



**Clarion**  
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# HEAVEN & HELL<sub>2</sub>

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*In the first instalment we looked at some current views on "heaven" and "hell," and noted that both are specific places with specific histories. We now take a closer look at some pertinent Scriptural data.*

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## *Understanding Symbols*

When we now speak of heaven and hell, we mean heaven and hell as they have come about *after* the Day of Judgment, as eternal realities in this "finished" state. In his mentioned works, K. Schilder, too, sought to speak about heaven and hell as they exist *after* the great day of judgment.

We are to keep in mind that the Bible, when speaking about heaven and hell as ultimate realities, speaks in *symbolic* language. The main question is: How are we to interpret these symbols? Should we, for example, imagine the "lake of fire" to be a "real" lake, a huge basin where waves of fire flow back and forth, always scourging, never devouring? Should we indeed imagine ourselves walking through pearly gates on streets of gold? You might know that in the Middle Ages these things were taken and depicted quite literally. How are we to understand them?

K. Schilder is convinced that it is all a figurative manner of speaking,<sup>22</sup> not *merely* symbolic, but *essentially* symbolic.<sup>23</sup> This means that the given symbols (fire, darkness, gold) present us with an idea of how it is, a manner of speaking adapted to our world and our ability to comprehend.

We must interpret them in this way, for otherwise they would be mutually exclusive. How can "eternal fire" (which generates light) be the same as "utter darkness"? Only if we take these "pictures" for what they truly represent can we begin to understand what is meant. The language of the Scriptures here is therefore indeed essentially symbolic: we are given a portrait of true and existing realities.

## *The Hell: Worm and Fire, Gnashing in Darkness*

The Scriptures use four main "symbols" for hell: a *worm* not dying, a *fire* not quenched (Mark 9:48), outer *darkness* and *gnashing* of teeth (Matthew 8:12).

The worm and the fire, you will remember, are connected to the garbage heap in the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna). They speak of a state of death, of decomposition. Yet this death is not a form of non-existence and this "decomposition" never ends! Schilder has seen the worm as a symbol of destruction from the *inside* out and the fire as destruction from the *outside* in.<sup>24</sup> It is to have death *within* you and coming *upon* you. It is a state of the "living dead," and is therefore in the Bible called "the second Death" (Revelation 20). It is, paradoxically, a state of always dying and yet never being dead, of not being able to die because you are essentially dead! Even death — in the sense as we know it today — cannot bring relief any longer.

Death, in the Bible, is always a matter of being *separated*, being cut

off from the land of the living; in this case especially: forever cut off from the Creator and the Heavenly Father. It is being ex-communicated, having fallen out of the covenant, with *no prospect* of grace and forgiveness.

The "outer darkness" strengthens this picture. It is an eternal groping around, with no way out. There is no light at the end of the tunnel, so to speak. And this leads to a situation of eternal *despair*. The "gnashing of teeth" especially denotes this despair, this self-accusing and self-despising. People gnash their teeth in anger, frustration, and despair. In hell there is *knowledge* of God. The inhabitants of hell have "seen Him" who came with the clouds (Revelation 1:7). They *know* of the great victory of Christ and the vindication of the godly. All hell will be filled with the *knowledge* of God, but there is no communion with Him! One cannot share his pain and despair with others; each has his own fulness of despair. The gnashing of teeth goes on and on; this means, it is a situation one never gets used to. It is *eternal* despair and anxiety. In hell the ungodly will know with total clarity that they have FALLEN as sons of God and are destined to dwell forever with the demons they have served. The ungodly have lost all touch with their origin and purpose, being damned forever, and *knowing* this in despair unending.

Such is the symbolic language of Scripture. And, indeed, we cannot say that these are *mere* symbols. For if the symbols are already frightening and terrible, how dark must the reality of hell be?

## Heaven: The Dwelling Place of God With Man

The symbols used for heaven speak of exactly the *opposite*: God dwelling with man, and men in harmony. The symbols used here are those of a *tent*, a *temple*, and a *city*. A "tent" speaks of a *home* where a family dwells. It speaks of God living with men "under one roof." A "temple" speaks of *worship*: there will be no temple there, no particular place of worship, for men will worship God everywhere in a never-ending Sabbath. All serve God; all of life is service. And a "city" speaks of a *community* where men live together in everlasting peace, all sharing the blessed joy of living with God! To sum this up: heaven is an eternal home where all men and women worship in perfect communion.

K. Schilder has emphasized that we should not seek heaven for that which is *lacking*: no pain, no sickness, no death, etc.<sup>25</sup> We should seek heaven because of Him who is *present*: the Triune God! We may then "see" God, face to face. We may know with amazing clarity and depth the "things of God." We will know as never before what *sin* really is and know as never before how great the grace and love of God in Christ really is! This will be the eternal ground for our everlasting praise and gratitude.

So the beauty of heaven is that everywhere I am home, with God, in fellowship with men, overseeing and rejoicing in the greatness of God and His works, walking in perfect service and praise; this is the essence of heaven.

The "new heaven and the new earth," the combined dwelling-place of God with men, will, of course, be a *different* place than where we now live. The changes will be immense. Our Lord said, "Heaven and earth will pass away . . ." (Matthew 24:35). And Paul said, ". . . the *form* of this world is passing away" (I Corinthians 7:31). It will be a different place, with different relationships. The earth, as we know it today, will disappear, and out of the old God will create a new, purified, and glorified world (II Peter 3). Out of the dissolution of the old will come the constitution of the new! Our existence will change from a vegetative-sexual existence to a non-vegetative-non-sexual existence. Christ has said that we will be like "angels in heaven," who do not need food to live or sexuality to multiply (Mark 12:25). We will have bodies, like the risen Christ has an identifiable

body, yet it will not be corruptible flesh but a "spiritual body" (I Corinthians 15:44), a body fit for heaven! No need for food and marriage for the preservation and continuation of the human race, for the number is full and the body perfected!

Much more than this we cannot say about life with God in heaven. The Bible gives us no geography of the new earth. We will not find the old world back, nor long for it. We will not find the old relationships back, nor long for them. We will then see with a new vision and a total vision the meaning of history and eternity.

Here already we find our basic answer to the question, "Will we recognize our loved ones from this earth?" And connected to this, the other question, "Will we not miss those loved ones who have been lost eternally?" K. Schilder has called such questions "typical cemetery questions,"<sup>26</sup> questions asked in our present situation, questions asked in grief during a sense of deep loss. But when the situation has changed, will the questions not disappear? Some writers claim that there will be an extensive form of recognition: we will recognize parents, preachers, teachers, and friends.<sup>27</sup> But the Scriptures do not indicate this. We will "recognize" and know one another in a perfect (and thus infinitely different) manner in Christ as brothers and sisters. I cannot say to what extent this "recognition" is based on "recollection" of former relationships. Will we miss some loved ones? Would it not diminish our perfect joy if we knew that some of our loved ones were lost? Let us not expect any sentimentality in heaven. Then we will know perfectly what we already know now: there is probation, there is hell! But we will rest and rejoice in the sovereignty of God. We will glorify Him in eternity for His *justice* and mercy! The "bond of blood" and family ties of this earth will not prevail in heaven over the bond of the Word and the Spirit.

### Degrees of Judgment and Glory?

A final question which might be asked with respect to both heaven and hell is whether there will a difference in place and position, either in the glorification or the condemnation. K. Schilder has written about *pluriformity* in both heaven and hell. We should not expect "grey masses" there, without distinctions. There is a difference in place and position among the angels in heaven and among men on earth today. Would it

be different then?

Our Lord has warned that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in judgment than for Chorazin and Bethsaida (Luke 10:13ff.). And Paul has written, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, *according to what he has done in the body*" (II Corinthians 5:10). Having more or less knowledge of the way of salvation is one of the measures of divine distinction.<sup>28</sup> Those who knew, receive greater punishment than those who didn't. And the qualification of the glory of each in heaven depends on the answer to the question, "What has someone meant for the service of God and the way of salvation?"<sup>29</sup> Receiving greater gifts and responsibility and using the given talents well, means being placed over more. In His judgment, God gives a just reward. And everyone will receive the *full* measure of glory or wrath according to his works.

The above does not undo the fact that all punishment is because of one's own sins and that all reward is a matter of *grace* in Christ Jesus. If we have done good, it is Christ who has worked in us and through us. We share only in *His* reward and glory. The above does warn us that we shall not despise God's grace. Those who are convinced that heaven is their eternal home, being ingrafted into Christ by true faith, will and shall bring forth fruits of gratitude. For who will taste the beginning of perfect joy without having a beginning of obedience.

Meanwhile, the history of heaven, earth, and hell is rapidly drawing to its close. The great catastrophe is near. The home eternal in the heavens is being prepared. Also the lake of fire. All men are being made ready to meet God and His Anointed. And it will be either everlasting blessed fellowship with God or eternal excommunication.

The Church of Jesus Christ is not afraid of the final events, but looks forward to the great Day with joyful expectation. Thus the Church concludes its confession with these words, "Therefore we expect that great day with most ardent desire, to the end that we may fully enjoy the promises of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, AMEN.

" 'Amen, come Lord Jesus' (Rev. 22:20)"

# The Competitive Spirit

In *Una Sancta* of Sept. 18 and Oct. 2, 1982, I found an interesting article about "The Competitive Spirit." It appeared in the "Newsletter" of the Calvinistic Political and Social Association which is inserted in *Una Sancta*. Br. W. Geurts, a teacher in Armadale, wrote it. First it served as a paper at a teachers' conference in Armadale, "where it was well debated." I will pass it on to you in its entirety.

## 1. Introduction

Competition is defined as a "striving for something in opposition." Such striving, occurring in a vast variety of forms, is a very strong social force in our Western world. It has a tremendous influence on many aspects of society, from sports and business to national and international politics.

Yet we seldom, if ever, consider this influence. Personally, I cannot recall ever having heard an introduction or lecture, or having read an article on it.

The desire to write this article came to me after having watched children at play, and observing how eager they always are to compete and win and how quick they seem to be to tell of their success over others. This competitive spirit so often seen in youth (as well as adults) raises the question whether it is a healthy state of affairs. Should we as Christians foster this attitude? And, if not, are we not fostering it right now, whether conscientiously or not?

My conviction is that we should not foster this attitude or spirit but rather subdue and minimize it. In this paper I will attempt to explain my point of view, since convictions must be soundly based on Scriptural norms to be of value to us as Christians. It is hoped that you will find my presentation reasonably clear and understandable.

## 2. Nature of Competitive Spirit

Let's start by trying to understand the nature of this competitive spirit, which seems so strong in many of us, both young and old. What is it that makes us want to win a race? Or beat someone at a Monopoly game? Or be on the winning side of a soccer match? Is it the fact that the winner gets a

prize? I don't think so. Oh, yes, a small child may sometimes compete for an attractive prize, but as we get a bit older this is no longer the case. For example, there is no prize for winning a chess game, or for being first in an informal swim race across the pool. In fact, at very few of the many competitive events in our lives are prizes even handed out. Any prizes which may occasionally be handed out normally have little or no intrinsic value; take, for example, a ribbon or cup.

Certainly, prizes can be ruled out as a reason for this uniquely human phenomenon. So we can say that reward in a physical form is not the motivator for competitive behaviour.

What else is there? Could we say that maybe it is the joy found in doing something skilfully? Needless to say, this question can easily be answered with a resounding "No, it is not." Logic tells us that the skill used to win may well be the same as when we lost. It all depends on who else is in the competition, plus other possible factors! Yet it is certainly true that we feel quite different after winning than after losing!! So again, we must eliminate this as a possible reason for the competitive spirit.

We could go on for quite some time considering various possible reasons, but I think it would be fruitless. Sufficient has been said that on seriously reflecting on this point we must all admit that the reason why we compete is simply because we enjoy winning. Winning boosts our ego. Whether we have won as individuals, as members of a team, or even just as supporters of a team, it makes really little difference. When we lose, it hurts our ego. Losing dents our self-esteem. Sometimes we can be quite touchy about such a loss. Let's face it, we are all poor losers!

At this point, then, it can be said (and I think, without fear of contradiction) that competition is so strong an influence because it enhances our ego, or, to say it slightly differently, it improves our self-image. This is basically why we like to win and are not so keen on losing.

Here I like to make a remark before we continue. It is more a question. Is it not often so that in the way of competing and winning a person builds

up self-confidence? Some youngsters have enough self-confidence. And so do some older people. Are there not others who build it up in the way of competing and (sometimes also) winning? And is it not so that a person needs self-confidence in order to be able to accomplish something? Or is all this also humanistic psychology and humanistic reasoning? But let us continue to listen to br. Geurts.

## 3. Origin and Development of Competitive Spirit

The question that comes up next is whether we are born with this competitive spirit or whether we acquire it somewhere along the road of life. This should not require too lengthy a discussion, I think.

It is evident to all who have ever watched little children at play that they already have it in them. Parents often use it for their own ends: "Look Johnny, can you eat as fast as he can?" "Who can do the neatest job?" etc.

However, can this inherited sense of competition be strengthened or weakened by the upbringing? If we acknowledge that we are born with it, then the above question is a crucial one for our discussion.

Well, research done by anthropologists supports the viewpoint that the "social environment" certainly does affect competitiveness as a human trait. The term "social environment" means upbringing in its largest extent, including not only parental influence but also other factors such as cultural demands of society, peer group pressures, etc.

In some tribal cultures anthropologists have found very little competition within the tribal group when compared to others. Even in communist Russia and China, children are not so competitive individually as compared to those in Western countries, according to some educationalists who have studied the Russian schooling system.

Although such studies as mentioned above must be considered with caution, they do support the following suggestion which appears both reasonable and somewhat self-evident. This suggestion is "that the place of an individual in his society has a great influence on his competitive attitudes."

The more social ties an individual has in his place in society, the less he can act independently and competitively. The more freedom there is, the more opportunity there is for the development of it.

We can see this phenomenon quite clearly in the Western democracies. People are becoming more and more competitive in so many ways while family and other social ties are loosened at an ever faster pace. Especially in the West the individual has become very much aware of his or her own uniqueness and rights while at the same

time losing all sense of social and moral responsibility to others and to society as a whole.

Therefore, I think, it is reasonable to say that "individualism stimulates competitive attitudes."

I hope that you can agree with this statement even though it has not been proven in any sort of "scientific" manner.

An important question, of course, is what the cause is of the fact that children in China and Russia are less competitive. Does that have to do with the fact that communism rejects free enterprise, and that all people are supposed to work for the state, and that in that way not only competition but also incentive is all but killed? Br. Geurts continues:

#### 4. Where Scripture places the Competitive Spirit

Having clarified (hopefully!) something of the nature and development of the spirit of competition, we now must face the issue in the light of what Scripture teaches us about man. We can see humanity (and ourselves) clearly only in the perfect mirror of God's revelation!

If we can agree on what I have stated about the nature of the competitive spirit in man — that it is a booster of the ego and self-esteem — then it must follow that it is very much part of the fallen nature of man. Up to now I have on purpose used the modern terms of "ego" and "self-esteem." The biblical term which includes these concepts must be the word "pride." The word "pride," as used in the Bible, generally describes the attitude of man (or a man) in which he thinks that he is achieving something himself. Pride is a self-confidence in one's own ability. It is a word which describes a man's high self-image.

Now let us be honest about this; those nice modern terms, invented by humanistic psychologists, sound a lot better, also to us, Reformed Bible-reading people! Such terms do not have the connotation of sinfulness, a connotation which the word "pride" does have.

We know about "pride" from our Scripture reading. The Psalms, Proverbs, and prophets are full of warnings about pride in oneself and about God's terrible punishments on the proud.

Yes, we know that human pride is wrong, yet we all would hesitate to put the desire to compete within the realm of human pride.

However, I believe that we *must* place it there, considering what we know about competitiveness.

Note the following Bible passages, if you will.

In Genesis, when Adam and Eve listened to the serpent Satan, was not their first sin that they wanted to be like God, knowing both good and evil? Was this not pride? Was this not at the

same time a terrible manifestation of competitiveness? They wanted to be *like* God!

Later on, was it not the competitive desire to be equally accepted by God which, when rejected, caused Cain's hatred to culminate in Abel's death?

Also think of the rebellion of Koran, Dathan, and Abiram against Moses. Was this not an evil competition for the leadership?

In the New Testament the same proud spirit of pride and competition was shown by the Pharisees and Priests when they saw their own position threatened by our Lord Jesus Christ while He was on earth (John 11:48, 12:19). They were out to win at all cost.

The apostle Paul also warns against a form of competition between followers of the different apostles in I Corinthians 3.

Many other passages from the Scriptures could be quoted.

Hopefully, sufficient has been quoted to illustrate the main point which I made, namely, that the inclination to compete to win is part of our sinful nature.

#### 5. Conclusion

Now many of you may, at this point, want to argue that I have not shown that competition itself is bad, but only that the selfish desire to win over others is sinful.

To such a reaction I can only reply, "That is true" . . . *but is this not enough!* Do we need more to put us on our guard?

Much in sports and recreation is based on competition. More and more time and money is becoming available (also for us and our children!) to pursue such pastimes. It is individual against individual or team against team. In such an environment, it becomes easy for our old nature to gain the upperhand and bring forth such fruits as pride, self-interest, and glory-seeking. In such an environment it becomes all the more difficult to show humbleness, gentleness, peace, love — in other words, the fruits of the Spirit, of the new man.

The point which needs to be stressed is that to encourage competition in whatever form is to encourage something which our old nature can readily adopt for sinful ends. It appears a lot less suitable for use by our new nature to encourage fruits of faith, and ultimately the glory of God. In fact, the more one considers it, the more difficult it becomes to see how any competition can lead to such fruits as given in Scripture (see Gal. 5).

Having come this far with the argument, we cannot help but arrive at a conclusion which will not be very popular with any of us, but which, I believe, must follow — namely, this:

Competition lends itself better to the strengthening of the old

nature of man than to the exercising of the God-given new nature.

Having reached this conclusion, we must be very careful not to go to extremes. One must not lose out of sight the positive values which could be shown to be present at many of the events, during school or leisure time, where some form of competition is practised, such as:

1. Experiencing the communion of saints;
2. Healthy exercise for body or mind;
3. Beneficial break from work or/and study;
4. Opportunity to act together; and possibly many others.

However, on giving this positive aspect some further thought, it becomes evident that such "benefits" are the result of the occasion itself rather than the result of the competitive aspect. This is a fine but *very important* distinction. In other words, these good things occur because the participants come *together* and do something *together*, and they are not related to the winning or losing.

In fact, one could be very blunt and say that these benefits happen *in spite* of the competitive aspects and its effects. (I think many a soccer or volleyball game would bear this out!)

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Now having said all this, what effect should this awareness of the dangers of competition have on us as Christian parents (and teachers)?

May I suggest a few areas for consideration?

- (1) Place less emphasis on winning in games and sports and more on sportsmanship and concern for others.
- (2) Encourage participation by all and not just the able ones. In *no case* show preference for those with more ability. *Never* foster individualism in team efforts. Do not create "star players."
- (3) Forget about prizes for everything, whether silver cups, money, ribbons, or a lolly.
- (4) Encourage non-competitive activities and games. These may be difficult to find. Develop new ones.
- (5) Above all, let's remember that God has given us all different talents and capabilities. Let us concentrate on those which are profitable to the service in His Kingdom.

I hope you will note that in the above list, I did not take the extreme position and say that all sports or activities with competitive aspects must be dropped. Although my fourth area for consideration points in this direction, I see the great difficulty facing us if we try to go all the way with this. Personally, I am not sure how far we must go as responsible Christians.

However, I do see that it is the right direction. It is also part of our sanctification and the "Battle of Faith" in which we all are to be awake and at work.

In my opinion teacher Geurts has

served his listeners and readers with these reflections and considerations. Is it not so that in games, in sports, things easily run out of control, precisely because that competitive spirit takes hold of the players. Why is it so hard, e.g. to play hockey just for the fun? Why is the fun out of it then? Why is it no longer as exciting? In playing hockey and other sports just for fun, those who are less good, but who would still like to play, are not left out any longer. That is much more Christian, indeed. Sports in the competitive spirit, with hot tempers and anger and all the consequences of it, is not truly Christian, is it?

But I would like to add something. Mr. Geurts spoke about Russia and China, where the children seem to be less competitive than in our Western world. Here we are more individualistic. One thing comes to my mind here: What about the Russian athletes? Do they not really compete in international games? Do they not do everything they can to win the gold? And are they not greatly rewarded when they do win? They are heroes, no less than in the West. Yes, they are heroes, but then to the glory of the communist state. And that is double idolatry. First man, the winner, is glorified, and then also the communist state receives glory and honour. For the State the gold was won.

That brings me to another thought. If we want to do away with the competitive spirit as much as is possible

and good, should we not replace it with something better? Do we otherwise not create a vacuum, in which healthy incentive can be killed and zeal disappear? We are talking here about a Christian life. The apostle Paul says: "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him," Col. 3:17. And: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage but that of many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ," I Cor. 10:31-11:1. Christ did not have to compete. He served God.

I am convinced that our lives would be a lot more Christian, if we would crucify our old competitive (jealous, proud) spirit (= flesh), and put on the new regenerated man, who is a new creation, created after God's image in true righteousness and holiness and in true prophetic knowledge (Eph. 3:24, Col. 3:10). Then we are content with what God has given us in talents and otherwise. If the love for God rules our lives, we have also many incentives and the correct God-pleasing motivation. We want to do everything in our lives — and I mean everything — for Him, to His glory, according to His will, and for the well-being of the neighbour. And is our heavenly Father (who gave us Christ), is our Lord Jesus Christ (our Saviour), is the Holy Spirit (who will dwell in our [sinfull!!] hearts) not fully worth our trying our very best for Him and doing our work and everything as well as we can, because it is for Him? You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your power, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second, like unto it, is: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

Then much selfish competing to build our own (humanistic) pride and self-esteem falls away. Then we have our whole life, our well-being, our salvation, our pride, our self-esteem in Christ as our Lord and Saviour alone. Then our "pride," our "boasting," is in Him, whose imitators, whose obedient disciples, we may be.

Such a Christian life we may and are called to live as adults, also as parents and teachers. Such a Christian life our children in the covenant, God's little ones, may learn to live, from our words and deeds.

J. GEERTSEMA

COMMITTEE FOR THE PUBLICATION OF  
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L.S.

Although we still received some small orders for the new HYMN SECTION, and our stock is depleted, we had to decide to relinquish the idea of ordering a new reprint. The costs might be prohibitive, and the date for the publication of the new Book of Praise is coming closer.

Our advice: if in a congregation several members no longer have this new Hymn section: let the consistory decide to return to the use of the Hymns in the Book of Praise. We all hope that it will be only "for the time being."

The Committee.

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## FROM THE SCRIPTURES

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*“Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send?  
Who is blind as my dedicated one, or blind as the servant of the Lord?”* Isa. 42:19

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# Dedicated Blindness

The words of the prophet at this point clearly form a strong reproach by the LORD concerning the way of life that Israel had adopted. The nation, addressed here as the LORD’s servant, is rebuked because of the persistence of her idolatrous practices in the land of exile. The LORD had revealed Himself and had spoken to them many times, but they simply went on closing their ears to the LORD’s messengers and shutting their eyes to His great wonders. They were deaf and blind as none other could be. The LORD even appears to speak with a sense of dismay and disbelief at the recurring rebelliousness of His people.

Yet these words of reproach also contain an intense appeal from the LORD. As He scolds His people, He also tries to reach them and make them open their eyes again. He does this by forming a contrast between the blindness of the people on the one hand, and the blindness of His special servant on the other. There is a sense in which the prophet brings the reproach of the LORD, and thus speaks of Israel as the Servant of the LORD. That reproach, however, does not exhaust the force of the words. When projected into the future, the prophet’s references to the Servant of the LORD point to that one faithful Servant whom the LORD was sending, Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

It is particularly in the words of this passage that we find a prophetic reference to the Lord Jesus and His coming. In rebuking His people Israel, the LORD God also appeals to them to look to His messenger, His dedicated or perfect one, and the blindness that He exhibits in the world. Indeed, the special messenger of the LORD is included in the group of those who are deaf and blind. But His blindness is definitely not the same! And so the LORD God calls his people once again to awaken, hear, and look at this perfectly faithful messenger, and the blindness that He showed.

Taken in this way, the words of the prophet here describe the work of the LORD’s messenger. How? Well, the Lord Jesus would not show the same blindness as God’s people showed; rather, He would show the *proper* blindness and deafness which the LORD was actually looking for among His people. What kind of blindness was that? It was not blindness to the wonders of the LORD, but blindness to sin and self-interest. The great Servant of the LORD would be deaf to His own wishes and desires; He would be blind to His own rights; His ears would be open only to the voice of the LORD. So He is named the perfectly dedicated One!

Thus, hidden in the words of this reproach, we find a prophetic focus on the Saviour and His work. The reproof of the LORD also becomes a plea which eagerly anticipates the coming of the Messiah, the Dedicated One. What do the words say about Him? We read much the same about Him here as in the beginning of chapter 42, in chapter 53, and in other places. The Lord Jesus will appear in the world as a deaf-mute, and as one who fully yields Himself to the will of His Father. “He will not cry or lift up His voice,” 42:3. “Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth,” 53:7.

It all leads to a remarkable contrast: while the people of the LORD had become deaf and blind to Him by following their own interests and walking after their idols, the Chosen Servant of the LORD is deaf and blind to any self-interest and listens only to the LORD. He is blind as one must be blind. He closes His eyes to the hostility directed against Him. He overlooks the bitter attacks of His accusers, and is deaf to their angry cries. He exhibits dedicated blindness. For while the people have forfeited their rights through their blindness, He, through His perfect innocence and obedience, consistently retains His rights. Yet He never appeals to them or uses them. He is blind to His own rights and *willingly* forfeits them, in order that we may have rights again. Who would have thought that anyone would show this blindness?

Through this dedicated blindness of God’s perfect Servant, we, too, have been ingrafted into the tree of Israel. The LORD has given an even greater gift to us. Now He has *fully* magnified His law and made it glorious in our eyes; for in being blind and deaf to His own will, the Lord Jesus was simultaneously fully obedient to the divine law. He gave His life as a payment for sin; though innocent He became guilty, in order that we might have life. All the blessings of the full obedience of this perfect Servant belong to us. How much more, then, should we not imitate His ways and follow after the same obedience? In other words, rather than being deaf and blind to the grace and goodness of the Father, and so having open eyes and ears for our own selfish interests in the world, should we not shut our ears and eyes to the impulses of the world and our flesh, and so more and more open our ears and eyes to the life-giving law of God? Then we will move from destroying blindness to dedicated blindness; from the deafness that kills to the deafness that serves, and so makes alive.

J. DE JONG



*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.*

#### **SAN DIEGO (RNS)**

Africa is in less danger of being overrun by Marxism than some people think, says Anglican bishop Festo Kivengere of Kigezi, Uganda.

"The danger has been overrated," Bishop Kivengere said in an interview here, asserting that in most African countries Marxism starts at the top and more or less stays there.

"I wouldn't say Marxism is a danger in Africa today because even in countries which have adopted Marxism like Ethiopia and Mozambique and Angola, the general population hardly knows what Marxism is all about," he said. (CN)

It is through these interviews and pieces of information that the eyes are blinded. In each and every communist country it is the "top" which adheres to the Marxist doctrine and uses its position to push through the ideas of this ideology. Russian agents and "helpers" will also see to it that the gain is not lost. And as far as the churches are concerned, what can be expected of them when, according to the Most Reverend Bishop, "Many of them are syncretistic . . . . They take the Christian faith and mix it with the old animism."? VO

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#### **NEW YORK (LCUSA)**

A coalition of religious groups, including the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., released a comprehensive survey here September 23, showing that church membership growth has fallen behind general population growth for the first time in 30 years.

"In the years between 1952 and 1971, the churches were outrunning the population. They had a 46 per-

cent growth rate compared to a growth rate in the U.S. population of 35 percent," according to Drs. William M. Newman and Peter L. Halverson of the University of Connecticut, analysts for the study.

But between 1971 and 1980 the population increased at a rate of 11.5 percent while the church membership grew by 4.1 percent. (CN)

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#### **SALT LAKE CITY (RNS)**

Concerned that their church is often viewed as un-Christian, Mormon leaders announced that a new subtitle is being added to the Book of Mormon proclaiming it to be "Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

The change, which will appear in all future printings of the book, was announced here at the 152nd general conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon).

While Mormons say that they "believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ," it is not a standard Trinitarian affirmation. They hold that God and Jesus Christ are separate entities who have progressed to a divine state, and that individual human beings may also become god and goddesses and creators of world. Unlike Christians, who believe there is one God, Mormons believe the masculine God has a feminine counterpart. (CN)

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#### **WASHINGTON (RNS)**

Enrollment in American private schools dropped by 31 percent from 1964 to 1979, and the ratio of students attending private schools also dropped says a new Census Bureau report.

Most of the loss was in Catholic schools, which enroll the majority of private school students. Catholic schools enrolled two-thirds of all private school students in 1979. During 1965-1979, Catholic school enrollment from kindergarten through high school dropped 44 percent. (CN)

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#### **BANGKOK, THAILAND (EWNS)**

Large house churches in Shanghai, Peking and other major Chinese cities are being forced to discontinue services, a Chinese pastor has confirmed here. During recent months both state and Three-Self Patriotic Movement (the government-recognized Protestant organization) have warned house church leaders not to meet. Under Chinese law, meetings

outside of the church buildings are technically illegal.

One long-time China watcher says many house church Christians will splinter off into several smaller groups, rather than become aligned with the Three Self-Movement. New pressure applied to the popular house churches indicates a possible return to the policies of the 1950's when the Three-Self leaders persecuted those who would not cooperate the China watcher says. (CN)

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#### **MADISON, WIS. (RNS)**

Lutherans and Episcopalians plan their first joint eucharistic service on January 16, at the National Cathedral in the capital, church representatives said here.

The announcements by bishops of the four churches follows recent agreement by Episcopalians and three Lutheran denominations on a plan for "interim sharing of the Eucharist."

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#### **PEKING (RTS & DPA)**

The Chinese-Catholic Church opened its first seminary in Shanghai, according to the official news agency New China.

It says that the first class numbers 36 young men from Shanghai and vicinity and that the seminary is under the direction of the priest Lin Luxian.

The 91-year old bishop Louis Zhang Jiashu, primate of the independently Chinese Catholic Church, said at the opening of the seminary that Roman Catholic seminaries and monasteries were manipulated before by foreign powers and served the interests of capitalism.

The new seminary, he said, has been established exclusively for the training of clergymen who are patriotic and love their religion. (ND)

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#### **WASHINGTON (RNS)**

President Reagan marks Thanksgiving this year with a proclamation asserting that America was set apart by God "to be found by people from every corner of the Earth who had a special love of faith and freedom."

Presidential Thanksgiving proclamations began with Abraham Lincoln in 1863, who was urged to do so by (Mrs.) Sarah J. Hale, editor of Godey's Lady's Book. Thanksgiving is observed officially on the fourth Thursday in November under an Act of Congress

— Continued on page 463.



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## OUTLINE

*Introduction, A Pailful of Education*

1. Educated in Jerusalem for life in Babylon
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    - 1.1.1 Daniel and his three friends; Daniel 1
    - 1.1.2 Paul and the Philippians; Epistle to the Philippians 4:8-13
  - 1.2 Canadian Reformed Young People 1982
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2. Christian Education
  - 2.1 Nic. Wolterstorff, *Educating for Responsible Action*
    - 2.1.1 Riva' educational theories
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3. Living in Babylon as citizen of Jerusalem that is above
  - 3.1 Responsible Christian Action
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    - 3.2.6 The Young People's Societies

*Coda: A Name and a Pail*

*Suggestions for preparatory reading*

**The Book of Daniel, ch. 1.**

The Letter of Paul to the Philippians. Nic. Wolterstorff, *Educating for Responsible Action*, CSI Publ., Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1980.

See also a Review of this book by J. VanRietschoten in *Reformed Perspective*, Vol. 1, No. 5, May 1982, pp. 13, 14.

H. Van Dooren, *Moral Development in Public Schools, Reformed Perspective* Vol. 1, No. 2, Feb. 1982, pp. 10, 11.

# EDUCATED FOR RESPONSIBLE CHRISTIAN ACTION

*Speech delivered at the 1982 Thanksgiving Study Weekend of the YCC in Chatham, Ontario.*

*Daniel and Paul*

Have you ever carried a pail of water and spilled half of it? No doubt, practically everyone has had that experience. You draw a full pail of water. By the time you have arrived at the place where you are to use it you have sloshed half of it.

Now this morning we are not going to speak about the technique of drawing water. But there is an old saying which was often used when I was your age: that a person had received a pailful of education and sloshed half of it. This means that a lot had been invested in us. We had received a tremendous amount of instruction. A pail full! We did not lack. But somehow, along the way, we spilled so much of what we had learned. As a result we did not make use of it.

Daniel had received a pailful of education. Daniel received his pailful of education in Jerusalem, the city of the only true living God. Daniel had three friends: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Daniel's name was, "My God is Judge." Hananiah's name was, "Yahweh is Gracious." Mishael's name meant, "Who is Like God?" Azariah's name meant, "The LORD Yahweh is Helper." These were Jerusalem names. They were names which had meaning with respect to their being boys of Jerusalem, boys of value, royal young princes; and their names expressed what they had learned, what they had been taught. These four boys were transplanted from the area where they had been educated, from the area where the temple of God is, and placed in Babylon.

Now, throughout the Scriptures you will find the name of the city of Babylon contrasted to the name of the City of God. Babylon . . . , the place where the people after the Flood built a big tower. With this tower they were to reach God; with it they would span that abyss, that unbridgeable distance between sinful man and God. With this they would force God to bless them. Babylon . . . , the pride of man, over against the majesty of God. The pride of sinful man would force God to do what man wanted Him to do. Babylon in the land of Shinar. Shinar was the land which is mentioned already in the early chapters of Genesis. Shinar was the land of Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the LORD. He built Nineveh and other cities. There the foundations for empires were laid. The land of Shinar was eventually the land of the city of Babylon with Nebuchadnezzar as king. Nebuchadnezzar erected there his own image to make all people fall down before him. Over this city he exclaimed, "The mighty Babylon which I have built." His pride was humbled by the LORD and he became like an ox, eating grass.

Babylon . . . , in the Book of Revelation you find Babylon back again. Babylon, the city of the world, the city of the merchants. Babylon, the city of men over against the City of God. On this earth we will become so efficient, so industrialized, so wise, and we will have such a grasp of things in technology, that we will make this world to tick and to work for us. We will prolong an eternal existence and happiness of men on this world. That is Babylon.

The four friends were transplanted from Jerusalem into Baby-

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lon. When they arrived in Babylon they were recognized as boys who had received an education. Already in Jerusalem this had been known, for when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, he gave instructions that they were to look for some of these young fellows who had learned letters, who were skilled in writing, who were also endowed with knowledge, understanding, and learning, competent to serve in the king's palace and to teach them the letters and the language of the Chaldeans. Nebuchadnezzar had great plans for these four boys. Out of these four Jerusalem boys he was going to make four Babylonian boys. He was going to brainwash them. He was going to make them forget all the instruction which they had received, make them pour out their pail and fill their pail with the wisdom of Babylon. As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all letters and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

The four boys were first of all given a change of name. Daniel became **Beltshazzar**. His Jerusalem name became a Babylonian name: "Bel, the god of Babel, protect the life of the king." Hananiah's name became Shadrach: "Servant of Marduk," another Babylonian idol. Mishael became Meshach: "Who is like Agu?" another Babylonian no-god. Azariah became Abednego: "Servant of Nebo," yet another one in the multigod galaxy of Babylon. This name-giving was not to make them just politically different, but to make them different in the core. The purpose was to wean them away from the God of their fathers, and to attach them to the gods of Babylon; to take them away from the Seed of the Woman's people and embed them in the Seed of the Serpent's people.

Now what did these four boys do with their pailful of Jerusalem education? The eunuch who was in charge of them gave them all kinds of goodies to eat. These foods were different from what they were used to eating in Jerusalem, and Daniel and his friends said, "No! We have never defiled ourselves with food like that before and we are not going to start now. Please give us simple food which is in harmony with what we have learned at home."

Now, was this just stubbornness because they liked mother's

cooking better than the cooking at that palace? Or did they just want to be different; were they health nuts? No! They had received a pailful of education, and they were applying what they had learned. They saw through this: Name change? Weaning us away from the God of Israel, the true living God and embedding us in the doctrine of the no-gods where death is? Giving us foods to eat which have been dedicated to the idols? Giving us drink which has been poured out before the idols? They used their pail of education. They did not slosh it. They knew what to do in critical circumstances. They knew what choices to make. They were able to see through the demands which the world placed upon them.

#### *Paul and the Philippians*

We take a jump to New Testament history. The city of the Philippians was an outlying city in the defence girdle which surrounded the Roman Empire. Philippi was populated by colonists who were retired veteran soldiers of the Roman Emperor. There the apostle Paul had preached the Gospel. And the Gospel had taken root so that there was a Christian congregation in Philippi. To these Philippian Christians the apostle Paul writes about *his* education. That's why we read part of chapter three.

The apostle Paul writes about his Pharisaic education in Jerusalem — Jerusalem, where the Word of God had been clouded by the opinions of men. The apostle Paul had been educated by these opinionated Pharisees. He had a rabbinic upbringing. He was skilled in the Law. He was tops among the Pharisees. He was a promising young man. He had his bed made.

Then Christ met him. Christ showed him that the opinionated pail of education he had received had to be changed. Christ with His Spirit and Word educated Paul all over again. He made him to see what was still useful in that education he had received earlier, now believing it as having been fulfilled in Christ, and He made him spill all that did not belong. He made him slosh in this case, so that he might have his pail filled to the brim with all that he needed to know.

As Paul said, "That I may gain

Christ. Then I count everything as loss." I will count it as garbage, if only I may have the right teaching of Christ and be filled with His education.

#### *Now we*

It is quite safe for me to presume that you are all baptized. You were all brought up in homes where the Bible was opened. You were brought into Church when you were a baby. You went — at least many of you did — to schools where the parents did not just have a finger in the pie, but where the parents structured the education for their children at that school. At home we learned much. In the school we learned much. In the Church we learned much. You are all in the period of life called adolescence. It is a time in which you are to act on what you have learned. You all, the one in this way, the other in that way, have received a pailful of education. And the point for us this morning is: What are we going to do with that pailful? What *are* we doing with that pailful? What are we doing with that instruction which we have received, at home, in Church, and, in many cases, at school?

Now we are going to approach that from the way the apostle Paul approached it in his letter to the Philippians. In the first chapter, verse 27, and in chapter two, verses 12 to 14, the apostle Paul touches on a common and somewhat delicate problem. I'll first read these two passages to you. In chapter one, verse 27, you read, "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel."

"Whether I come and see you, or whether I am absent." The apostle Paul — and now I paraphrase freely — says, "You all have received a pailful of Christian education, Philippians! And I, as apostle and ambassador of Jesus Christ, am a father to you. When I am present, I see your Sunday faces. When I am present, you all toe the line, as if you indeed are applying your instruction in the praxis of your life in obedience. But when I am absent, what then? When I as apostle and ambassador of Christ am absent, what are your

faces like then? What are your week-day faces, Philippians? Now, whether I am with you or whether I am absent should not make any difference. You should be making full use of that which you have learned, that I may hear that you stand firm in one spirit."

Chapter two, verses twelve to fourteen: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence . . ." — there you have it again! — ". . . but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or questioning."

Again, very liberally paraphrased: "Philippians, you have received a painful of Christian education. Don't grumble! Don't question! Use it believingly, obediently, whether I'm there or whether I'm not there; whether father or mother are there or not there; whether the teachers are there or not; whether the minister is there or not; whether your girlfriend is there or not.

(To be continued.)

J. VAN RIETSCHOTEN



*Did you remember  
to hand in  
your year-end greeting  
envelope to the  
local correspondent?*

#### OUR COVER

*Autumn Reflections*  
Boyne River, Carman, Manitoba.  
Picture taken by John Nyeboer.

## PARALIPOMENA

### Is there a Difference?

#### *Enviably Joy*

This morning, October 30th, I was accosted by a young lady who was about to put under my windshield wiper a note with the words, "Halloween is from Satan — Come to Jesus and be saved." I told her that I did not need that because Jesus is my Saviour. Her reaction was: "I am born again! Are you also born again?"

Although I could agree with her statement on Halloween, I wondered why she reacted with "I am born again" to my "I believe in Jesus as my Saviour." Is there a difference?

But first: I was impressed by the spontaneous joy with which she spoke and then went on, against the wind, to other cars. "Let's keep up the good work!" she said, and she said it with a happy smile. She gave the impression that she was a very happy girl. Enviably . . .

#### *How it sounds*

When I went my own way, I kept thinking of our brief meeting. She and I spoke a somewhat different language. One of the things she said was "Do you believe in the New Testament?" I said, "Yes, but you can't believe in the New Testament without believing the Old Testament!" — to which she did not react.

Yes, there is a difference, although at the same time I say to myself, "Brother, don't talk nonsense." According to Scripture there is no difference between "believing in Jesus Christ" and "being born again." In one and the same chapter, John 3, the Lord spoke about both as the only and absolute condition for entering the kingdom. To Nicodemus, "Unless you are born again, you cannot enter the kingdom . . ."; and when I look at this chapter, I conclude that the words "whoever believes in Him has eternal life" were also spoken to Nicodemus. Then you get those well-known words of v. 16 and so on. Obviously, faith and rebirth are the same; both, in any event, are a gift and an act of God.

And yet, it sounds different, does it not? When you say, "I believe in Jesus," it sounds like something that *you* do, have done, and are doing. When the young lady, with music in her voice, says, "I am born again," it sounds like something that *the Lord* has done in and with her. And that is quite a difference!

#### *How it really is*

I first remind myself, "Judge not lest you be judged." I called the girl's obvious happiness "enviable." I wish one could read that on the faces of all Canadian Reformed believers as it was readable on her face.

Yet, the way I feel it, there is a difference; and I do not feel that because in "our circles" we hardly speak any longer about being born again since we rejected that so-called "presumptive regeneration." Sometimes one would fear that regeneration was also thrown out (I'm talking about the way we talk!).

But I feel the difference this way: I've been around a bit, and my impression is that those who always talk about "I am born again" have more interest in what went on and is going on *inside themselves*. They seem ("seem"! to have no great interest in the mighty acts of God. They "seem" (!) to be more self-centered than God-centered. I conclude this also from the kind of songs they prefer.

We, by the grace of God and by nothing else, have learned to love those words heard at the Supper table: we seek our salvation *outside ourselves* in Jesus Christ and in the mighty acts of the Triune God.

#### *Okay Then*

Let there be a difference, although there is no difference between believing and being born again. But if there is, and if "I am born again" looks at what is inside me, and "I believe" looks at what is outside me in the LORD, then we have *much more reason* to be filled with joy, and to *show* it!

Chronicler

# news medley

It seems that winter will begin. We still have two large geraniums outside, against the house, and they are still blooming profusely, but today I am going to take them in; they may not survive another night outside. Inside they can bloom all they want, and we may even be able to use them to provide stock for next spring. It would be nice to have a small, heated greenhouse, but this would take too much time and would cost too much in comparison with the benefit that would be derived from it, although satisfaction and enjoyment cannot be measured or expressed in terms of profit.

Are things getting bleaker outside, inside things are flourishing. I refer now to the activities in the midst of the Churches. Societies are in full swing and we are grateful for the interest which is shown by old and young in all sorts of topics, mainly in the study of God's Word. Once in a while I get questions which were left from society meetings, and then we spend part of a catechism period to discuss these questions and to try to get a satisfactory answer. When you get these questions, you know for sure that the young people are interested in this particular point, something which cannot always be said of the parts of the doctrine which are explained at the weekly hour or fifty minutes when they attend catechism classes. In many instances they don't even give you the opportunity to complete your answer, for new questions come up, further explanation is required on a particular point, and from the one thing comes the other. how blessed are we that we still can have these discussions in all freedom! Keep it up!

In the Surrey Church plans are in existence to include also outsiders in some activities, if I understand the information well. The Home Mission Committee came with some information to the Consistory. First they told the Consistory that their activities with the Summer Bible School had been a success, with many children from outside the church attending. "Young people have requested approval for a monthly social activity to help each other and those interested in the service of the Lord. This request is granted and the church building can be used."

As said, I do not quite get what precisely they have in mind, but in the future it will become clearer, I trust, also for "outsiders," i.e. people living far away.

The Deacons of Surrey "inform Council of their efforts to discuss with other Churches the need of a nursing home for the older members of our Churches in the Valley."

For many years this point has been discussed and the need becomes more and more pressing. I think I wrote it before, but repeat it here: the problem is oftentimes that these things have to be set up and executed by persons who do not need it and who are not planning ever to go into it either. The same applies to an Old Age Home. I hope from the heart that this time something will be achieved and something tangible will result from the consultations. It is important that we have Old Age homes in as many places as possible. They should not be large complexes: our membership is not that large. And who would wish to move from the one part of the

land to the other when he has been living somewhere for twenty or more years?

There really isn't anything else that should be mentioned from the Valley Churches and therefore we move on to Edmonton. There isn't much there either, but one thing could find a place in our column. In the Immanuel Church Consistory meeting "A proposal was made to have Council pray before the first service and after the second service. Council decided to leave the custom as it is at present (i.e. Prayer in Council before the worship service and a prayer of thanksgiving during the services with the congregation").

There won't be many Churches where prayer is offered before and after the services on Sundays. No one can say with certainty where this custom originated and why it was introduced. It is a good custom when the members of the Church pray at home, in the midst of the family, for the Lord's blessing upon the services which are to be conducted this Sunday, but I cannot see much sense in doing it then again when the office-bearers are together in the Consistory room before the service. There is one expression in the above quoted item which does not seem correct. It says "Prayer in Council before the worship service." Here I discover a misunderstanding. Before the service we are together in the Consistory room as office-bearers to enter together, thereby to show that the service is a service of the Church under the leadership and direction of its office-bearers; but there is no meeting and the prayer which is offered in some Churches is not a "Prayer in Council." It is a prayer in the midst of the brethren, but that is different. There are Churches where the office-bearers take turns coming to the Consistory room and sitting in the pews for the office-bearers. Each Church is perfectly free to arrange this as is most expedient: there is no Consistory or meeting anyway before the services or after.

It does happen sometimes that matters are discussed and decisions made before or after the service; but every one who was or is an office-bearer knows the dangers of such practice and the criticism which has been uttered in this respect. However, if I should elaborate on this, too, the medley would become too long. That's why we proceed.

"In the question period it is asked whether the parents who request baptism for their children are asked to inform the caretaker about this. It is decided that baptism should be requested from the Consistory who, in turn, should inform the caretaker."

This is a quotation from the brief report on Carman's Consistory meeting. I mention it because sometimes the caretaker is in the dark about baptism until the parents come in with the baby. And then everything has to be made ready in a hurry. Especially during the cooler weather, our caretaker always sees to it that the water is somewhat lukewarm, so that the baby will not be startled when, all of a sudden, cold water is sprinkled upon his or her forehead. Then it is good to know beforehand that baptism will take place. In some instances the parents are so correct as to phone the caretaker on Saturday evening, but it is indeed the duty of the Consistory or of the one who has been appointed by the Consistory to tell the caretaker. Let us all see to it that this small courtesy be not forgotten but that we honour every one in the position which he or she has.

It also happens sometimes that a meeting is cancelled, but that it is plainly forgotten to inform the caretaker of this. Especially now that the heat has to be put up, it is the more important that those who have to take

care of this be informed promptly if a meeting is cancelled. We would be upset — and rightly so — if the caretaker does not have things ready for a meeting; but what about him when he discovers that all his work has been in vain, for nothing?

We mentioned the Home Mission Committee of Surrey. Let us also mention the one in Burlington East. "The committee asks approval to appoint a senior Theological student to coordinate the Home Mission work in Burlington during summer of 1983. The consistory likes the idea but feels that all preparations should be ready before the summer."

What I like here especially is the idea to engage the senior students in the work that is being done in the Congregations and by them. We do not have the custom that our students have a "practical year" before graduating, and thus activities during the summer could very well give them much needed experience. They are not without experience, for due to the many vacancies around here some of the brethren have ample opportunity to practise their skills in teaching catechism classes. The only "problem" with summer engagement is, of course, that much of the work is at a standstill due to holidays and so on. However, it is something to keep in mind.

We move on to Burlington West. Most of the news from there nowadays does not concern Burlington-West but (future) Burlington South. With the date for instituting a separate Church there approaching fast, the planning is going ahead at a rapid pace.

"The pulpit supply is well provided for and we have only a few Sundays to be taken care of till the end of May."

It was also decided "to ask for permission to form a ward council for the wards that will after January form the church at Burlington South, and to give this council authority to deal with a number of preliminary matters pertaining to the institution to ensure a smooth and orderly transition period."

The list to be presented to the Consistory of Burlington West containing the names of those who wish to belong to the Burlington South Church was signed by some 80% of those living in the projected territory. "Those who have concerns and difficulties with signing this list will be visited to try to convince them of the importance that they should join, so that we may start this new church with the support of all members." See, this is something which I do understand and yet cannot appreciate. I think that those who did not sign did have their reasons for it, and these reasons should be respected. No pressure should be exercised to make them sign after all. I understand that the desire is there to have all families in the projected area join the new Church, and there is nothing against talking with them on a personal basis; it is not to my taste when it is decided to visit them with the intention to make them change their mind. Matters have been discussed and publicized sufficiently so that every one can know what the score is. That should be enough and every one should leave it at that.

Our journey will have to end in Hamilton this time.

Although the organ in the Hamilton Churchbuilding is not that old yet, it appears that repairs are necessary. Two estimates came before the Consistory, and the one of \$26,800 was accepted. Imagine: so much just for repairs. It is not too long ago that one could purchase a good pipe-organ and have it installed for this amount. That's how times have changed. Our organ badly needs

a complete overhaul as well, and I dread the day when we shall be told how much this will cost. The trouble is, of course, that when it was installed, everything had to be done as cheap (not "as cheaply") as possible. For many years it worked, but for all the Congregations which followed the same course the bill is presented now, or will be in the near future. Then it is important to have things done thoroughly, so that there won't be a need to have extensive repairs again after fifteen or twenty years.

I do not know what kind of a subscription form Hamilton uses, but I have an idea that it is a slip of the typewriter when we read that a newly ordained elder "subscribed to the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order, signing the Subscription Form." In our form the Church Order is not mentioned, and it generally is not.

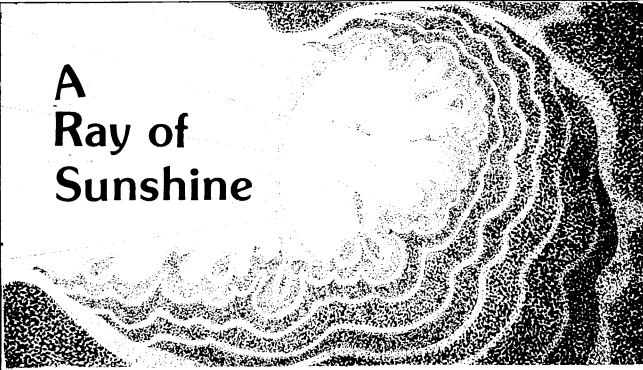
The main point, however, that I would wish to touch upon from the Hamilton bulletin is what Rev. Huizinga writes about the International Conference of Reformed Churches which is going on in the Netherlands at the moment when I write these lines. Rev. Huizinga gives some information about the conference and its purpose(s), and then draws his conclusion.

"All in all, a calm and relaxed pace can only help to lay a solid foundation for such an international conference. I foresee great difficulties in the constituting of such a conference, while the practical benefits still seem nebulous (cloudy) to me."

I must express my agreement with the words which the Rev. Huizinga wrote. I also remind our readers of the article which Dr. Faber wrote about this conference. And even the interview with the Rev. G. Van Rongen which could be found in a recent "Variant" issued with *Nederlands Dagblad*, could not take away my doubts and uncertainty. For the time being I cannot see much use in a conference such as this one. Please bear in mind that I am speaking about such a conference in general; let this not be construed as a criticism on what the brethren are doing in Groningen at this moment. With the Rev. Huizinga I say, "The benefits are — at best — still doubtful. And when I see that one of the items to be discussed is "Meaning and authority of the recommendations and conclusions of the I.C.R.C.," I shiver. What is going to happen? Will such a conference, in spite of all assurances to the contrary, develop into a sort of super-synod? I am inclined to say, "Churches, beware!" I am very grateful to the Synod 1980, that the brethren who are delegated to this conference have been told not to commit either themselves or the Churches. That was a very wise decision. And when our forthcoming Synod receives the report from the brethren who were delegated, I hope that it will display the same caution and carefulness which could be noticed with Synod Smithville 1980.

What is the use of such a conference for the membership in general? That is a question which certainly should be foremost in our mind. It is nice for some brothers to attend a conference where all sorts of questions and topics are discussed. It is nice to make a trip to such a conference in service of the Churches, and to meet people from other countries to discuss various aspects of Church life. Very educational and very interesting. Perhaps we shall receive a booklet in which the speeches given and the conclusions reached are neatly presented to us for scrutiny and learning. But what do the CHURCHES benefit from it? It costs a lot of money and this would not be an impediment if the benefit

## A Ray of Sunshine



“Who is wise and understanding among you? let him shew by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace.”

James 3:13-18



A quotation from  
Calvin's Commentary  
on the book James

3.13. Who is wise. As we may admit that a passion for malicious speech is the offspring of pride, pride itself is largely engendered by a false assurance of wisdom, which accounts for his mention of it here. It is the rule for hypocrites to vaunt and project themselves by their denunciation of all around. Similarly, in the old days, many a philosopher won his reputation by cynical railery directed at all classes. The self-satisfaction that inflates and blinds such foul mouths is rejected by James, who says that the notion of wisdom conceived by such selfishness had nothing of the divine about it. No, he urges, it is diabolic.

This is the sense: these haughty censors, so generous to themselves, so unsparing on others, think they have outstanding wisdom, but are greatly deceived. The Lord has trained His people quite another way, which is to be gentle and courteous to one another. The only men who have wisdom in God's sight are such as bring to this gentleness an honest manner of life. The harsh and unyielding, for all the other great virtues they may have, have no real measure of wisdom.

3.14. But if ye have bitter jealousy. He details the fruits that grow from overmuch severity, as opposed to meekness. It cannot be helped but excessive strictness will produce unworthy jealousies, which will at once break out into quarrelling. He is stretching language to speak of “faction” in the heart, but this makes little or no difference to the sense. He intended to point to the source of these evils which is a base passion of the heart. He calls it bitter jealousy, for it has no domination until our hearts are so affected with its poison that they turn

outweighs the cost. However, this is now exactly what I cannot see as yet. For the time being I am well satisfied with the contact we have via deputies for correspondence. Please let there not be a sort of international synod or conference whose conclusions and recommendations *could* have “authority” (! ! ! !) for the participating churches. It is a sign of danger when at a conference (!) one is going to discuss the question what meaning or *authority* its conclusions and recommendations may have for those participating in it.

The thought has been expressed that the present conference is intended to be sort of a counterpart of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod which was established after the second world war. We have been assured that this is not the case. Good. Let us, then, confine ourselves to recognizing each other as sister Churches wherever this appears possible and allowed. In this manner the life of the Church in each and every country

can develop along its own lines. If there is anything we can help each other in, let's do it. For this, no bi-ennial or tri-ennial conference is needed.

I could say much more about such a conference, e.g. about the question of “Mutual help in the execution of the missionary mandate in the missionary situation of our time,” but I should not let this become an article. Only this about this point: Have we returned to the basic truth that mission is the task of each (local) Church now to discuss this at an international level with possible consequences of a return to mission work regulated and supervised by general deputies or even an international commission? Perhaps I see too many dangers; but it should not be my fault when no warning voice is heard and no caution is advocated.

I may come back to this once the results of the present conference are known.

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everything sour. If we wish to make an honest boast that we are the sons of God, we are told to behave quietly and moderately with our brothers, or else he will say we lie, when we boast the name of Christ. It is quite relevant to include faction with jealousy, since disputes and rows always swell out of malice and envy.

3.15. This wisdom is not. Hypocrisy does not withdraw its claims readily, and so he returns to attack, with some energy, their arrogant attitude; he says it is not true wisdom (on which they pride themselves) to be so doom-ridden in belabouring the faults of others. Now he allows them the word wisdom, but qualifies it as earthly, animal, demonic, in contrast to the true definition, which is heavenly, spiritual, divine — giving each epithet its direct opposite. James takes it for granted that wisdom comes to us from no other source than the heaven-sent illumination of God through the Spirit. Thus, however far man may stretch his intellect, all his insight will be vain, indeed, will fall into Satan's trap at last, and come to mental ruin. The senses ("anima") are here contrasted with the Spirit, as in I Cor. 2.14, where Paul says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of God." No greater collapse could bring down the pride of man, than to find himself convicted of drawing all his wisdom from his own nature, without anything of the Spirit of God, and of letting his own nature go over to the devil's court. This comes to mean that men who follow their own feelings will quickly slip into Satan's wiles.

3.16. For where jealousy. He is arguing from opposites: the jealousy that drives on the hypocrites has an effect quite the reverse of wisdom. Wisdom requires a well balanced composure, while jealousy starts disturbance in the mind, makes it uneasy in itself, and has a disordered temper towards others. Some translate ἀκαταστασίαν as "changeableness," and it sometimes has this meaning; but as it can also be "civil strife" and "uproar," the sense of "confusion" seemed best for the present passage. James appears to imply something more serious than fickle behaviour, inasmuch as the ill-minded detractor handles everything in a chaotic and mistaken fashion, as though he were beside himself.

3.17. But the wisdom is from above. He proceeds to list the effects of heavenly wisdom, which are the opposite of those above. It is, first of all, pure, that is, qualified as excluding hypocrisy and selfishness. Secondly, he calls it peaceable, meaning, unconnected with strife. Thirdly, gentle or reasonable, to teach us that it is far from that undue severity which shows a brother no tolerance. Then, it is easy to be entreated, approachable, indicating

an abhorrence of pride or spite. Lastly, he says it is full of mercy, while the hypocrites are inhuman, forbidding. By good fruits he suggests all the good offices that well-intentioned men owe to their brethren, as much as to say, in one word, full of well-doing. Consequently it is downright dishonest to glory in dark austerity. Although he had gone far enough to condemn hypocrisy, by speaking of the pure and sincere, he ends by repeating the point still more plainly. We are warned that there is no reason for our being so very woeful, except that we are too indulgent towards ourselves, and we are conniving at our own sins. It might appear odd that he wishes it also to be "without discernment" (ἀδιάκριτος). For the Spirit of God does not abolish every distinction between good and evil, or make us so unconcerned that we lose all judgment, and admire vice as virtue. I answer, that James intended the word to cover that over-anxious and scrupulous probing, of the kind we often observe amongst hypocrites, as they search over-particularly into a brother's words or deeds, and take every item in the worse sense.

3.18. And the fruit of righteousness. One can take this in two senses, either that a harvest is sown for the peacemakers, which they may later reap, or that they themselves, while they put up quietly with a good deal of trouble in their lives, do not fail to sow the seed of righteousness. He is anticipating an objection. Those whose lust for censoriousness drives them to speak ill, always have the pretext: What, are we to foster evil by our permissiveness? To which James replies, Those who have true wisdom from God are to be so calm, restrained, peaceable and merciful that they will neither conceal nor favour vice, but will endeavour to correct it; but with peace, that is, in a way of moderation, such as will preserve unity unimpaired. This is our evidence that there is no intention here, as far as he has discussed it, of doing away with unruffled words of admonition, as long as those would-be practitioners of healing for sin do not become executioners. This for them that make peace ("facientibus pacem") is what grammarians call a "seventh case." We should read the passage thus: Men who work for peace are also concerned with the sowing of righteousness, and are not idle or ineffective in promoting and encouraging good works: but they temper their zeal with the seasoning of peace, while hypocrites throw all into uproar with their blind and frantic attacks.

Send your requests to:

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

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## Canadian Reformed Association for the Handicapped

In previous issues of this magazine you will probably have noticed an advertisement asking for a couple willing to take care of two or three handicapped brothers and sisters on a full-time basis. The board felt that it would be advantageous to clarify what the purpose and aim of the association for the handicapped is all about. Let me first give you a brief outline of the history of this association.

In 1976, a steering committee was formed to study the different avenues that could be used to promote the interest of and the care for the handicapped in our Reformed community. A constitution and by-laws were formulated as a result of this committee's efforts, and on Apr. 7, 1978, a provisional board was instituted with the mandate to come with: 1. a proposal to the membership, 2. a final draft of the constitution and by-laws. By Dec. 1, 1978, a permanent board had been established representing most churches in Ontario. Since then, much time and effort has been put into trying to establish a home for these special covenant children.

In 1979 the first "family" picnic, which included handicapped children with their parents and all interested, was held in Christie Park. During the summer of 1980 the first summer camp was organized and became a success for all participants and volunteers. Also the camps of last year and this year (see one of the former issues), were being looked forward to with great anticipation by all involved. However, summer camp is only one of the activities generated by the board. Our main objective is to establish a home for these children, and now I would like to elaborate on what our intentions are at the present time.

Over the past number of years, many of us have heard some say, or have even said it ourselves, "Is it really feasible to establish a home for the handicapped in our circles? Is it responsible, economically, for us to shoulder such an undertaking, seeing that at present there is a need for only two, possibly three, such handicapped children? Would it not be better to wait

until there are five or six children to start a home?" These and numerous other related questions have been previously voiced or thought by many of us. However, I am sure that all of us have the best interests of these covenant children at heart, and there is no one of us who would not love to see a home established for them. We must also realize that there are many parents who want a home for their handicapped children, although they are now still at home, knowing that if anything were to happen to either or both of them their child could be placed in a Christian environment and continue to be brought up in the fear of the Lord as one of His covenant children. It is with this in mind that the board has set April 1983 as a target date for opening a home.

I would now like to backtrack and give you a brief outline as to what progress the board has made over the last few months. We have been meeting regularly about once a month and have accomplished some things. Although progress sometimes seems to be slow, one must remember that all our time is volunteered and that there are times when we are not able to dedicate as much time as we would like to.

We have recently toured Bethesda Home in Vineland and also a government-sponsored group home for six residents in St. Catharines. We looked at four houses that are for sale in the Beamsville area. Reasons why we have been concentrating our efforts in this area are: one opening in an A.R.C. industry, and the possibility of utilizing the workshops of Bethesda Home. Another reason is that most of the handicapped people of our churches are already placed in workshops and A.R.C. industry in this area. Accessibility to Lincoln is fairly good, being close to the QEW. After having looked at a few places with a real estate agent, the board was able to draw some conclusions as to what the ideal property would look like. We are looking for a four-bedroom bungalow with fairly large dining and living areas, and preferably family rooms, situated on a lot of about one to two acres.

Another idea that the board would like to present to you here tonight is a foster home concept. As I mentioned previously, there is at the present time a direct need for only two or three residents. The board also feels that the sooner we can start a home the better, but we must also be realistic and realize that the cost is quite high. A home for four residents at the present time would cost us approximately \$73,000, whereas, with a foster-type home, we feel a budget of \$40,000 would be adequate. If we were to buy a home for about \$75,000 with a down payment of \$25,000, we would be left with a \$50,000 mortgage, and, at today's interest rate of 19%, it would cost us about \$800 a month. We would also like to find a couple willing to take care of these children on a full-time basis, although the residents would probably be going to a workshop during the day. Between parents taking their children home occasionally on week-ends and relief staff coming in, we would be able to provide the foster parents with some time off. We would use this concept as a stepping stone to expand, as the need arises, into a group home. For example, if there were an urgent need to place a third or fourth resident, it could be done right away, and extra staff hired within a period of six months, and so on, until we finally have a home with a director and a full-time staff.

Now all I would like to ask you is to give these matters some thought. Give us some reaction, direction, and feel free to ask any questions concerning these matters. I also ask you to remember a few things when you go home tonight. Don't just leave everything up to the board. We are more than willing to do the work, but not alone.

If you are wondering what you can do, here are a few pointers: get new members, promote the cause, give your local board members some feedback. After all, the only way to get anything off the ground is for us all to work at it and hard. So don't leave it until the next membership meeting, but decide tonight to do something. Above all, remember this work in your prayers, for it is only under the blessing of our heavenly Father that anything can function properly.

On behalf of the Board,  
P. Feenstra

(Opening speech of the chairman, given at the last membership meeting of the Canadian Reformed Association for the Handicapped.)



## PATRIMONY PROFILE<sub>3</sub>

By Rev. W.W.J. VanOene

The committee appointed in 1812 consisted of Protestants and Roman Catholics. It was their mandate to prepare a draft according to the above guidelines. The Jews could be considered a fourth group. Who was the man that had the most influence with the drafting of the new concept? The head-clerk, J.D. Janssen.

In the course of the year 1812 the committee completed its report. The draft concept was sent to Paris for Napoleon's scrutiny and approval. However, in 1812 Napoleon undertook his campaign into Russia. He reached Moscow and even took up residence in the Kremlin. But the policy of the scorched earth made him leave the Russian capital and Russia altogether: his army was destroyed. He lost some 400,000 men. His retreat from Russia ended in his exile, first to Elba, then to St. Helena, where he died in 1821. His fall caused the committee report to become a forgotten document. But its main author, head-clerk J.D. Janssen, lived on and was still around.

### *The Ecclesiastical Situation*

In the meantime what was the ecclesiastical situation itself like? The repeated efforts to come to a new form of organization could not undo the fact that the old Dort Church Order was still valid and in force. The convening of a *general* synod may then have been practically impossible, but the other ecclesiastical assemblies were still feasible and were indeed held.

Classes were still held in 1795, and particular or provincial Synods in 1808. Although no general synod was convened, the various particular synods kept in close contact with each other and frequently reached a consensus. Such was the case, e.g., with the introduction of the hymns.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century there was a growing group of influential people that propagated introduction of a collection of hymns besides the Psalms. At the Provincial Synod of North Holland of 1796 it was decided to request the cooperation of the other regions; this was obtained. A committee was formed. It drew up a general plan at its first meeting in 1803, completed its work in the summer of 1805, and saw its labours crowned with the introduction of the new Evangelical Hymns on the first Sunday of 1807.

How could those hymns be introduced whereas Article 69 of the still valid Church Order provided that only a few hymns should be sung, such as the Song of Zechariah, the Song of Mary? The Church

Order could be changed only by a decision of a general synod! The reasoning was as follows. If every third year a general synod had been held as provided in the Church Order, the article concerning what was to be sung in the services would have been changed long ago. Therefore a decision by all particular synods in this matter now is to be counted as one made by a general synod. The particular synods agreed. The Evangelical Hymns were introduced. In many Churches the new collection of hymns was received with gladness; in other Congregations there was strong opposition to them. The opposition to the Evangelical Hymns prompted various particular synods to provide that the singing of at least one hymn during the services was mandatory. This, in turn, increased the opposition, and the latter was again an occasion for the Particular Synod of North Holland to decide that all those who did not comply with the above decision were to be admonished and, if they persisted in their refusal, to be suspended and deposed. Other provinces followed suit.

In the days of the Secession the singing or non-singing of the Evangelical Hymns was a reason for suspension of ministers. And the criticism uttered by Jacobus Klok, to whose brochure Hendrik de Cock wrote a preface, will be mentioned again.

In 1864, the Netherlands Reformed Synod set aside the decision which had caused so much trouble, and left it in the freedom of the minister to include or not to include hymns in the liturgy.

Why was there so much opposition to the Evangelical Hymns? There will have been a certain measure of conservatism, although we also are to take into account that the strongest urge and promotion of the hymns came from the side of those who had been infected by modernistic ideas. Further, it was claimed that the manner in which they were introduced was illegal: only a general synod could change Article 69 C.O., and there was no urgent need to deviate from that article.

The third and main reason, however, was the contents of many of the hymns. Mysticism, Remonstrantism, and modernism found free expression and promotion in them. They had proceeded more from the heart of religious man than from the Word of God. Although they contained "many touching outpourings of a varied religious nature," as the Preface to the Hymns has it, they were neither gathered nor introduced from a desire to give the Church the opportunity to sing of the fulfilment of all God's promises in Christ Jesus our Lord, and of the "age of the Spirit."

### *A Few Efforts towards Improvement*

Were there no movements or activities at all advocating return to the true and living preaching of God's Word and to free the Church from the glorification of "virtue," of "reason," and of a "decent life"? There were various movements and activities for the better as well as for the worse, but, whatever movements there were, they remained localized and

had little more than regional effect, if even that. Besides movements advocating a return to the truly Reformed doctrine and lifestyle, there were also cases in which the spirit of the times was the driving force.

The revolution with its slogan of "liberty, equality, fraternity" made quite an impression on the people. And, when there is indeed a spirit of fraternity, should that not also become evident in the ecclesiastical field as well? Now that all denominations had acquired equality before the law, should there not be a merger of all Protestant denominations?

The Remonstrants took the initiative. On September 10, 1796, they sent a letter to the ministers of all Protestant denominations with a plan for a "general brotherly union." In August 1797 they elaborated on it further in a second letter. Only a few in the Reformed Churches and in the Baptist Church accepted the plan. The whole undertaking fizzled, but was indicative of the spirit of the times.

In Delft we find a society for "Christianity above Division," called *Christo Sacrum*. It was established in 1797 by some member of the Wallonian Congregation in that city under the leadership of a lawyer. No one who became a member had to leave his own church, and as a result there were Lutherans as well as Roman Catholics who joined. Each one's religious conviction was respected and all condemnation of people who had a different view and conviction was avoided.

When the society celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, we find among the delegates from various ecclesiastical boards the secretary of the Netherlands Reformed Synod and the secretary-general of the Department of Public Worship . . . J.D. Janssen. However, the number of members gradually diminished by death, financial problems increased, and after 1834 no more services were conducted. The little church building which the society had acquired was sold in 1838, the year in which the society's founder died.

Let us also give an example of activity in a different direction. Jelle Corvinus was a teacher of Catechism and lay-preacher in Leeuwarden. He was a man who was greatly disturbed by the unfaithfulness of the ministers. Thinking that the new Constitution indeed gave him full freedom to do so, he established the New Reformed Congregation, which called him as its minister. That was in 1800. Soon a second minister was needed, and the baker's helper, Jan de Jong, was appointed as such. The latter travelled extensively to speak an edifying word wherever he could: in barns, homes, and even church buildings.

However, the Consistory of Leeuwarden and the Classis Dokkum succeeded in getting an ordinance from the civil authorities forbidding this "unlawful preaching," threatening to levy heavy fines. The Congregation dispersed, but enabled de Jong to study in Franeker — which at that time still could boast of a university — and thus to become a minister in the regular way. He did serve in the ministry from 1808-1821, the year of his death.

### *King William I's Creation*

Almost twenty years had passed since Prince William V left the country and the Batavian Republic was proclaimed, when the son of the last hereditary Stadtholder was welcomed back from his exile. Already when Napoleon was still on his way to Moscow — summer 1812 — secret consultations were being held to prepare for the days when The Netherlands' independence would be restored and a Prince of Orange would again reign.

On the 30th of November, 1813, Prince William landed at Scheveningen. On December 2nd of that same year he was proclaimed Sovereign Ruler. On March 29, 1814, the first Constitution of the Kingdom of The Netherlands was adopted, followed on August 24, 1815, by the second one. And September 1815 saw the Solemn Inauguration or Enthronement of King William I.

It is difficult to give a fair description of the king's views, actions, goals, and intentions. The opinions about him are widely divergent. He certainly was no average person and displayed an enormous amount of activity, besides using his personal fortune for the development and rebuilding of the country.

It has been claimed that William I was an "enlightened despot" and in many respects was not any different in his outlook on the position, duties, and privileges of a ruler from Napoleon. Whatever may be true in that statement, it is a fact that he did rule autocratically and that his ministers were in fact little more than the executors of the king's decisions. Such a disposition and attitude is certainly one of the principal reasons for William's actions in Church matters.

To be fair, we also have to take into consideration that, on his return to The Netherlands, William certainly did not find things in the same condition as they were in 1795 when he left the country with his parents. It is never so that, after a period of war and unrest, things return to the state they were in before the troubles began. We have seen this after both world wars; and especially the events and developments after the second one are fresh and vivid in our memory. People who flatter themselves with the hope that everything will be as it was before the turmoil started and who are looking forward to that are in for a big disappointment.

The same applies when a reformation takes place. People sometimes think that difficulties can be solved when the immediate cause of the conflict has been taken away. Nothing is farther from the truth. Once a conflict has proceeded so far that a choice has to be made, a true and God-pleasing solution cannot be found otherwise than by a total and overall return to the obedience to the Lord. The Lord does not lead His Church out of the house of bondage in order that she should return to it as soon as the immediate cause of the clash and breach has been eliminated, either to a certain extent or completely.

To be continued.

enacted in 1941. Here is the text of Mr. Reagan's proclamation.

"Two hundred years ago, the Congress of the United States issued a Thanksgiving Proclamation stating that it was the 'indispensable duty of all nations' to offer both praise and supplication to God. Above all other nations of the world, America has been especially blessed and should give special thanks. We have bountiful harvests, abundant freedoms, and a strong, compassionate people.

"I have always believed that this anointed land was set apart in an uncommon way, that a divine plan placed this great continent here between the oceans to be found by people from every corner of the Earth who had a special love of faith and freedom. Our pioneers asked that freedom. Our pioneers asked that He would work His will in our daily lives so America would be a land of morality, fairness and freedom.

"Today we have more to be thankful for than our pilgrim mothers and fathers, who huddled on the edge of the New World that first Thanksgiving Day, could ever dream. We should be grateful not only for our blessings, but for the courage and strength of our ancestors which enable us to enjoy the lives we do today.

Let us reaffirm through our prayers and actions our thankfulness for America's bounty and heritage.

"Now therefore, I, Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 25, 1982, as a National Day of Thanksgiving and I call upon all our citizens to set aside that day for appropriate expressions of thanksgiving. "In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-seventh day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and seventh." (CN)

## LEUSDEN

The membership of the (Syn.) Reformed Churches in The Netherlands decreased by almost 13,230 in 1981. From 861,640 it went down to a little over 848,000. The number of communicant members decreased by almost 5600, that of non-communicant members by almost 7660.

For the first time in a number of years the receipts decreased in 1981. Income went down from fl. 225,373,209.- to fl. 220,524,930.-. The average per member increased and went from fl. 264.- to fl. 274.-. (N)

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# Books

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Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Children of Promise: The Case For Baptizing Infants*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1979, 116 pages, \$3.95. Reviewed by J. De Jong.

This attractive little book has a title which cannot fail to interest anyone born out of and schooled in the struggle of the Liberation in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands forty years ago. Baptism was then one of the central issues of the day, and although *infant* baptism itself was not directly in dispute, the ground and reason for infant baptism most certainly was. This also forms a part of the material dealt with in this little book.

It is interesting to see how Prof. Bromiley, well-known in America through his translations of many important texts in German theology, treats the issues of baptism, regeneration, and faith. Although he is in many respects a disciple of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth, Bromiley certainly does not agree with his teacher's rejection of infant baptism. Indeed, in this little book one will find a good summary of all the Biblical arguments in favour of infant baptism. One is amazed to see how Bromiley, a complete "foreigner" to the Dutch conflict, maintains the characteristic two sides of the covenant, promise and demand, and also does not fail to stress the role of human responsibility, cf. p. 42ff.

Aside from two major weaknesses that plague the book, there are a few minor points that one might raise in the flow of the argument. For example, Bromiley leans strongly to the view that the Holy Spirit begins His work of regeneration at or around the time of baptism. And, although he states that we do not know the manner of working, he brings in many texts which are meant to support his view, as, for example, the calling of Jeremiah and John the Baptist, Jer. 1:5, Luke 1:15. Such texts, however, cannot lead to a conclusive dogmatic formula, and in this context one can better retain the well-known 1905 formula that "God fulfils His promise according to His sovereignty, in His time, either before or under or after baptism, so that one is required to speak about these things cautiously, and not desire to be wise above what God has revealed."

A related matter concerns the salvation of infants, particularly of those who die in infancy. In defending this point, Bromiley also states that the Holy Spirit necessarily works faith in infants, since "without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. 11:6," p. 97. However, defending the salvation of infants born to believing parents does not necessarily require defending infant *faith*. It is true that, as

the apostle says, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, I Cor. 15:50. We believe that infants, particularly those dying in infancy, are sanctified and regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit so that they may receive eternal life. This, however, does not require infant *faith*. Here again one is required to confess that God has not revealed His manner of working and that we must therefore not desire to be wise above the limits of Scripture. It is interesting to note here that the formulation of the Canons of Dordt is also reserved, and in fact stresses the covenant of grace and the covenant promise, rather than dwelling on faith which may or may not be actually present in the infants, cf. Chap. I, Art. 17.

Besides these minor points of interest, two major weaknesses of the work must be mentioned. The first concerns Bromiley's view of Scripture, which appears quite different from our own. Although his views are not specifically stated here, Bromiley repeatedly uses characteristic Barthian terms like "witness" or "record" — all of which indicate that he does not accept the full binding character of the Scriptural revelation. The result of this unfortunate stand is that Bromiley's conclusions are rather weak. Although he presents all the arguments for infant baptism in a masterly way, Bromiley nonetheless ends by leaving the matter open. One of his practical conclusions is that no absolute rule of infant baptism should be imposed on a congregation! Since there is no specific command, we should be left free in this matter.

A second weakness concerns Bromiley's references to the two-sided character of the covenant. Although he maintains human responsibility, Bromiley is silent on the matter of the covenant *sanctions*. This may also be a reflection of his general theological position. At any rate, it makes for a one-sided presentation, and again takes away from the *seriousness* of the issue at hand. On this point, too, Bromiley ends up hampering the case of infant baptism, rather than promoting it. Ultimately his conclusions represent a concession to the Baptists, rather than a strong testimony against their teaching.

Thus the book must be read and used *critically*. We have here a concise summary of the Scriptural arguments for infant baptism, a summary from which we can all most certainly learn a great deal. But the lines must be drawn more sharply than Bromiley draws them. Forty years after the Liberation, in a new country, new generations in our churches are still called to uphold and maintain the age-old Nicene confession: "I acknowledge *one* baptism for the remission of sins . . ." without fear or compromise. And while this booklet can help us, it is essentially not *with* us. For infant baptism is not a matter of indifference, but forms a cardinal part of the one catholic faith that we are called to confess until our Saviour returns to us on the clouds of heaven.

# Ministers' Workshop

On Monday, June 7, ministers and theological students gathered together to enjoy a theological workshop. Our convener, Rev. J. DeJong, read from Philippians, whereafter we sang Psalm 119:35, 40. The convener opened the workshop with prayer. In his welcoming remarks the chairman especially welcomed Rev. R.F. Boersema, missionary in Brazil, who was on furlough.

In the morning Prof. L. Selles introduced a topic on Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. He especially paid attention to E.P. Sanders' book entitled *Judaism*. This work deals with the Jewish commentary on the Torah (the Law) especially, as in the Talmuds, Mishna, Midrash, Targums, as well as on the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha. He surveys the thoughts of previous writers on this subject. With regard to Paul and the rabbinic literature, Sanders prefers to compare the two by paying attention to the patterns of religion (how the religion functioned in the lives of its adherents). This seriously limits the comparison, for Sanders basically asks, "How does one enter the religion?" (repentance, election, etc.), "How does one stay in?" (the keeping of the law, for example), and "How does one leave the religion?" (justice, punishment, etc.).

It was noted that election and the covenant were basic concepts for Judaism. However, the rabbis saw the covenant as prior to the fulfilling of the commandments. It was as a covenant member that one was obliged to adhere to its teachings. Even though the commentaries of the rabbis are usually not systematic and consistent but rather often haphazard, nevertheless it can be said that the Jews did have an eye for the mercy and love of God, though in practice their religion was dominated by legalism.

Rabbinical thought does not include the concept of original sin. For the Jews the theoretical possibility that a man might not sin remained. Man is free to obey or to disobey. And atonement is not sought in the per-

son of the expected Messiah but instead in what man must do to be reconciled with God. Man must repent and return. Ceremonies and even death help to make atonement (the approach of death often causes man to repent and death itself squares one's account with God). Rabbinical Judaism, therefore, lacks a doctrine of atonement, and it paves the way for later Roman Catholicism and Arminianism which both resemble this aspect of Judaism.

Sanders considers it his duty to refute the popular Christian notion that rabbinical Judaism was only legalistic and cold. No, it enjoyed the promises and the grace of the covenant and it had much warmth, he maintains. Prof. Selles criticized this optimistic appraisal. That Palestinian Judaism lacked the conviction of original sin led to a lack of a doctrine of atonement. The accent fell on man and what he could and must do to be right with God. Consequently, the system became heavily legalistic, as is also evident from the Gospels and the Pauline letters. Prof. Selles lamented the fact that Sanders said so little about the New Testament — about Jesus and Paul and their interaction with the rabbis and their "theology."

A lively discussion ensued about the relation of such Judaism to the gospels, to Paul, to church history (and the development of Pelagian theories, for example), and to modern Jewish history. There certainly was enough left for a future discussion.

Mrs. J. Faber and Mrs. C. Wieske served us a nourishing lunch during which we enjoyed catching up on old friendships and new developments. We listened with interest to the reasons why Rev. J. Mulder had shaved his "Colonel Sanders" beard.

After lunch the floor was given to Rev. R.F. Boersema to introduce some aspects of mission work in Brazil. This was a real treat for us. He briefly outlined the progress of the work done as well as the pastoral prob-

lems encountered — the immoral lifestyle, poverty and malnutrition, drunkenness, the evils of a very loose brand of Roman Catholicism which has bred much superstition, worship of saints and magic, and the superficiality of Pentecostalism. Besides this, he dealt with the need of translating the creeds, confession, psalms and hymns, etc. Little contact has been made with the Presbyterian churches in Brazil. Finally, he discussed the Nevius' method of mission work (in which the missionary becomes a type of circuit-preacher).

A downpour of questions swamped our missionary colleague, but he answered them all very ably. Questions were asked about the rich landowners, about illiteracy, about the Nevius' method, about concentrating on rural areas instead of the urban centers, about the influence of mission aid on the receptivity of the poor to the gospel, about the method of preaching (where do you start with people who know nothing of the Bible?), about the question whether outsiders can participate in singing psalms, etc., in the worship services, about the immoral lifestyle, and about the Brazilian government. As you can tell, a full range of questions came Rev. Boersema's way. We all learned much and became more closely acquainted with our missionary efforts in Brazil.

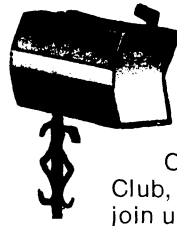
A new issue of *Koinonia*, our ministerial paper, was handed out, and an up-date was given.

The next workshop will be held on Nov. 8, '82 at 10:00 a.m. in our college building. Prof. J. Faber and Prof. L. Selles will introduce "Paul and Judaism" in the morning and Rev. J. DeJong "Rules for Ecclesiastical Assemblies?" in the afternoon.

The convener heartily thanked everyone, especially the two speakers. We sang Psalm 119:16 and Rev. W. Pouwelse thanked the Lord in prayer.

W. HUIZINGA

# our little magazine



## From the Mailbox

Of course you may join the Busy Beaver Club, *Rose Peters*. We are happy to have you join us. We hope you'll really like joining in all our Busy Beaver activities. Do you help out on the farm, *Rose*? Bye for now.

Hello *Brenda De Boer*. Thank you for your letter. I'm glad you're happy to be back in school. Good thing you sent your letter when you did, *Brenda*! Write again soon.

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Everybody likes riddles I know. Here are some more for you to enjoy with your family!

Some are from Busy Beavers *Tammy Linde* and *Brenda De Boer*. And some are from guess who?

1. What runs but does not walk, has a tongue, but can't talk?
2. Though I dance at a ball, I'm nothing at all!
3. No need for a brush, no need for a broom, I'm used a lot to tidy a room.
4. What kind of bird is like a car?
5. What pet is found in most automobiles?
6. Why can't a bike stand by itself?
7. When is a ship untruthful?

### QUIZ TIME

#### DO YOU KNOW???

The highest mountain in the world? \_\_\_\_\_

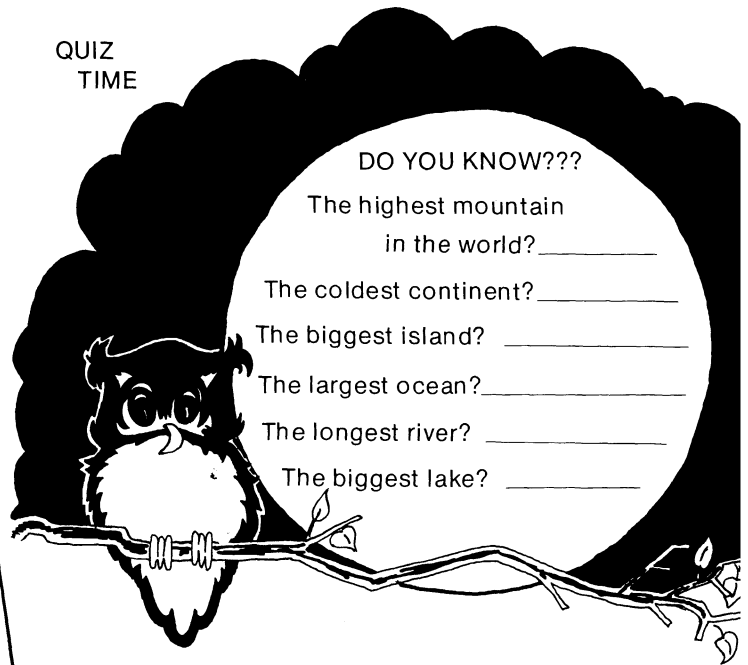
The coldest continent? \_\_\_\_\_

The biggest island? \_\_\_\_\_

The largest ocean? \_\_\_\_\_

The longest river? \_\_\_\_\_

The biggest lake? \_\_\_\_\_



Answers next time!

Bye for now, Busy Beavers.  
Hope to "see" you next time!

Hello Busy Beavers,  
We have some winners! Oh yes!  
You remember we had 2 CONTESTS this summer.  
Our big QUIZ CONTEST, but also our cartoon contest.

And so we have 2 winners!

I won't keep you guessing.

Here they are:

Busy Beaver *Brenda De Boer* won our Quiz Contest, and Busy Beaver *Margo Hofsink* won our cartoon contest.

Congratulations to you both. Keep up the good work!

Yes, keep up the good work, because you had real competition!

Thank you to all the Busy Beavers who entered our contests. You all deserve a pat on the back!

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One Busy Beaver wrote a very interesting letter about what she wants to be when she grows up.

I thought you would like to read her story, too!

Here it is:

### ... WHAT WE WANT TO BE WHEN WE GROW UP ...

Well, I'd like to be a teacher. I'd like to be this because I like school and trying to help young kids learn. I also think that it's important if they (children) learn to read, write, and do arithmetic. So if I think that this is important, why can't I help young ones do this when I grow up? I think I can so I will when I'm old enough. At home I have four younger brothers and sisters. Well, two sisters are in school already but the other brother and sister aren't so I help them learn a little already. My brother is in Grade One so he knows quite a bit of the main things already. But if he has a book from school sometimes I help him with the harder words. My youngest sister is still only three so I help her with a bit more, for example, help her memorize songs or let her recognize many different animals in a book. I enjoy doing this because it helps them learn. I think, that it will also be enjoyable when I'm a teacher. Well, now you know what I like to be!

Answers:  
1. wagon 2. shadow 3. vacuum cleaner 4. a goose because it honks 5. carpet 6. It's two-tired 7. When it lies at anchor.

With love from your  
Aunt Betty.