our house is an open house and that everybody is ALWAYS welcome. If we happen to have visi-

tors whenever a second one drops in, well, then we leave it up to the second one to decide whether he or she wants to stay or make it short.

But enough about that. Although our invitation is an OPEN invitation, we will from now on keep your advice in mind.

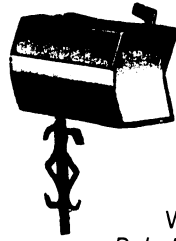
The second part of your letter is a little more difficult to reply to. Let me speak for myself for the time being. I know that I am not perfect and that is a very soft judgment. My confession in the Heidelberg Catechism is a little more blunt: unable to do any good, inclined to all evil, by nature, and even the most holy ones, as long as they are in this life, have only a small beginning of the new obedience.

And that is exactly the reason why I go to church. If I were perfect I wouldn't go. Why should I?

So, your complaints are very normal. What else can you expect? The other people in church, your and my brothers and sisters, belong in the same category. They, too, are not perfect, etc. They, too, go to church be-

OUR COVER
Riding Mountain National Park.
(Photo Courtesy Province of
Manitoba Government.)

our little magazine



From the Mailbox

Hello Busy Beavers,

Do you remember our Birthday Fund?
Maybe our new members don't know about it yet.
So let's talk about why we have a Birthday Fund.
No, it's not for any of OUR birthdays.
It's not even for a PERSON's birthday.
It's for the birthday of our Theological College.
That's the school for new ministers, you know that,
right?

And you know, too, that's a very important school.
What would we do without ministers!
Our College has a birthday every September.
And then we Busy Beavers like to give a birthday
present, right?

That's why we have our Birthday Fund — to save up
money for a birthday present for our Theological College
in September.

Would you like to help?

You may send as much as you like, as often as you
like.

Every little bit helps.

Let's all join in and save up for a nice big birthday
present for our College this September!

* * * * *

FOR YOU TO DO

Do you see our mailbox down below?

We've used this one for years, and it's showing signs
of wear.

We need a new one!

Who can "make" us a new one?

Draw a picture of what you think our new mailbox
should look like.

Maybe you can send more than one!



Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Jennifer Dykstra*. We hope you'll really enjoy being a Busy Beaver. You had a good holiday at Christmas, didn't you Jennifer? Bye for now. Write again soon.

And a big welcome to you, too, *Helena Roodzant*. We are happy to have you join us. Have you been busy teaching your little sister? Sounds to me as if she's very clever! And have you played hockey lately, Helena? Thank you for the puzzles.

Welcome to the Club, *John Huizinga*. I see you are a real Busy Beaver already. Do you have a rink to skate on with your sister, John? Please write and tell me your birthday, so that we can put your name on the birthday list.

Welcome to the Busy Beavers Club, *Harold Dykstra*. I hope you'll enjoy joining in all our Busy Beaver activities. How did you enjoy staying up New Year's Eve? What did you do all that time, Harold?

How is your baby blanket coming along, *Linda De Boer*? I'm glad you had such a nice Christmas holiday. I think I have a recipe you'll really like, Linda. Will you trade me for your favourite recipe?

Hello, *Tim Hofsink*. I'm happy you had a nice Christmas holiday, and that you had a good time tobogganing. Thanks for the poem, Tim.

Did you have a good time at New Year's, *Brenda De Boer*? Sounds to me as if you had a very good Christmas holiday, too. And I'm glad you like your bookmark. Thanks for the quizzes, Brenda.

Do you have lots of snow to play in, *Gerrilynn Huizinga*? I'm glad you too enjoy Our Little Magazine. Thank you for the quiz, Gerrilynn. Write again soon.

Thank you for a nice chatty letter, *Edith Hofsink*. How is your Australian pen pal doing? Do you write each other often? I see you're a real Busy Beaver, Edith. Thank you for the puzzles, and for the good wishes, too!

Henrietta Huinink, please send me your new address. My letter to you was returned to me!

Did you get some more snow to play in, *Mary-Ann Van Woudenberg*? How was your Christmas concert? And did you have a good time visiting during the holidays? Thanks for the quiz, Mary-Ann.

Hello, *Cynthia Oosterveld*. It was nice to hear from you again. Thanks for the puzzle and your good wishes, Cynthia.

Busy Beaver *Helena Roodzant* wrote:

"All the books of the Bible are in this puzzle. I made it for the Busy Beaver Club. The words can go up, down, across, diagonally, and backwards."

Thanks for sharing, Helena!

Enjoy the puzzle, Busy Beavers.

I'm looking forward to getting lots of pictures from you!

Bye for now.

With love from your
Aunt Betty