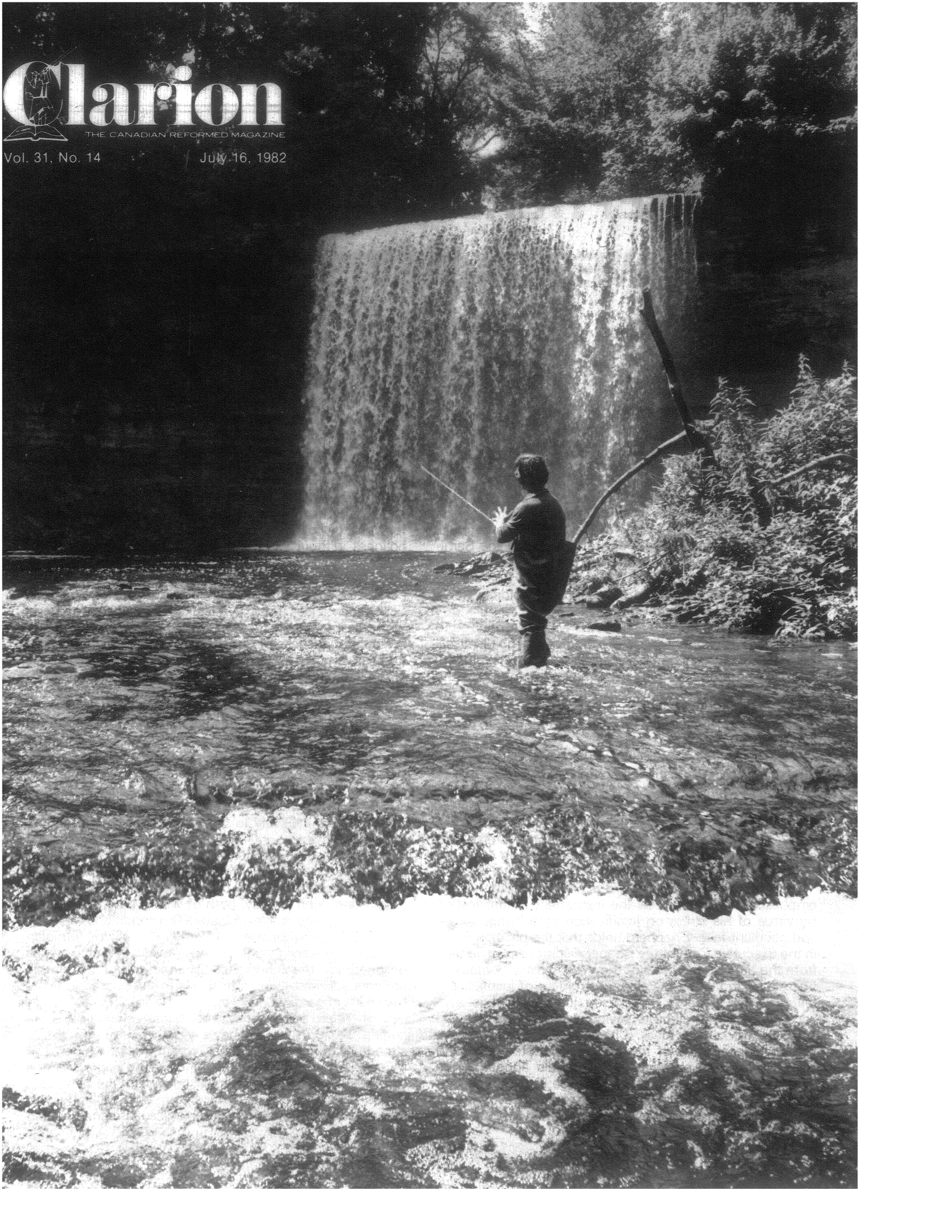


# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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## SHEPHERD'S DISMISSAL FROM WESTMINSTER SEMINARY

In order to inform our readers we publish the main part of a news release sent by Prof. Norman Shepherd. It reads as follows:

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At its meeting on May 25, 1982, the Board of Trustees of Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pa., ratified its action of Nov. 20, 1981, dismissing the Rev. Norman Shepherd from his office as Associate Professor of Systematic Theology after 19 years of service at the institution. In taking this action the Board did not allege theological error or a violation of the Seminary's doctrinal standard, but expressed its desire to distance the Seminary from a controversy which it had come to view as unresolvable. Previously, both Faculty and Board had exonerated Shepherd from allegations of holding views contrary to Scripture and Confession.

The Board's Nov. 20 action was widely recognized to have been taken on the basis of expediency. The dismissal provoked an avalanche of protest from students, alumni, and supporters of the Seminary. Seven members of the Faculty including Cornelius Van Til communicated to the May 25 meeting their view that an adequate case had not been made for Shepherd's dismissal and requested his reinstatement.

The Executive Committee of the Board had prepared a position paper to justify Shepherd's removal. It makes clear that Shepherd was not dismissed on the ground of demonstrated errors in his teaching, but nevertheless seeks to show that his position is "not clearly in accord with" the Westminster Standards at three points. No attempt is made to deal with Shepherd's position on the basis of Scripture.

In the first point, Shepherd is alleged to obscure the emphasis on faith alone as the instrument of justification by virtue of his stress on justification by a living, active, and obedient faith. Shepherd holds that the position taken in the Executive Committee's paper distances itself, in fact, from the precise emphasis of the Westminster Confession that although faith is the alone instrument of justification, faith is "not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces and is no dead faith, but worketh by love" (Chap. XI, Sect. 2). The paper fails to take account of this confessional statement and also fails to take account of Shepherd's appeal to the Westminster definition of repentance as inclusive of turning from sin and a "purposing and endeavouring to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments." The

Confession states that such repentance is necessary for pardon without being the cause or ground of pardon (Chap. XV, Sect. 2, 3).

In the second point, Shepherd's insistence on covenantal loyalty and obedience as the second part of the new covenant is alleged to obscure the fulfillment of covenant demand in the obedience of Jesus Christ on behalf of his people. Shepherd, however, has held throughout the controversy that the obedience of Christ, active and passive, secures the justifying verdict of God, and that Christ's work for his people lays the foundation for a life of covenantal obedience. This obedience is the holiness without which no man will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14).

In Shepherd's view, the negative reaction to the necessity for covenantal obedience as expressed in the position paper arises from a mistaken conception of good works as intrinsically meritorious. While designed to guard the meritoriousness of Christ's obedience, such a conception subverts the Reformed doctrine of the normative use of the law by putting the obedience of the believer essentially into competition with the obedience of Christ as the exclusive ground of justification. It also deprives Reformed theology of any basis in principle for a thoroughgoing and radical rejection of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the meritoriousness of good works. Both the Belgic Confession (Art. XXIV) and the Heidelberg Catechism (L.D. 24) deny that the good works of the believer are meritorious.

In keeping with its mistaken conception, the position paper objects explicitly to the historic Reformed doctrine that every covenant, including the new covenant, contains two parts: promise and demand. It also objects to speaking of the new covenant as embracing conditions although Reformed theologians have often done so, including R.B. Kuiper and John Murray, both of whom have taught systematic theology at Westminster. The conditions were not construed as meritorious in a Roman Catholic or Arminian sense; but as Calvin taught, "Those whom in mercy he has destined for the inheritance of eternal life, he, in his ordinary administration, introduces to the possession of it by means of good works" (*Institutes* III, 14, 21).

Shepherd believes that a consistent application of the criteria set forth in Clowney's view of the covenant as stated in the position paper would make Kuiper and Murray unacceptable at Westminster. The paper marks a significant shift in the theological position of the Seminary. It also calls into question the Seminary's willingness to tolerate serious discussion of theological differences within

the bounds of its confessional standards.

The position paper views the warnings of the New Testament against the consequences of disobedience as only hypothetical with respect to the elect, thus depriving them of their force and urgency in the church's proclamation. In a third point, it is alleged that taking these threatenings seriously as Shepherd does undermines assurance understood as knowledge or information about one's election "of the kind that could be produced by special revelation."

Shepherd argues that this construction differs from the Westminster Confession's appeal to the promises of the gospel received by faith and borne home by the testimony of the Holy Spirit as the foundation for assurance. A view which subordinates faith in the promises of the revealed Scriptures to a subjective experience of searching for insight into the secret decree ultimately undermines the biblically grounded infallible assurance of which the Confession speaks.

Shepherd maintains that the allegation of "deep inherent problems in the structure and particular formulations of Mr. Shepherd's views" in the brief Nov. 21 Board Statement explaining his suspension arises from an insistence that the application of redemption be approached from the point of view of election with rational deductions concerning what may or may not be true in the lives of particular persons. The position paper's evaluation of his views is conducted from this perspective. This essentially rationalistic and deductivistic approach often brings the theologian into conflict with the language and intent of Scripture creating serious problems of its own.

Shepherd finds the distinctiveness of the Reformed doctrine of salvation to lie in its grasp of the biblical teaching on covenant including promise as well as demand and warning. On the ground of the covenant keeping of the representative head, Jesus Christ, and by way of the covenant God's unchangeable sovereign electing purpose is realized in history. The covenant is not to be defined in terms of election, but election is to be understood from the perspective of the covenant. As Calvin and other Reformed theologians have pointed out, it is wrong for the creature to seek to mount up directly into the blinding light of God's decree.

Weary of the long-drawn procedure, Shepherd withdrew his request for a hearing and took steps to transfer his ecclesiastical membership from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to the Christian Reformed Church. Although Westminster Seminary and the OPC are independent of one another, historically they are part of the same reformational movement in American Presbyterianism. His removal from the Seminary made a transfer out of the OPC appropriate. Subsequently he was informed that charges would be filed against him at the May 7 meeting of Philadelphia Presbytery of the OPC. On May 18, Classis Hackensack declared him eligible for a call in the CRC after an extensive interview concerning his doctrinal position.

\* \* \*

Thus far the news release. We thought that it would be informative for our readers. In the Canadian Reformed Churches there is deep sympathy with the person of Norman Shepherd and especially with his views concerning God's Covenant. This sympathy does not exclude disappointment and disagreement with respect to his last steps. Also in horizontal relationships we should not be

rash with our mouth, nor let our heart be hasty to utter words. Ecclesiastes says: God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few (5:2). Nevertheless, public matters should be dealt with in a public manner. Moreover, sympathy and friendship are under the norm of the Word of God.

We may not hide our conviction that Prof. Shepherd should not have left the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Philadelphia Presbytery of the OPC had previously devoted ten whole days extending over a period of more than a year to a discussion of Shepherd's views. The discussion was initiated by Shepherd himself who submitted Thirty-Four Theses to the Presbytery requesting its judgment on them. Thirty of the theses were found to be in harmony with Scripture and Confession, another was found to be in accord with the ministerial vows, and no action was taken on three others which, according to Prof. Shepherd, expressed opinion on matters of historical interpretation. Should Prof. Shepherd not have subjected himself to a discussion of the charges that now — finally! — would be filed against him? Precisely now that his views concerning the Covenant had been attacked and the debate had shifted from the issue of justification to the Covenant doctrine, we as Canadian Reformed people would have been interested in an official Orthodox Presbyterian statement. Is Shepherd's covenantal doctrine in accord with his ministerial vows? Is the teaching of the Covenant as established by God with the believers and all their children in accord with Larger Catechism Q. 31? Our readers know that the Larger Catechism states that the Covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in Him with all the elect as His seed. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church and we would have been helped by a thorough discussion of the issue.

Although within the NAPARC relationships a transfer of ministerial credentials to the Christian Reformed Church does not meet with great difficulties, and although personal circumstances have undoubtedly played their role, the transition of Prof. Shepherd to the Christian Reformed Church is even less understandable. In Dutch we say: "Nu komt hij van de regen in de drup." The attacks upon the infallibility of Holy Scripture, the influence of contemporary liberal movements like feminism (and the consistent strife for women in office), and the spread of secularism in Christian Reformed circles must bring a truly Reformed minister of the Gospel into trouble. Moreover, Canadian Reformed people know of the position that the Christian Reformed Church took with respect to the pronouncements of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (syn.) concerning Covenant and Baptism. In ecumenical context (the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1946) they approved a doctrinal statement that exactly embodies a definition of the covenant in terms of election, to use Prof. Shepherd's own terminology. During the last decades they followed the synodical Dutch churches also in other respects and still maintain the ecclesiastical fellowship with those deviating churches in The Netherlands. This is also a matter of covenantal disobedience!

But my words should be few. We will listen to Paul's word: "Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls" (Rom. 14:4). *Ceterum censeo* that Westminster Seminary lost an eminent Reformed dogmatician and that it should guard its path to the future.

J. FABER

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# LABOUR AS A MANDATE

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## Part 1

The substance of this and following articles was the topic on the League Day, May 24th. For some reason or other the audience was small. Those present deemed the speech worthy of wider attention. To reach a larger audience than that of I.H.A., it is published here.

### Apostate Talk

When tackling any topic, we usually do well to start with an opposite opinion. Or rather, when we wish to learn the divine truth about something — something as important as labour — it is wise to remember that truth exists in conflict. The Father of Light has revealed Himself and has revealed the truth about things in and to a world that is being led by the nose by the father of lies, the old serpent. His name is Satan: the opponent, God's opponent.

We are going to talk about "labour"; that seems a neutral topic. But we start with the thesis that the truth about labour can only be truly and fully known when we respect the antithesis that the LORD God has pronounced in paradise. This antithesis is all-embracing. It also embraces "labour."

You discover this when you check a dictionary like *Webster* or an encyclopedia like the *Britannica*.

As synonyms for labour, *Webster* gives the following "grey mass" of misery: drudgery - exertion - pain - toil - travail. There is truth in this list, as we will see; but nothing about labour as a (divine) mandate. When *Webster* proceeds to a narrower definition, we get the following:

a. labour is "all wage-earning workers as distinguished (!!! vD) from capital and management";

b. "all *manual* workers whose work is characterized largely by *physical* exertion: *distinguished* from white-collar or professional workers" (emphasis mine, vD).

You hear the voice of the president of the Canadian Labour Congress, who recently announced and promised a new chapter in "class struggle," "class warfare." Possibly unwillingly *Webster* put himself on the side of *Karl Marx* who managed to

break society apart by creating contrast between "manual, physical labour" and all other kinds of labour, and who proclaimed war between the two "classes" as the liberation of mankind.

Too bad that such apostate talk invaded even a dictionary!

The *Britannica* is a bit better, though not much. First, it seems to deplore the necessity of labour: labour "consumes quite a part of the short days and years of human life . . . ." Ah, that's too bad, isn't it? Then, "labour is, unlike play, not generally an end in itself, but is performed for the sake of its product." Whatever that means, it surely says that labour can, as such, not create joy. It is admitted that "in primitive society there was much more stress on pride and pleasure in one's labour"; the reason being that primitive society did not know individualism but put strong stress on the community: "working in company has in itself a cheering effect." But all that is gone by now: modern society (except, it seems, in Japan, where — so we hear — working in company still has a cheering effect, and thus floods the markets of the Western world!) has lost the love for labour.

Summing up this wisdom from (only) two sources, we must state:

1. Not a word is heard about the possibility that labour might be essential to human life, because it is a mandate given with the creation of man.

2. We see a return to the cold philosophy of the Roman Empire, fathered by men like Plato and Aristotle, which considered (manual) labour as a shame for a free man; let the slaves do it!

3. Our sources give a mixture of Marxism and materialism, by admitting that labour cuts up society, being a class distinguished from white-collar and capital. The only purpose is: to get money.

4. Thus labour becomes an unpleasant business, a necessary evil; necessary to make money in order to buy, not only the needs for the family, but also luxury, fun, and pleasure. The ideal thus becomes: shorten the working hours so that we

may enjoy more leisure time. In short: "less labour — more money." That has become the social gospel of our day.

### The Pope Knows Better

Before we turn to Scripture to hear the divine truth about labour, we may, with pleasure, listen to Pope John Paul II who recently published a papal letter *Laborem Exercens*; the English title is, *On Human Work*. From this letter we learn that the Pope in this matter is closer to the Bible than much of so-called Liberal Protestantism that is poisoned by an apostate world and that is poisoning it still more.

He begins (we quote him via *Calvinist Contact*, May 28) with a reference to the Genesis command: God telling mankind to fill the earth and subdue it. "Here we have a man and a woman, created in the image of God, receiving a mandate that remains valid throughout history. Despite cultural or technological change, people remain bound by this original mandate. Whatever line of work we may choose, and whatever the conditions of our work may be, we are part of the Creator's ordering process."

This being the case, the Pope condemns "the communist system that claims to provide equality between all workers, and refutes the right of private ownership. Capitalism stands near the other extreme, with large landowners at times exploiting their help; or faceless corporations employing vast numbers of people so that they become mere cogs in a gigantic wheel." *Ian Paisley*, at the recent visit of the Pope to England and Scotland, may have taken up the old cry of several reformers, calling him "Antichrist, Antichrist!" but one cannot deny that Christians truths are being spoken by this head of the Romanist church. He states some of the worker's rights, such as the right to sufficient wages to support a family; the right to rest and vacation; the right to have work in the first place. (It seems that with "workers" the Pope also means only "manual labourers.")

I quote once more: "Examining the mother's role, he notes the need children have for love, care and affec-

tion so that they may become morally and spiritually mature. A just society will make it possible for mothers to give their children this kind of care . . . . Having to abandon these tasks in order to take up paid work outside the home is wrong . . . when it hinders these primary goals . . . of a mother." His answer to "women's lib": "the true advancement of women requires that labour should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them (motherhood) and at the expense of the family, in which women as mothers have an irreplaceable role."

We rejoice when others, "who do not follow us," quote the Bible and say Biblical things about "labour."

#### Scripture's Fundamental Lesson on Labour

In contrast to socialistic bad talk, and improving upon the Pope's teachings, Scripture offers us a wonderful picture of "labour."

1. The first lesson to be learned is that the Bible does not make any distinction between so-called "manual labour" and so-called "professional workers" or what have you. All human activity is called labour in the Scriptures, be it physical or manual or spiritual or whatever other kind of labour there might be. Even the special work in the kingdom is called labour. Mind you, we believe that all "labour" is, or is to be, "kingdom-work." Even the "labour" of the woman during childbirth has the same name as Paul's work and that of his assistants: they were "labouring" in the Word. That's why the apostle, in I Timothy 5:18, could apply the word of Deuteronomy 25:4 — "the labourer deserves his wages" — to those "who labour in preaching and teaching."

One may ask, "Why is this so? Why does Scripture teach the equality of all labour? Why does it underline the nobility of labour, whatever it be?"

2. The answer to such and similar questions is already given on the first page of the Bible!

We can summarize Genesis 1:26ff. in one line: the answer to the above questions is: "Labour belongs to God's Image in man, male and female." But this part of Genesis 1 is so important, so abundant, so foundational for all of human life and all of man's labour, that we had better read it again together, as the LORD God said it (for once we quote from NIV):

Then God said, "Let Us make man

in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground . . . . God saw all that He had made, and it was very good."

Later the Lord Jesus would say, "My Father is working still . . ." John 5:17, but the first word of this quotation from Genesis 1 indicated that He had come to a kind of conclusion of His work of creating. All things were now made ready for man to appear on the scene as the master and ruler of creation. "Then," having prepared all things, the LORD God said: "Now We are going to make man, male and female, to take over from Us the dominion over all things." As Psalm 8 would say it: "He has put all things under man's feet." The LORD had now finished His labours and was going to rest on the seventh day. Then He said: "Let Us now put on man's shoulders the dominion over, the care for, the development of, all things that I created."

Dr. K. Schilder did not tire of teaching his students his most-important lesson: to get the right perspective on any aspect of Christ's redemptive work for the Cosmos, you must always go back to the beginning! Why? Because Christ came, not just to save human souls for heaven, but to undo the devil's destructive work and to restore and complete creation.

In this way we also discover that the denial of the first chapters of Genesis as the history of what really happened, means to spoil and to destroy everything, not only religion as the relationship of man with his God, but also labour.

3. In these words of Genesis 1 we find the ABC of all kinds of labour. The word "dominion," or "ruling," tells us that labour is the total opposite to what Greek philosophy had made of it: labour is a matter of ruling, a royal business; it is the nobility of man as God's image. "God blessed them" may be interpreted as "God installed, ordained, them in their royal offices as male and female."

Let's illustrate this with regard to the female. Webster translated the labour of childbirth as "muscular contractions" and no one will contradict this. But it is more! We should not first look at Genesis 3, where a part of the punishment for sin is, "I will greatly multiply your pain in child-bearing." No, we should first look at, listen to, the mandate of Genesis 1: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." As the Saviour, in one of His parables, would say: The King said, "I want My house to be full." Full for Me, for My kingdom, for My pleasure. If Christian women start losing sight of this, the world has fallen into great tragedy. In paradise the LORD God had prepared and furnished only one mansion yet of the "Fatherly house with the many mansions"; cf. John 14:1ff., also Genesis 2:8ff.: "The LORD God planted a garden in Eden." Outside that garden there was no paradise yet, but all the universe would have to become paradise. That's why the LORD not only said: "multiply," but also "subdue the earth"; in the light of Psalm 8: subdue all creation. There you have the mandate for labour. All human activity, to create or — Continued on next page.



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## The Task of the Church

In *Calvinist Contact* of June 4, 1982, we find an interview with the Rev. Carl D. Tuyl, pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church in Toronto, in which he gives his ideas about the task and function of the church in our modern society, especially of the church of which he is pastor. He says:

There are at least four things to consider about the ministry of First Toronto. First, in a city like Toronto, there is an obvious need for housing. The government makes it possible for us to help meet that need by offering us a 2 per cent mortgage on a building which would provide cheap but decent housing for lower- and middle-income groups, those hardest hit by inflation. The idea is not to create a CRC ghetto [housing only for CRC members, J.G.], but to direct such a ministry to the entire city.

Secondly, there are many neigh-

bourhoods in the city where there are no meeting places and very few convenience shops. We could help to provide these services, as well as day care facilities and maybe a post office. It doesn't have to be a non-profit organization, you know . . . .

The third consideration is that the church ought to be identifiable physically. The facility should reflect the Church's activity in all areas of life. We could have offices for Christian organizations, maybe space for the Toronto Central Christian School. I see it as a beehive of Christian activity.

The fourth consideration is the ministry to the present members of First Toronto. This project would pull together all the different groups in the church, make them all more aware of the community's needs.

The question what these groups are and how this project would help them is answered as follows:

There are those who want to put their Christian love into practice (I call them "closet charismatics") who would now have more opportunity to do so. The "social activists" — those concerned with poverty and justice, nuclear disarmament and so on — would no longer have to move to the fringes because the church provides no outlet for their expressions of their faith.

There is a third group whose focus of Christianity is on worship, and a fourth sort of scholarly group, people of the Reformational movement, who are interested in gathering and disseminating knowledge about the Christian faith. These groups in First Toronto never meet. The facility I dream of could pull them all together. They are all legitimate expressions of the gospel. Together they would express the unity of the Church, the multi-facetedness of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After some examples of churches that go in this direction are given, the question is asked: "What place, then, does worship have in your concept?" The answer is:

The word "liturgy," you know, originally applied to all expressions of the Christian faith. Paul meant by it "Christian service" in general. You can't put the emphasis on one variety

of service at the expense of another. Also, our patterns of worship are very much historically and culturally determined.

Our present mode of worship has been formed by a past agricultural society. It's completely out of date. Sunday is no longer the best day for worship, especially not in the summer when all my parishioners are or want to be up north (in cottage country). The church is people; where the people are, there the church should be.

Worship would certainly be enhanced by the proximity of other activities in the "beehive" facility. We could, for instance, start each day with worship and fellowship, have a Friday evening service maybe. Worship is very important, but it can't be isolated from other facets of Christian activity.

The Apostle Paul said we should preach in season, out of season, whatever the opportunity. And, you know, Sunday opportunities are diminishing. One long weekend in July I counted only fourteen people in the second service. You see, we should be like Paul said the Philippians were: A "colony of heaven . . . ."

In my opinion, with this kind of ideas it is no wonder that only fourteen people attend the second service. Where is the seriousness of the fourth "word of the covenant," about the day of rest and worship? The service of God must be adapted to the wishes and pleasures of the people. In this way of thinking the church becomes a part of a social, local (partly) religious community, in which every Christian (of whatever idea and view) has his say and place. I am of the opinion that this dream is the end of a church as true church of Christ according to God's Word, and as we confess it in our Creeds. Here God's commandments do not speak any longer, but the wishes and desires of people. I am thankful that the readers of the same issue of *Calvinist Contact* also received a different — opposite — guidance in two other articles. In the first place, I would like to point to what the Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema writes in a third article under the title "The CCRCC — QUO VADIS?" He says that he is

concerned about the *direction* of the Council of CRCs in Canada. That Council is proposing that a communication be sent to the Canadian Government.

Of this proposed communication a draft has been made. We read further:

In that Draft, the Canadian government is to hear not only the voice of the CRC,

### MANDATE — Cont'd.

der, to develop what the Creator has laid in the earth at the beginning, as treasures to be discovered by man in due time, according to his needs — not only the plowing of the fields and the digging in coal mines, but the work in the labs, the drawings of the architect, the beautifying of human life by art, music, poetry, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera — all this was included in that single word, "subdue." Now it becomes clear (and we plan to return to that in more detail) that Scripture does not discriminate between "labour" and "professional workers"; it becomes clear why child-bearing and mission can be called by the same name: "labour." Yes, there is, there would come, a great plurality in kinds of "labour." People would turn that diversity into a ladder with higher and lower rungs. Before the Creator any and every kind of labour should be working out that original and primary mandate, given on the sixth day of the first week, when He put the royal burden of looking after His handiwork upon man's shoulders, thus making man His "image," His deputy, His viceroy.

To be continued.

G. VANDOOREN

but by means of that Draft the CRC is saying to the government: "Thus says the Lord."

Well, now, my concern in these articles is to raise the question — Is the CRC, in this Draft Proposal, faithfully proclaiming the Word of the Lord? Is the CRC faithfully announcing that the Shalom of the Lord is rooted in a humble confession that Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord? . . .

I have said a number of things already about 1:03. I believe that the one sentence commentary on "the great and first" commandment, viz. "to love God is to care for His beautiful handiwork, including human life," is not only inadequate, but it misses the mark. It is a sign of serious spiritual impoverishment to so summarize the first and great commandment . . .

That same spiritual impoverishment — (or must I say it stronger?, must I talk about a distortion of the Truth?) — comes to light in the second part of 1:03 where a commentary is given on the second commandment which is like the first and great commandment. "To love our neighbour," it says, "implies the establishment of justice for all." A concluding sentence brings it all together, "Therefore, as citizens we are responsible for the protection of creation and for the pursuit of justice, the Shalom of God."

By means of a number of quotations from a book by the late professor Dr. S.U. Zuidema (*Communication and Confrontation*), the Rev. Sikkema shows that all love for the neighbour is not as such fulfilment of the "second" commandment of God, and says that all people who love their neighbour ("because they show care for them, are concerned for their wellbeing, defend their rights") are not automatically also lovers of God. He continues:

But then the question must be raised, is there not a difference between the love which Christ asks of us as fulfilment of the second commandment, and the love of which humanism speaks, a love characterized by humanitarianism, *medemenselijkheid*, a being for others? . . .

We must not forget that Christ saw also this second commandment "as a commandment given by God." And He saw in this "divinely ordained commandment a reflection of the great commandment." And that is why, you see, "he demanded that also the love required by the second commandment be a conscious reflection of my love towards my God" (cf. Zuidema, p. 109).

Earlier in this article on "The Great

Commandment" Prof. Zuidema said: "The neighbourly love of the Christian as Christian is a reflection, an expression of his love towards his God. If not, it is not the neighbourly love of a Christian, but the *mitmenschlichkeit* of the (secularized, God-estranged) humanist. The piety has then disappeared out of it . . ."

And that is why it also follows that a failure to recognize that the second commandment can be fulfilled Christianly only when it is indeed an expression of the Christian's love towards his God, — a failure to recognize that, I believe, means that the second commandment is not fulfilled. Then the second commandment has become secularized. Then this commandment has been estranged from God "and loosened from its intimate bond with the great commandment."

Prof. Zuidema saw very sharply the difference between true Biblical love for the neighbour, based in the love of God and Christ Jesus, and the so-called love and justice of which modern humanism, including modern liberal theology, speaks so much. So many think today that this "Christian," but in fact humanistic, man-centred love is the great solution for our problems. But they forget that this "love" eventually comes from "the deceiver and murderer from the beginning." I hope that the readers of *Calvinist Contact* understand and hold onto what the Rev. Sikkema writes, and that they have an open eye for true and false prophecy, also on this point of God's commandments.

The second good article is from the hand of the Rev. Cecil Tuininga. It bears the title: "Current state of discipline in the Christian Reformed Church." To give the readers of *Clarion* an impression of this article I quote the following parts. We can gain also by taking them to heart.

Discipline concerns both doctrine and life. Every person is formed and controlled by his thinking (Proverbs 23:7), hence the warning to Timothy, "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim. 4:16). We can only walk a godly life when we know the demands for godly living . . .

The basic meaning of discipline is teaching. This must begin in the home . . . Parents are responsible to teach their children to know, fear, love, and serve the Lord. They must teach their children self-denial for the Lord's sake. That certainly calls for the use of the rod. (Proverbs 29:15) . . .

Discipline is also the calling of the church. Every congregation must see to it that there is a sound program of catechetical instruction. That is the best way for securing a sound disciplined life in the congregation . . .

But discipline is also the calling of the ministers of the Word. I believe preaching is foundational. The letters of Christ to the seven churches make this abundantly clear. Christ calls the ministers to stir up the members so the evil may be removed from the congregation and its life renewed . . . I see preaching as the very heart beat of church discipline.

The Rev. Tuininga then refers to two booklets, written in Dutch, about the situation in the synodical Reformed Churches: *Tussentijdes Balans*, by the Rev. E.G. Van Teijlingen, and *Koerswijziging in Onze Kerken*, by Prof. Dr. K. Dijk, and says:

Very rightly both writers see a direct line between the disturbing changes taking place in the moral ethical life of church members and the preaching of the ministers. They see changes in preaching as originating in a new type of exegesis . . . men are following a new, more intellectual approach; more exciting way, as some put it. This new approach brings with it a questioning of the historic creeds, especially the teaching of reprobation. This breach with the theologies of the past [Calvin, Bavinck, Kuyper are mentioned, J.G.] has brought with it a regrettable breakdown in the authority of the Word of God in preaching. The pulpits have lost their authority and ring because speculation has come in the place of proclamation.

From The Netherlands the attention is focussed on their own situation:

Let us begin by looking at our homes. As I observe it, this presents a very sad picture. In our average homes there is very little meaningful Bible study, very little Bible reading, and a very limited reading of good Christian literature. Parents seem rather indifferent to what or whether children learn their catechism. Doctrine seems to be a bad word in many homes. The result is a poor work by catechumens, a resentment of memory, with little support of the parents . . .

It is inevitable that this carries over into church societies, such as still exist. Very few make careful preparation before coming to a society to discuss and study God's Word. The result is tragic in that many stay home from meaningless discussions . . .

Indifference to doctrine brings with it indifference to godly living. When

Israel strayed they were called to return "to the law and testimony" (Isaiah 8:20). The sad commentary concerning Israel was: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). When we are not living according to God's Word, we allow ourselves many freedoms. Only the Truth can make us free. Indifference to truth brings bondage to sin . . . .

Perhaps modern psychology and psychiatry have influenced us in fearing restricting our children. Since they resent being restricted, and since we fear losing them by demanding right living, we leave it with very mild admonitions. I suspect that also among us the new intellectual approach makes us very negative against the so-called bad negativism of the past. What is more, the permissive spirit of our modern age also influences us.

Who still dares to forbid young people from doing what we know is worldly and against God's Word? Seemingly everyone else does allow it and where does that leave those who still want to have their children walk in the fear of the Lord?

When indifference to sound doctrine, along with carelessness to good living, comes into the life of the congregation, it almost completely stifles church discipline. Just where will a consistory begin when members see nothing wrong with living common-law, drinking, dancing, and the like? What is more, such living brings also with it a breakdown in respect for authority. That begins in the home, spills over into the church and society. The results are evident. We begin to condone practices condemned by God's Word. And with it comes a rationalizing and condoning of the very lifestyle of the world. And since man gets too much attention we fear taking action lest we lose too many members.

The article continues with some questions and remarks about the situation in the Christian Reformed Church. I can leave them out. I think what the Rev. Tuininga writes provides very good reading material. And I hope that also in our midst his words are taken to heart. What drives us? The fear and service of the LORD, or our own convenience and comfortable life; the up-building and preservation of the church of Christ we belong to, or our own material gains? What about the Reformed doctrine as confessed in our Creeds? Do we study it and instruct also at home? But let me not add anything more to the words of the Rev. Tuininga.

J. Geertsema



*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.*

#### NEW YORK (RNS)

"I would like to announce that I'm not a communist and have not joined the Communist party and have not been asked to," evangelist Billy Graham told reporters here on his return to the United States from a controversial visit to the Soviet Union.

The evangelist was obviously annoyed at press reports and commentary in the United States which suggested he had been too favourable to his Soviet hosts in his public statements.

Mr. Graham said he had been misinterpreted in news stories quoting him as saying he had seen no persecution of religious people in the Soviet Union. He admitted saying this, but explained that it was after having been asked by a reporter if he had personally seen any examples of persecution.

"There is religious persecution in the Soviet Union, but I didn't see it," he commented.

The one mistake Mr. Graham said he thought he had made was in quoting Bible passages on obedience to government authorities when he preached at the Moscow Baptist Church. He said he had cited those passages in a general discourse about the teachings and practices of Jesus, but admitted, "if I had to do it over again I wouldn't quote that verse of Scripture." (CN)

Now that our good friend sees his reputation tarnished by (what we hope was only) his gullibility and naivete he tried to extricate himself from the disgrace into which he has justly fallen. "Misquoted," or "misinterpreted," or more such beautiful terms have to serve as a smokescreen. There is only one honest way out for Mr. Graham:

Admit, "*Peccavie*," which in plain English reads, "I have sinned."

\* \* \*

#### ANN ARBOR, MICH. (RNS)

The Rev. Hans Kúng, the well-known Catholic theologian and author, will teach full-time next fall at the University of Michigan here.

Retention of Kúng for one semester as a professor in the Department of Near Eastern Studies and the Program of Studies in Religion was announced by Peter O. Steiner, dean of the College of Literature, Arts and Sciences.

Dr. Steiner said the question of the priest's further affiliation with the university would be open to negotiations at that time. (CN)

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#### WASHINGTON (RNS)

As promised, President Reagan has sent Congress a 37-word proposed constitutional amendment that would permit voluntary prayer in public schools.

The proposed amendment reads, "Nothing in this constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group prayer in public schools or other public institutions. No person shall be required by the United States or by any state to participate in prayer."

The amendment omits the word "voluntary" in deference to critics who say no prayer involving elementary or even secondary school students could be voluntary, said a source who helped to draft the amendment. (CN)

\* \* \*

#### NAPLES, ITALY (RNS)

A relic of what is said to be congealed blood of St. Januarius, a martyred fourth century bishop, liquefied on schedule in what local Catholics regard as a good omen for this troubled Italian city.

The phenomenon is supposed to take place on the first Saturday of May, marking the day on which the saint's body was transferred to Naples.

Thousands of Neapolitans, anticipating the liquefaction, gathered in the cathedral May 1 for a prayer service led by Naples' Cardinal Coorado Ursi. After an hour and a half of prayer, the cardinal announced that the substance contained in a small vial had become liquid. The crowd burst into applause. (CN)

Hurray! VO



## TULSA, OKLA. (RNS)

Steve Largent, one of the top receivers in the National Football League, has found himself defending his "personal religious convictions" in the middle of a battle he says will end in the first NFL players' strike.

Mr. Largent became the center of a heated controversy when he announced that he felt obligated "as a Christian" to honour his contract with the Seahawks even if the NFL players' association calls a pre-season strike.

"It's a personal thing with me," he said. "I respect the personal convictions of those who plan to strike. I hope they respect mine."

"God's Word calls a contract a vow. I've made a vow with the Seahawks that I will play football with them for three more years. To break that vow would be wrong." (CN)

Thank you, Mr. Largent. VO

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## OTTAWA (MCC)

The government recently released a report of abortion statistics for the year 1980. There were 65,751 abortions in total: 30,900 in Ontario; 12,673 in British Columbia; 8,940 in Quebec; 7,121 in Alberta; 1,587 in Manitoba; 1,572 in Saskatchewan; lower numbers in other provinces.

The 1980 increase in total number is the smallest increase since the 1969 change in law. (Comm.)

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## TORONTO (CP)

Presbyterian clergymen in Canada who disagree with ordaining women ministers have been told they must participate in such ordinations or leave the church.

The 108th general assembly of the church, meeting in Toronto, overwhelmingly approved a resolution which says that while dissenting clergy have "freedom of belief," they do not have "freedom of action."

Of more than 250 delegates at the assembly, only 18 registered opposition to the new regulation.

"I'm in a total quandary and so are most of the others who voted against this authoritarian move," said Rev. John Vaudry of Orangedale, N.S.

Vaudry said it is impossible to know what the ultimate result of the assembly's decision will be or how many clergy across the country will be put in the same position he and the other dissident delegates are in. (KWR)

## ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

The Australian Reformed Churches have definitely broken their relationship as sister Churches with the (syn.) Reformed Churches in The Netherlands.

The synod of this small federation (approximately 10,000 members, mainly of Dutch descent) decided to do so last month. For this decision three grounds were adduced: the Dutch membership of the WORLD Council of Churches, acceptance of women in office, and the notorious report on the nature of the authority of Scripture, "God with Us." A limited form of contact remains.

The relation between the Reformed Churches in Australia and the Dutch (syn.) Reformed Churches has experienced tensions for several years. Grave objections against the course in The Netherlands Churches have been found with the Australian Churches for a long time and these objections brought the latter already in 1979 to putting restrictions on the relationship. Ministers from The Netherlands were no longer allowed without further examination to preach in Australia, and attestations were to be examined thoroughly since that time.

Now the sister-Church relationship has been terminated, although a restricted contact is continued in order to keep open the possibility of further discussion. (ND)

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## LEEWARDEN (ANP)

Dr. Hendrik Algra, former editor-in-chief of the *Friesch Dagblad* and senator died in a hospital in Leeuwarden at the age of 86. He started off as a farmhand and studied during the evenings till he received his teacher's certificate. Later on he studied especially Dutch Literature and History and became a highschool teacher.

Dr. Algra was known for his writings, and for his faithful stand during the German occupation. For some time he was interned as a hostage and gave lectures on history to his fellow-hostages in the concentration camp at Vught. Later on, these lectures were printed in book form with the title *De eigen weg van het Nederlandse volk*. Together with his brother, Dr. Algra wrote *Dispereert Niet*, twenty centuries of history of the Dutch people. He became a senator in 1946 and served as such till 1968.

On October 20, 1980, at the age of almost 85, he received an honorary doctor's degree from the Free University.

"We do not hesitate to call Hendrik Algra a singularly gifted man who knew his calling to use his talents in the service of His Sender. He had a message to bring and through the conciseness and clarity of his style he knew how to capture the attention, both as a journalist and a historian." (ND)

## VENTNOR, NEW JERSEY

American missionaries are still important for the future of the missionary enterprise, but they should give greater attention to the social context in which they work, especially the suffering of the poor and to the total impact of the United States on the countries where they serve. This sentiment prevailed at a gathering of some 200 leaders of U.S. mission agencies and a number of people from Third World churches who met at the Overseas Ministries Study Center here for a consultation on "The Role of North Americans in the Future of the Missionary Enterprise."

Jorge Lara-Braud, Director of the Council on Theology and Culture of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, a native of Mexico and now a U.S. citizen, observed that one reason for the growing ambiguity about the powerful role of North Americans is that the poor "wonder about the validity of U.S. Christian witness when it comes so intimately related to an economic system which means comfort to the senders and destitution to them." There is, however, still a role for the American missionaries but they must refashion their work in solidarity with the poor, work more ecumenically, and give greater attention to the evils of materialism and violence in their own society. Another major speaker, Prof. Ted Ward, a Baptist, also futurist and specialist in development, deplored the "political naivete" of so many missionaries. He also criticized the U.S. government support for Third World dictatorships. (RES NE)

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## ZEIST, THE NETHERLANDS

The Board of the Reformed Mission Alliance (GZB) in The Netherlands Reformed Church has decided to enter into a relationship with the Iglesia Presbiteriano Nacional del Chile whereby the GZB will make a missionary pastor available to help the Chilean Church in its missionary task. Chile is the second country in Latin America (Peru was the first) where the GZB will provide such assistance. (RES NE) VO

# news medley

As this medley is written a little earlier than usual, I have no opportunity to scan the advertisements in the previous issue to see whether there are any couples whom we should give honourable mention on the occasion of a wedding anniversary. If there is sufficient reason to make up for our deficit in one of the future issues, we shall certainly do so. Now we proceed directly to the news from the Churches.

As the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, we shall follow its course, although not precisely. In order to have some order in our remarks, we begin with the Church at Grand Rapids. It is not so much news about this Church that I wish to mention, but I do wish to pass on a few remarks which the Rev. P. Kingma made at the occasion of the appointment of Dr. James A. DeJong as President of Calvin Seminary. The Grand Rapids Church is, of course, geographically close, and their contacts make them follow the happenings at Calvin with the more interest.

Our news medley is not a press review, yet I cannot but quote a few lines from *Calvinist Contact* of June 25, 1982.

"Dr. De Jong, son of Dr. P.Y. De Jong, is currently professor of theology. Since graduating from the Free University in Amsterdam in 1970, he has taken on various academic positions, first as assistant professor of theology at Trinity College in Chicago, and then in 1974 as assistant, associate, and finally professor of theology at Dordt College.

"De Jong saw two major issues before the Christian Reformed Church today: hermeneutics (Report 44 which talks about the nature and authority of Scripture) and denominational unity as witnessed with the creation of the Mid-American Reformed Seminary in Iowa.

"With respect to the denominational unity, De Jong said that we must 'identify what we have in common and then hold on to that which we have in common. We should maintain a commitment to our faith. I cannot condone the movement for an alternative seminary in Iowa. To take that kind of action is not in the best interest of the church.' "

Thus far the quotation from *Calvinist Contact*.

In the light of the above, I pass on some remarks made by the Rev. Kingma in *Pro Ecclesia* of the Grand Rapids Church.

"We are of the opinion that the appointment of Dr. P.Y. De Jong's son as President of the Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids intends to cause confusion as to the principles of the new seminary. (where Dr. P.Y. De Jong is going to teach, VO) The family name of the two men is the same. Many members will easily be ready to assume: as the father is, so is the son. The father is known from his publications on Reformed education and on the Belgic Confession, etc. The son who accepted his appointment does not appear to share his father's views on critical issues in the Christian Reformed Church according to an interview with the newly appointed Prof. De Jong published in the Grand Rapids Press."

As stated above, it is not our intention to compete

with the press review, but I considered these remarks worth to be passed on to our readers without comment.

On our way "up" we stop in Hamilton. I mentioned before that Hamilton has chosen Brazil as mission field. Now that the Rev. Boersema and family are on furlough and visiting relatives in this part of the country, Hamilton made use of this. "It is reported that the Rev. R.F. Boersema, the missionary from our Western sister churches presently working in Brazil, is visiting in Southern Ontario. Board of Mission is therefore requested to arrange a meeting with the members of the supporting churches (for Hamilton's mission efforts), the Lord willing on June 16 in the Cornerstone Church."

The other time I asked you to contain your curiosity for one more period of two weeks, i.e. till the next *Clarion's* issue was to reach you, for a decision was made regarding possible institution of a Church in the Waterdown/Flam-borough area. Now I can satisfy your craving for more information. "The vote conducted in the meeting of Wednesday, June 16, 1982, resulted in only a 56% majority. Since the accepted requirement was 70%, the intended institution can at the present not be realized." Too bad, isn't it?

To my sorrow we have to make the jump all the way to Winnipeg. The Winnipeg Consistory "decided to prohibit smoking in the church building on every occasion." This would not have been sufficient to mention Winnipeg, if nothing else was to be said. There is more. "The Berends family is living in the new manse. They are quite happy with their new residence. Especially the minister is happy with his new study. As some visitors were saying already, it is bound to be noticed in his sermons."

"Even though the pledges initially reached around \$39,000.-, several gifts were received without a previous pledge, boosting the amount to the present \$41,145."

The goal was \$46,000.00 and thus they come pretty close.

The Rev. D. DeJong mentions that "In the *Calgary Herald* there was an article last week about a Christian Reformed minister in Ontario who makes (prepares) his sermons with a computer." I read an article about this quite a while ago already, but forgot whether it was in *Calvinist Contact* or in some other periodical. "They did not have to go that far, for since some time your pastor does the same. Also the membership system is computerized, and at the consistory meetings I provide the elders with a print-out of their district and the state of the homevisits done. Especially in typing sermons, articles and papers much time is saved, and the end result much better, as far as appearance is concerned."

Also in Calgary, "the decision was made to move ahead and register under the *Societies Act*." No, if I understand this well, it does not refer to the Church but to the political Studies Group.

A while ago we mentioned something about seating arrangement for the office-bearers in the Coaldale Church. Now we can pass on "Re: seating arrangement office-bearers: decision of council meeting held April 13, 1982, is rescinded as there appears to be enough space available."

And this brings us down to the Fraser Valley.

As general news we can mention that the Rest Home Society approved the Board's proposal to apply for C.M.H.C. funding.

Further, that on June 11th, Mr. S. VanderPloeg was scheduled to give another organ concert in the Maranatha

Church in Surrey. When he did so a previous time, I asked whether anyone was going to send me a cassette of that concert. I haven't received any yet, although I know that one person certainly recorded the concert. I repeat my question this time. I must admit that I do have a copy of a "private concert" which brother VanderPloeg gave for a brother from Ontario who was allowed to tape it and who was so kind as to provide me with a copy. I am certain that this is with the full approval of the author, otherwise I would not even have mentioned it. It is a pity that these performances are not more widely known. When I mentioned the Luisterpost in Grand Rapids, I passed on a suggestion to have something like this here in Canada as well, by means of which members who are house-bound or bedridden, can enjoy the things which others can go to and see and hear even though they have to drive long distances for it. Would it not be beautiful if members elsewhere could hear a tape of the Convocations and the College Evenings?

Speaking of cassettes, a few months ago we had a beautiful concert in Hamilton, in which many choirs took part from all over Ontario. They were our "own" choirs, and I mention this to prevent misunderstanding. We thoroughly enjoyed the concert (one of the few I had an opportunity to attend) and are looking forward to the cassette to be issued so that we can listen again and again. The Association for the Handicapped was the beneficiary of the concert and will also be this of any surplus made on the cassettes. I do not know how many of them will be issued, but I am sure that they will be in great demand.

Returning to the Valley, we continue with news from the individual Churches.

Abbotsford decided to use the new forms as of June 6, but Chilliwack has some objections to at least one of them. They decided "to start with the 'Section Liturgical Forms 1981' in the worship services with the exception of the new form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, because the Consistory has serious misgivings about the inclusion of some 'new' sins in the list."

Chilliwack is not the only Church which objects to this part of the new form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Rev. J. DeJong wrote about it a long time ago, and I am convinced that he was right. Chilliwack, apparently, also agrees and so does Fergus, I may say.

In Langley, "the Organ Committee has two requests. The first concerns a rank of pipes which is to cost \$1,600.00. This request is granted if the money can be raised without adding it to the budget of the church." Smart thinking! "The second request is still under consideration," but I don't know what this second request was. Be patient.

When the J. Kuik family returned from Brazil, a sister from the mission field came with them. At first, if I remember correctly, it was the intention that she would stay for half a year, but things seem to have changed, and now I read about a period of two years. In the part of the Surrey Church we are told that a letter was received regarding a study course "for sr. Teresa Vieira, who came to Canada with the Kuik family. After consultation with Teresa, br. and sr. Kuik, the missionaries, and the Rev. Van Spronsen, the proposal is made by them to Council that a teaching course be set up for Teresa in cooperation with teachers of the William of Orange School, so that she can utilize her two-year stay here in Canada and, hopefully, make it beneficial for the upbuilding of the congregation in São José.



*On July 27, 1982, the Lord willing, Mrs. T. DeJonge hopes to celebrate her 86th birthday. She was born in Holland, and emigrated to Canada in 1952 with her 3 youngest children, while two married children were already in Canada, and two remain in Holland today. She has been a widow since 1947. Mrs. DeJonge has been a member of the Chatham congregation until last January when she moved into Shalom Manor in Grimsby. She is now a member of the Lincoln congregation.*

The Council is requested to sponsor the project. Council decides to stand behind this project, although it leaves the organization, also financially, up to the brothers who are proposing it."

We close this time with the Okanagan Valley.

"The use of the church building has been very gratifying and is ideal for our needs. Please note the *time changes* for our services. It appears to be more suitable for all involved to have them closer together. There still is plenty of time to have lunch and fellowship together." That all depends, I should say, on who is reading and who is preaching. The services are now at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Then there is precious little time inbetween the services if the morning sermon is somewhat lengthy. Perhaps our younger ministers do not prepare all that long sermons, but some of the older ones still know how to keep people in Church! I am sometimes surprised that it is already that late when we return to the Consistory room. I never look at my watch during a service except in Ottawa, where the morning service starts at 9:00 a.m. and where the cars have to be off the parking lot before twenty after ten. Then you don't have all that much time for a service, although the sermon is the first part I would leave in its entirety, cutting down on the other elements of the service first.

In this medley we touched upon a lot of things which may not have been direct news from and about the Churches, but I hope that you have enjoyed it nevertheless. With this I have to leave you again, for my thumb is not that thick that I can derive any news from it. Besides, I would soon be reprimanded, be it ever so kindly and mildly.

The sun has set in these regions since long.  
May your day be bright and your pathway clear.  
Have good holidays.

VO

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# THE BOOK OF RUTH

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## Part 3

*The Old Testament laws applied: the law concerning the poor, widows, and strangers (Lev. 19:9, 10; Deut. 24:19-22)*

Boaz's obedience strikes us immediately with regard to this law. Ruth was a unique woman in the sense that she belonged to *all three* categories above, but even had one extra mark against her: she was a Moabitess. She belonged to a cursed people, a people banished from the presence of the LORD. She was even worse than a foreigner: she belonged to the aliens who had attacked Israel. She knew she would be resented in Israel; yet she went out to glean. And the LORD opened the way for her. She would no doubt have been driven away from many fields; first, because she was a Moabitess, so that the law could be construed as not applying in her case; and second, because the regard for God's law was so poor in that time that many did not maintain the provisions with regard to the poor, widows, and strangers. At that time, many would have thought that they would be doing God and country a favour by molesting and humbling her! Boaz, however, is different. He understands the spirit and intent of God's law, i.e. *to make room* for those who were in danger of being squeezed out: the poor, the widows, and the stranger. The LORD wants to include rich *and poor* in the blessings of His covenant. He wants a people who take care of each other and provide for each other's needs — particularly when the danger arises that one might be lost. In this way, the LORD wanted to check the natural tendencies to oppression and corruption among His people.

So Boaz opens his field to Ruth. He shows hospitality to her, offering her bread and wine — another reflection of the resurrection meeting in the upper room. He takes pains to give her even more than she could glean, so that she is satisfied and lacks nothing. He urges Ruth to stay on his fields right to the end of the early harvests. That, too, was an unusual act of

obedience to the law. Boaz could well have told Ruth to move around a little; however, knowing the time in which he lived, he commands Ruth to stay with his field. And this is what Ruth does until the end of the harvests.

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*The Old Testament laws applied: the law of redemption (Lev. 25:13-28)*

The beginning of the third chapter introduces another contrast in the story. In the beginning of chapter 2, we get to know Boaz before Ruth does; here something is *kept from us* which is known to Naomi. This adds to the suspense in the story. Apparently, Naomi owns a field and is about to sell it.<sup>1</sup> The incidental character of this fact in the story indicates that the question of *property* is not the major point of the story. Yet this is an essential element in the story, and it surely cannot be overlooked. In fact, this part of the story foreshadows the *totality* of Christ's redemption, including its material or economic aspects.

In their circumstances, the field owned by the widows meant little to them, and they probably would not have received much from the sale of it. Elimelech had probably left the field when he moved to Moab, so that it lay fallow for several years. At his death, the rights of ownership passed on to Naomi; but she, too, would lose the field at her death. While we do not know whether the Jubilee law was actually in effect in Israel at the time, we do know that the value of the land was computed according to the value and number of crops to be gained until the year of Jubilee, when the land was returned to the original owner. These factors indicate that the land probably was not worth a large sum of money. And Naomi could not expect any future with this land, since neither she nor Ruth had children. They were at the point of losing it, and no hope could be found in it. No doubt Naomi had considered all the angles.

Throughout the harvest period, however, Naomi began to see the plot

of land through different eyes. She knew that Boaz was a near relative, one who was legally in a position to redeem her land. Of course, selling the field to him outright would not bring much help to them. She would soon lose the field and the money. But through the leading and guiding hand of the LORD, she is brought to see a new possibility. That possibility lay in Ruth, specifically in a marriage between Boaz and Ruth. Suddenly this hanger-on whom she had tried to get rid of becomes very important to her: she opens the door to redemption!

The whole situation represents a rather ironic turn of events for Naomi. However, she definitely sees this as the hand of the LORD in her life, leading and correcting her. Her acknowledgment of the returning kindness of the LORD is also a confession of faith. She praises the LORD who in His kindness has not forgotten the *living* and the *dead*. Her words, too, anticipate the resurrection of the Saviour. And, as she only sees the possibility of redemption in the marriage between Boaz and Ruth, her words implicitly confess the coming Saviour who was born out of this marriage! The depth of Naomi's confession is also Messianic: it looks to the future and anticipates God's redemption in the future. Later, her grandson Obed is also called her *redeemer* 4:14 — another foreshadowing of the great Redeemer, Jesus Christ!

What did the law of redemption provide for, and what was its basic function? The word used for nearest kin here is the word *go-el*, a technical term that applied to all near male relatives in Israel. The *go-el*, or next-of-kin, was required to provide a redemption of the land if his relative's inheritance was lost or sold. When a man was forced to sell his property because of his financial circumstances, his nearest kin was obligated to buy it back from the original buyer and restore it to his relative again. The aim of the law was to provide help in distress and to ensure that each man kept his inheri-

tance until the revelation of the Messiah so that not one would be left out. Again, the LORD *makes room* for everyone, rich and poor. This was also the point of the law concerning the Jubilee, which provided a return of the land to the original owners every fifty years. Because of this law, sales of land in Israel were much like our rental system.

The law also makes clear that when one legally performed the function of the *go-el*, and was called to act as a redeemer, he was doing so on behalf of the LORD Himself, as a representative of the God of the covenant, who gives covenant justice to the poor and dispossessed in the land. That is why the LORD Himself is often called a Redeemer in the Old Testament. All wealth belonged to Him, and when one paid a redemption price, it was really the LORD Himself who provided the redemption. And that, too, foreshadowed the great redemption that came in Jesus Christ. Particularly the prophet Isaiah uses this term to describe the saving activity of the LORD who redeemed His people out of the poverty and dispossession involved in the exile, cf. Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 60:16; 63: 16; etc.

Naomi now turns to this law and sees the possibility of redemption for her family through this law that the LORD had given to His people. However, she realizes that in itself this law is not enough. Boaz is a redeemer, but as long as there were no children, any act of redemption would not help. Technically, the law did not even apply in this case, since Naomi had not sold the field. Naomi, however, sees the possibility of applying the law only if Boaz were willing to marry Ruth. That is why she instructs Ruth to visit Boaz on the threshing floor at the end of harvest time. This was the time in which the need for redemption was the most acute, since the women had now lost their means for daily support. Naomi chooses this time to make the request for redemption known to Boaz.

\* \* \*

*The Old Testament laws applied: the levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-10)*

This brings us to the final law appealed to in this narrative: that is, the law of the levirate marriage. The third chapter describes Naomi's plan to present Ruth for marriage to Boaz; it also tells how Ruth accepts Naomi's proposal and goes to the threshing floor, making an appeal of redemption and

marriage to Boaz. Boaz, agrees to do the part of a next-of-kin and gives Ruth six measures of barley as a sign that he not only understood Naomi's intentions, but also endorsed them because of their God-fearing character.

Now questions often arise concerning the behaviour of the widows here, particularly the behaviour of Ruth. Isn't this act a little too bold, and morally questionable? She literally asks Boaz to spread his blanket over her. What could be more suggestive than that? And isn't Naomi, too, being overly calculating here? She had failed once when she married her two sons to Moabish women; is she about to fail again?

Actually, this action should not be judged through our own "Western" eyes, but must be seen in the light of the customs of the day. No doubt there was an unwritten code which made this action acceptable, much like a visit of a woman to a male doctor also involves an unwritten code of acceptable behaviour in our society. On the other hand, who should not reduce this event to a normal, everyday occurrence. It was a very bold step, indeed. It was an unusually discreet and delicate way of introducing a proposal to Boaz. But this time the boldness exhibited is not the boldness of sin, but the boldness of faith! In faith the women see that this is the only way.

Why are the women led to take such a delicate and secretive approach? Normally matters concerning an appeal to law were dealt with publicly, cf. Num. 27:1-11. However, in this case another route had to be taken, since the women had no right to make a direct appeal to the law of a levirate marriage. They are not acting on the basis of the law, first of all, but on the basis of *faith*. They are making an appeal to the LORD to have the justice of the covenant, their rights in the covenant, administered to them in the way of the covenant, the way of *faith*. That accounts for their appeal to Boaz.

What did the law concerning the levirate marriage specify? This law was given to ensure that no one's name would be blotted out in Israel; that all families would be represented at the appearance of the Messiah, and would receive their share in the Messianic promise with its blessings. In this law, the primary concern was not the land, but *offspring*. If a man died leaving no heir, the brother of the man (*yabam*), i.e., the woman's brother-in-law, or

*levir*, was required to take her to wife, and so raise up offspring for her deceased husband. Here the LORD was concerned with preserving the *family line*.

It is obvious, therefore, that this law, too, did not really apply in the case of the widows. Boaz certainly was not a *levir* or brother-in-law to Ruth, and thus could not act in that legal capacity. In fact, there was no *levir* in this case. There was a nearer relative, but Naomi had no interest in approaching him; rather, she wanted to get around him. In all probability, his lifestyle did not make a marriage to Ruth very attractive. Consequently, the women are unable to make any *public* appeal for justice. They can only make their appeal discreetly to one who understands the real meaning and intent of God's law, i.e., one who would realize their plight and act in the *spirit* of the law. And this is what Naomi expected of Boaz.

This means that Boaz was required to fulfil a double task and a two-fold office for the women. He was required to act as *go-el* and *levir* at the same time in order to provide a *full* redemption. And although the two laws are distinct in the Mosaic law, their very character makes a combination of them seem most natural. This solution would only appear obvious for one who understood the purpose and intention of God's law. At the same time, such a combined redemption required a greater sacrifice on the part of the redeemer. Boaz had to give more than a sum of money; he had to give himself in marriage!

J. DEJONG

<sup>1</sup> Here we follow the reading proposed by Goslinga, in his commentary in the *Korte Verklaring* series; cf. p. 555 sub Ruth 4:3.

## Church News

### NEW ADDRESS:

Rev. J. VanRietschoten  
481 McNaughton Ave. E.,  
Chatham, Ontario N7L 2H2  
Phone: (519) 354-8946

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# OUR COLLEGE

Another College year has come to a close, the thirteenth in the row. No year is ever like the preceding ones but this year was different in many ways.

There was, to begin with, the installation of the Reverend C. Van Dam, followed by the inauguration of Professor Van Dam. A memorable event; the more so because the new professor in the Old Testament disciplines was one of the first students at the College. The only problem which presented itself was the first name relation which the transition of former student to present-day colleague implied. For the rest, he took it all in his quiet way and started his work with the joy and gratitude of being permitted to devote his talents to study and teaching in the service of the Lord through the training for the ministry of the gospel.

In the meantime, the beginning was not all that easy, for we all had to work, if not for two, then in any case for one and a half persons. That applied to Prof. Faber as guest lecturer for a semester at Westminster Seminary. He had to meet a heavy schedule, teaching in the three classes of undergraduates, graduates, and students preparing themselves for a doctorate. The work was not finished when the time of lecturing was completed in the first week of December, for a box with assigned papers was brought home and had to be marked. Since the College could not afford a guest lecturer to take Prof. Faber's place, he had to catch up on all the teaching in the diaconological department in the second semester. That could be done, for Prof. Faber's first semester hours were used by his colleagues to do extra lecturing in the courses which at other times are given in the second semester. It kept us all going at an accelerated pace, but it worked out so well that not only all the subjects in the various departments were taught but that even some extra hours were given when it was Prof. Van Dam's turn to leave for the completion of his doctorate in Kampen in the beginning of May. Before he left, the exams in the Old Testament department had been written and were marked. From what we have heard,

the Van Dams are doing fine in Kampen and the work is proceeding, though it will take some time before it is finished.

A treat after the daily lecture meal was a very special lecture delivered by Dr. J.W. Wevers of the University of Toronto, who is professor in the Institute for Near Eastern Studies. Prof. Wevers, whose parents migrated from Holland to the United States, speaks the Dutch language and even the dialect of the "Achterhoek" just as well as his English. He is a world-renowned Septuagint scholar. With a few more scholars in England and West Germany he is involved in the preparation of a new edition of the Old Testament in the Greek language, a gigantic task which requires a word-for-word study of the manuscripts to establish the best possible text of this translation which dates back to 250 B.C. and was the Old Testament Bible for the whole Greek-speaking world. Prof. Wevers not only told us about this work but also showed us his workbooks to give us an impression of the process leading to this new edition. An afternoon like that is a visible demonstration of the care of the Lord for His Word and a stimulant to study it the better.

All through the year we were privileged to do so. One out of our circle, our retired lecturer in Church History, the Rev. H. Scholten, who till the time he became sick was involved in this study with us, was taken to the Lord. Together the College community attended the funeral and thanked the Lord for what he gave to the churches and the school of the churches in this indefatigable worker who had the interest of school and churches so close to his heart.

Shortly before the end of the course, student Wieske, who with his family, came to us from Australia underwent a serious operation. The course was just closed when our administrative assistant was admitted to the hospital for an operation. Both are recuperating and will have started their work again when you read this write-up. With gratitude to the "fount of life and grace" we mention this.

The end of the course, just like the beginning, brought a change, but

different from the one in September. The change at the end will remain invisible for the time being. To keep you from guessing what that might be: it is the end of the lectureship of the Rev. G. Van Dooren in the diaconological department. Before he had stepped down he was already appointed as temporary instructor for the academic year 1982-1983 in the same department. In the meantime steps are being taken towards the nomination and appointment of a third professor by the upcoming Synod of Cloverdale. We are happy with our brother that he is able to continue his work for another year and hope that he can do it with the same enthusiasm as in the past years.

The memorable fact of the granting of a charter to the College by the provincial government did get all the attention it deserved, but it cannot remain unmentioned in a survey of the past year.

A thing which is also worth mentioning is that the College is apparently becoming better known. I base that on the inquiries concerning study possibilities which we receive. I do not know yet what will come of it but it is nevertheless gratifying to notice the interest which is being shown.

As to new arrivals from our churches, three students could initially be admitted. They are br. Douwe Agema from Abbotsford, who already studied some years at the Theological College in Kampen, but migrated to Canada; br. Peter Feenstra of Fenwick; and br. Garnet Peet of Chatham who both obtained their Bachelor of Arts degree this spring.

The study results of the present students are not completely known yet, since not all assignments were finished at the time of writing. Two may be mentioned already. They are br. Clarence Bouwman who will be the first one to receive the Master of Theology degree, which was established now that the College has been recognized; and br. Eric Kampen who finished his third year.

Thanks be to God for His manifold blessings!

L. SELLES

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# school X crossing

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## A. Graduation

One of the highlights of a school calendar is the annual graduation evening. A survey in Ontario provided the following information. Seven schools reported that 91 Grade VIII and 17 Grade X students would be graduating this month. Obtaining speakers for this occasion seems to be a yearly problem. Ministers are usually polled first and then educators or people in the community who are somehow "qualified." Perhaps it would be wise to omit this point on a graduation program once in a while. There seems to be a number of other options which could just be as meaningful. Besides, the people who are usually asked to speak can often barely find the time or are sometimes not suitable as graduation speakers.

Other activities which took place in the various schools were:

- picture taking
- dinner for the graduates, followed by an assembly
- presentation of diplomas and gifts (Bibles, commentaries, a book, rings, and pens)
- a speech from the class representative or valedictorian
- contributions from other grades
- a farewell to departing teachers

Congratulations to all those who have completed another stage in their education!

\* \* \*

## B. The Annual Headache (One final turn!)

Various points of view have been expressed in CLARION about teachers' salaries, hiring procedures, etc. A few months ago, I mentioned that this topic would be dealt with one more time. One letter was received and has been printed in this column for your consideration.

Allow me to make a few personal remarks.

1. It is not true that annual contracts allow teachers more bargaining power which may be abused. Most teachers would rather see a system of continuous employment or a permanent contract. This contract would provide stipulations regarding resignations and other important em-

ployment considerations. Salary increases would be evaluated along the same basis as in various businesses. The present system is inadequate — boards will agree too, I would think. However, let's not blame it for teacher's militancy (as some claim) to hold the school at ransom in February or March.

2. A teacher's wage should be based on a number of factors. Qualifications and experience are presently the two main criteria which are used by school boards. Other factors such as being the second wage-earner or having special needs are often controversial. The more a school board takes these factors into consideration, the more disputes will occur. If teachers are paid according to the role they have in the overall school effort, further controversies will erupt. Whether we like it or not, a salary based on qualifications and experience is still the most equitable to all. It is extremely difficult to determine a *fair* annual salary. Teachers should not compare themselves with those who teach in the secular system, because equity would never be possible unless there is full provincial funding for private schools. On the other hand, school boards should not hide behind the statement of "that's all we can afford." The operation of a Christian school should never be undertaken unless it can be done properly. Let's not give way to some sort of misguided zeal which excludes a sober look at the proper financing and the expected costs.

3. The number of teachers at the moment is not large enough to fill all the vacancies. (I suppose that if teachers ever wanted to organize themselves for "militant action," now would be the time.) No matter how one studies this problem, the lack of *security* always seems to come to the foreground. Somehow, men and women who are contemplating a possible teaching career, often refrain from doing so for financial reasons or because of the various aspects which are associated with teaching in a parental school.

Male teachers, especially, must have the assurance that working in our schools may be a lifetime com-

mitment and not have the fear of becoming a highly priced commodity after a while, which is simply too expensive for a school's budget.

Much more could be said about this topic. Hopefully the various points of view expressed in SCHOOL CROSSING will stimulate further discussion in mutual trust and harmony. Let's not forget, after all, that all of us are working towards one common aim in the field of Reformed education!

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## C. News from the Schools

a. "Some concern was expressed with salary schedules for "junior high" and how this is to tie in with elementary and high school schedules. The high schools presently have a higher salary schedule than the League salary suggests, yet the teacher qualifications could be the same. It is suggested that the committee address this item."

(Minutes of a recent meeting of the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies)

An appropriate bit of news in the light of other comments made in this column!

b. The outside appearance of our schools is important. The building and grounds should be kept neat and presentable. The *Credo Courier* (Brampton/Toronto) reports:

Again we count on the membership for maintaining the school grounds. May we remind you of the following points?

1. All grass areas are to be cut.
2. Check whether trees need water. If so, please water them.
3. Persons marked with (x) are in charge. They obtain the necessary keys and make sure that there is enough gasoline (regular) and oil.
4. Keys can be obtained from the Maintenance Committee.
5. When finished, clean mowers of grass and dirt.
6. Dates given below are Saturdays. If a Friday night or Monday night suits you better, discuss it with the person in charge.
7. Feel free to take your own lawn-mower along — same for edge

trimmers, etc.

8. Have fun.
- c. What a teacher would never know if he did not grade papers:
  1. A litre is a nest of young baby animals.
  2. The cuckoo does not lay its own eggs.
  3. A circle is a line which meets its other end without ending.
  4. The dodo is a bird that is nearly decent now.
  5. To remove air from a flask, fill the flask with water, tip the water out and put the cork in quick.
  6. It is a well-known fact that a deceased body warps the mind.
  7. For dog-bite: Put the dog away for several days. If he has not recovered then kill it.
  8. Dew is formed on the leaves when the sun shines on them and makes them perspire.
  9. A person should take a bath once in the summertime and not quite so often in the winter.
  10. Algebraic symbols are used when you do not know what you are talking about.
  11. The pistol of a flower is its only protection against insects.
  12. To collect fumes of sulphur: hold a deacon over a flame in a test tube.
  13. To remove dust from the eye: pull the eye over the nose.
  14. For head colds: use an agonizer to spray nose until it drops into your throat.

(from the *Newsletter of Coaldale Christian School*)

d. We've finally got our piano! It's a Nordheimer, complete with bench, new felts and all the ivories. Best of all, it looks nice and sounds great. A very special thanks to the piano fund manager, Jack Schoeman, assisted by Karl Csicsai. These two came up with all the fund-raising ideas, counted and wrapped money, made the deposits — they were the real workers behind the scenes.

Special mention should also be made of those who made an extra effort. Geraldine Bos and Gerald Smink, who sold the most figurines; the 10B class, who won the Thermometer Contest (followed very closely by 12A); Bill VanVeen who ate the most hot dogs; Janice Dykstra, who sold the most spices; and all the many others who sold figurines and spices, ate hot dogs, contributed to the Penny Bank, and participated to the Thermometer Contest.

The piano now stands in the library as tangible evidence of hard

work and determination of the students of Guido de Brès High School, Grades 9 to 12, 1981/1982. Thanks to one and all.

(from Guido de Brès High School bulletin)

e. In some school bulletins I notice that there was a discussion on a decision concerning extra time for the principal to attend to non-teaching duties. More and more it seems there is a recognition that in order for principals to do their jobs properly, they require more time away from the classroom (teaching that is) and help with some of the "administrative" duties. Though perhaps somewhat belated, the recognition is nevertheless welcome. The principals can and ought to play an important role as educational leaders in their schools and communities. When most of one's energy is consumed in teaching, it is difficult to be a guide to others and be a creative leader as well.

(from the editor of the *Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association Magazine*)

#### D. Incoming Mail

While I sympathize with some of the points raised by Dr. Scholtens in a recent edition of "School Crossing", the conclusion he draws re: teachers' salaries represents a dangerously regressive course of action. I refer to his suggestion that teachers' salaries ought to be based on "need" as well as training, experience, and responsibility.

There are two primary reasons why "need" ought not to be a factor in developing proper remuneration for teachers, or for that matter anyone receiving consideration as satisfaction for work performed. The first reason arises out of civil law. The second reason arises out of the mandate and capacity of school boards to determine need in a just and reasonable manner.

##### a. Civil Law

I need not elaborate on the incumbent duty of all Christians to respect and abide by the spirit and principles of our Civil Law. Dr. Scholtens, however, registers reservations against the principle of "Equal Pay for Equal Work," by stating that it is both "secular" and "unbiblical." I suspect that closer inspection of Scripture would alter Dr. Scholtens' position to the point where he has to agree with me that this principle is indeed very biblical. I will only agree

with his present position in so far that, in our present age, the practice of this principle may often be considered unbiblical.

##### b. Mandate and Capacity of School Boards

Under this broad heading we must consider both, whether "determining need" is compatible with the mandate of school boards, and whether school boards may morally assume this capacity. We should clarify that the task of determining need is incumbent on that segment of our community which is directly involved in administering the Mission of Mercy to the poor and the destitute.

The primary mandate of school boards and school societies concerns maintaining and operating Christian schools. While there are many and various tasks in performing this mandate, it requires very little imagination to conclude that administering the mission of mercy is incompatible with this primary mandate.

It is equally questionable whether school boards may morally assume the capacity to assess the needs of a limited minority of the community. Indeed I suggest that it is unacceptable to have the majority of the community determine the bounds of an acceptable lifestyle for a minority of the community. This situation is even more untenable in communities such as ours, where (as Dr. Scholtens points out) relatively few of our members pursue post-secondary school education with a view to further exploiting their God-given talents in all forms of kingdom work. It hardly needs stating that teachers form part of that small minority.

Rather than incorporating archaic and unbiblical concepts under the guise of "new and innovative methods of distributing a finite sum" for teachers' salaries, I suggest that we must reassess the value we place on education. If we continue to use our schools as glorified day care centres until our children are old enough to go out and work to support our schools, then we may as well close up our schools now. On the other hand, if we value education as a means to realizing the potential of our God-given talents, then it will become equally clear that that value must be reflected in the manner we establish fair and reasonable remuneration for our teachers. The only reasonable factors in determining fair teachers' salaries are those which



are commensurate with the value we place on education, i.e.: experience, education, and responsibility. Not only must the schools fulfill their task of impressing the value of education, but this task must also be powerfully reinforced from the pulpit and in the home.

This letter would be incomplete without briefly addressing the problem at hand. The first problem which impedes the progress of Christian education concerns the false notion that "planning" is "unReformed." Planning without Christ-centred motivation is indeed un-Reformed; but planning in the context of kingdom work is simply a fundamental aspect of good stewardship.

It is agreed that our schools operate with limited financial resources which become infinitely more limited as the economy slows down. The proper course of action entails an assessment of our financial resources as well as the financial resources required to conduct specific educational programs. When this assessment is carried out for the year ahead as well as the potential for up to five years in the future, then it becomes clear that the limits of the financial resources God has placed at our disposal will define which programs we can put in place.

To add a measure of stability to the system, it would seem reasonable that after an initial probationary year, teachers ought to be offered 2 to 5 year contracts tied to an annually revised salary grid. Revising the grid on an annual basis will facilitate bringing new teachers on stream each year as well as adjusting to account for cost of living increases. Finally as a gesture of goodwill and common sense, one or two board members familiar with contracts ought to sit down with prospective appointees and fully clarify both the performance and financial ramifications of potential contracts.

I fully believe that if we followed the above steps we would go a long way towards minimizing the adversary type of relationship which often exists between school boards and their teachers. The solution does not lie in petty concessions but in positive stewardship.

Leonard Lodder  
Guelph

#### E. *Something to Think About*

Is it not ironical that in a planned society of controlled workers given compulsory assignments, where religious expression is suppressed, the

press controlled, and all media of communication censored, where a puppet government is encouraged but denied any real authority, where great attention is given to efficiency and character reports, and attendance at cultural assemblies is compulsory, where it is avowed that all will be administered to each according to his needs and performance required from each according to his abilities, and where those who flee are tracked down, returned and punished for trying to escape — in short, the milieu of the typical North American secondary school — we attempt to teach "the democratic system"?

(from *School Administration: Thoughts on Organization and Purpose*)

To everyone: have a good summer! May the Lord protect us all. Until September, 1982, Deo Volente.

NICK VANDOOREN

(From now on please mail your bulletins, letters and other contributions for SCHOOL CROSSING to John Calvin School, 607 Dynes Rd., Burlington, ON L7N 2V4)

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## PRESS RELEASE

of the Classis "Ontario-South," held June 9, 1982, at London, Ontario.

1. *Opening.* On behalf of the convening Church of Hamilton, br. H. Van Veen opens the meeting. He suggests the brethren sing Ps. 121:1. He reads Phil. 3:1-12, and leads in prayer. A word of welcome is extended to all present.

2. *Credentials.* Br. Van Veen requests the delegates from the Church of Grand Rapids to check the credentials. It is reported that the Churches are duly represented. The Churches of Smithville and Grand Rapids have instructions.

3. *Constitution of Classis.* Br. Van Veen asks the brethren Rev. M. Werkman, Rev. J. De Jong, and Rev. P. Kingma to take their respective offices of chairman, clerk and assessor.

The chairman, Rev. M. Werkman, relates the following facts: as to the Church of Chatham, Rev. Van Rietschoten's acceptance of the call; as to the Church of Smithville, its minister's completion of his studies; as to the Church of London, the Rev. De Jong's call from the Church of Carman, Manitoba; as to the Church of Hamilton, disappointment regarding efforts to find a missionary as yet.

4. *Adoption of the Agenda.* It is decided that this Classis will have the Question Period ad Art. 41 C.O. in the morning session. The Agenda is adopted.

5. *Question Period ad Art. 41 C.O.* Two Churches ask advice in disciplinary matters. Advice is given in closed session.

6. *Reports.* a. The Church of Chatham presents a report ad Art. 19 C.O. Hearing this report Classis decides to maintain the contribution at \$8.00 per communicant member through 1982;

b. The Church of Lincoln reports that the books of the classical quaestor are found in good order;

c. The Church at Watford requests that the report regarding the Archives be presented at the next Classis;

d. Church visitors report on their visits to the Churches of Chatham and London.

7. *Instructions.* The Church of Grand Rapids asks Classis advice as to the date and place of the Regional Synod for 1982.

Classis advises the Church of Grand Rapids to convene Regional Synod 1982 on November 10, 1982, at Lincoln, Ontario. The place of Lincoln instead of Grand Rapids is chosen in order to keep travel expenses as low as possible.

The Church of Smithville receives an answer to a question regarding church visitation.

8. *Approbation of the Call to the Rev. J. Van Rietschoten.* Classis approves the call subject to the local approbation of the call by the congregation, and requests the Church of Chatham to report about this approbation at the next Classis.

The Church of Chatham requests representation of the Churches in the classical district. Rev. M. Werkman is appointed.

9. *Arrangement Next Classis.*

Date: September 8, 1982.

Convening Church: the Church of Lincoln.  
Time: 10 a.m.

Place: London, Ontario.

Moderamen: Rev. W. Huizinga, chairman; Rev. M. Werkman, clerk; Rev. J. De Jong, assessor.

10. *Adoption of the Acts.* They are read and adopted.

11. *Press Release.* It is read and approved.

12. *Personal Question Period* is made use of.

13. *Censure ad Art. 43 C.O.* The chairman concludes that it needs not to be applied.

14. *Closing.* After the ladies have been thanked for their services Rev. Werkman suggests the brethren sing Ps. 116:7, 10. He then leads in prayer of thanksgiving.

For Classis June 9, 1982,  
P. KINGMA

# BOOK REVIEW

W.P. Blitchington, *The Christian Woman's Search for Self-Esteem*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982, 166 pp. Hardcover, \$8.95 (U.S.).

This book identifies the plight of women today, where there is great pressure for them to define themselves differently. The author suggests that we are turning into a society featuring the "masculinized" female, and the "feminized" male. It is not too clear what this means, but it is an indication that women are not the only ones who stand to suffer from some of the ideas that are being promoted.

The main thesis which Blitchington tries to develop is that we should have a much greater appreciation for what makes us unique and different as males and females. The author makes a strong pitch for innate biological differences which then prescribe specific sex roles. Hence, he will argue that women are biologically more sensitive and passive, while men are by nature much more aggressive and striving. While there is a fair bit of truth in this, it also tends to be an oversimplification which would not resolve the so-called "battle of the sexes" as we experience it today. The suggestion is that "women act as a source of control over sexual activity through their greater ability to live without it and through their need to keep sex and love closely connected" (p. 108). By giving some careful thought to the statement it should become clear that it paints a rather sordid picture of male sexuality, and the man's animalistic drive to satisfy his basic appetites, and to seek sex without intimacy. If it is true that males are generally more intrusive and dominating in sexual relations, it may be as much related to societal pressures for males to be "macho" and tough. We may consider that in the beginning this was not so, and that the male can be tender and caring without his wife telling him to be so.

The author provides a more balanced view in chapter 6, when he describes six types of marital relationships. The book would have had more impact if the author had made this more of a starting point. For it is in a good Christian marriage that the different styles and dispositions are worked out through a lot of struggle and a willingness to give and take. Blitchington rightly states that the key is "the willingness of the two to use their own strengths, appreciate those of the spouse, and learn to control their own weaknesses" (p.100).

A review should not extrapolate isolated sections from a book, but it is worth-

while to mention the author's treatment of the sixth relationship, namely the "independent woman/submissive man relationship." While Blitchington's attempt to explain the phenomenon of the independent wife from a psychological perspective is distracting, he makes a good point in emphasizing that this relationship is often the most problematic, and the most difficult one to balance. This discovery should not be much of a surprise to Reformed readers who are aware of what Scripture states about submissiveness and headship. What is not clear is what can be done to modify such a relationship when the traits sometimes persist through the life of a marriage (an interesting topic for a Ministers' Workshop, or an Office-bearers' Conference).

The main value of this book is that it makes one think how we are so easily influenced by stereotypes, and it does succeed in telling women to accept certain differences, and not to fall into the trap of competing with men, or to contribute to the hard-hitting "every-man-for-himself" mentality. However, the message also needs to be directed to the men who may need to reexamine how *their* roles have been molded, and that they could become more sensitive and understanding without the fear of becoming "feminized." Some of the criticisms of the book have been developed above, and to this should be added the concern that Blitchington is much too free in mixing "findings" from his own professional field (Counseling Psychology) with a number of opinions that are commonly held by Christians. This seems to be becoming more of a trend in books written to Christians — a kind of double-barrel effect, where the proof of modern science is added to statements that are really much too simple, and tend to close the discussion on an area of life which is complex and should not be reduced in richness and diversity. A further point which is rather aggravating is the fact that, while the author professes to be a Christian, his references are almost exclusively from his own field, and some are rather suspect in terms of being edifying reading. To make matters worse, there was not a single reference to any part of the Bible in the entire book!

While the book brings about some interesting issues for debate, there are too many weaknesses, which would lead to the recommendation that you save your money and *not* add this book to your personal library.

H.C. VANDOOREN

With thankfulness to the Lord, who brought us together, we announce our engagement:

SANDRA VEENEMA  
and  
ANDY VANDERVEEN

June 19, 1982.

R.R. #6  
Dresden, Ontario N0P 1M0.  
R.R. #5  
Thamesville, Ontario N0P 2K0.

*Love bears all things, believes all things, endures all things.*  
I Corinthians 13:7

KATHLEEN MENKEN  
and  
RALPH KNEG

Engaged June 16, 1982.

119 Queensdale Crescent  
Guelph, Ontario N1H 6W6.

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. Engaged:

RITA BREDENHOF  
and  
HENK VISSCHER

3986 - 184th Street  
Surrey, B.C. V3S 4N8.

With thanks to the Giver and Sustainer of life, we announce the birth of our first child, a son:

REUBEN GERRITT

Born: May 27, 1982.

Clarence and Yvonne Winkelaar  
39376 Wellsline Road, R.R. #2  
Abbotsford, B.C. V2S 4N2.

With thankfulness to the Lord, the Creator of life, we wish to announce the birth of our third daughter:

KRISTA LEONA

Born: June 13, 1982.

Peter and Geraldine Bosscher  
(nee Vanderwoude)

A sister for: *Alicia* and *Nadine*  
5209 Suncrest Road  
Burlington, Ont. L7L 3W9.