

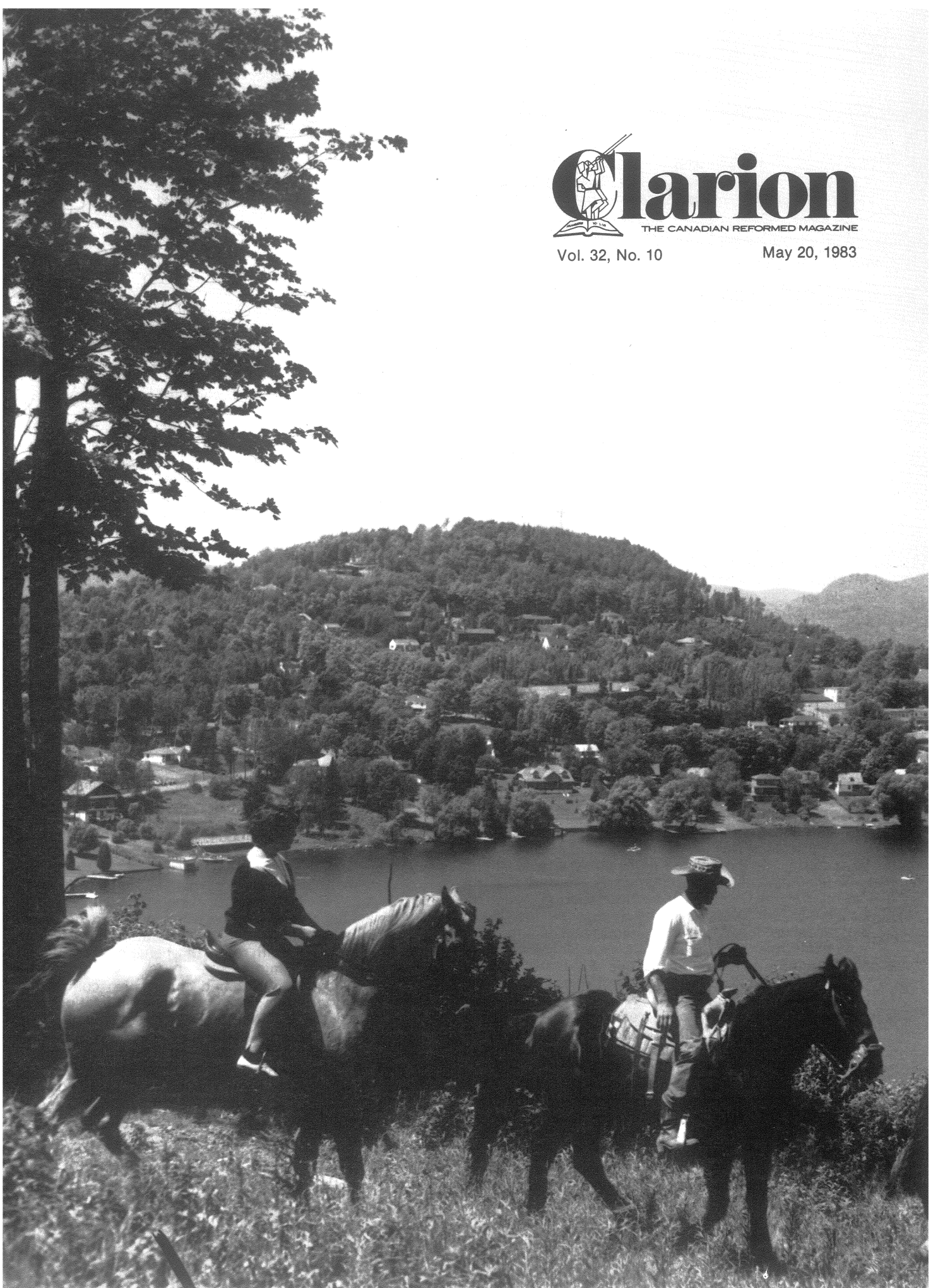


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Vol. 32, No. 10

May 20, 1983



Confessions Concerning the Church₂

Comparison of the Belgic Confession with the Westminster Confession of Faith, especially with respect to what they say concerning the catholic or universal Church.

5. "More or less pure" versus "true or false"

Another point of discussion is what the Westminster Confession of Faith says in Chapter XXV, Sections 4 and 5. There we read:

"4. This catholic Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular Churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.

"5. The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth, to worship God according to His will."

In this respect the Committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church wrote in the above-mentioned letter: "We would further point out that the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XXV, Section 4 and 5, does distinguish between the true and the false Church ("no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan"). Two of what the Belgic Confession (Article 29) calls the marks of the Church are mentioned in Section 4, but with attention to the need of purity in all phases of public worship; and the third, discipline, receives special attention in that a whole Chapter is devoted to it (Chapter XXX, of Church Censures). The Westminster Confession of Faith does differ from the Belgic Confession in that account is taken of degrees of purity within the Church as visible. This reflects a more complicated ecclesiastical situation than existed in the time of the writing of the Belgic Confession when the difference between Lutheran and Reformed confessional groupings was barely beginning to receive institutional form. For the Belgic Confession the false Church was pre-eminently the Church of Rome and the true Church was the Church of the Reformation. Although the Belgic Confession states expressly that the true Church and the false Church 'are easily known and distinguished from each other,' your Synod has experienced considerable difficulty in discerning the lines of the true Church in the United States. This bafflement arises from an ecclesiastical complexity to which the Westminster Confession addresses itself in terms of degrees of purity without propounding a doctrine of the pluriformity of the Church. Neither the Belgic Confession nor the Scottish Confession of 1560 faced this complexity."¹⁵

From this passage it becomes clear why the Westminster Confession speaks in a different way. The Belgic Confession says that the true and the false Church are easily known and distinguished from each other. There is an element of truth in the OPC Committee's statement that this was apparently much more easy in Guido de Brès' time — when there was basically only a distinction between the Roman Catholic Church, the Anabaptists,

and the Reformed Church — than it is in the present time with all kinds of Churches all over the world.

I think we should not make a contradiction between what the two Confessions say. As we have stated earlier already: the Belgic Confession puts strong emphasis on the personal confession of our faith and the way things are supposed to be. The Westminster Confession, written almost eighty years later in an established situation, pays more attention to the practical and actual situation.

We certainly have to make a distinction between the true and the false Church. We have to use the marks of the true and the false Church, mentioned in Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession. But we should never forget that becoming a false Church often does not happen overnight. It is a process, a development. And in the course of this process we can certainly speak about a more or less pure Church.

6. Only one true Church in one place?

This question has given rise to many discussions. Some use a sort of syllogism to answer the question. (A syllogism is a reasoning which uses two statements, a so-called major and a minor, which seem to lead to an inevitable conclusion.) The reasoning goes like this:

Major: There are many false Churches, but only one true Church.

Minor: We are the true Church.

Conclusion: All other Churches are false.

As we have stated already earlier, becoming a false Church often does not happen overnight. It is rather a process over a period of time. There can very well be a certain stage in the course of events at which the one might say, "It is a false Church," while others say, "It is not," or "Not yet." Of course, we have to look at the marks of the true Church according to our confession in Art. 29, but even then it is not always a clear-cut matter. Things are not always black or white in human life. There are many colours in between. That is what the Westminster Confession of Faith refers to when it speaks about a more or less pure Church.

The syllogism, mentioned above, also contradicts what history teaches us. In 1869 a unification was reached between the Reformed Seceded Churches and the Reformed Churches under the Cross. It is clear that the true Church cannot unite with the false Church. Therefore it shows that there must have been two true Churches at the same time, which came to a unification.

The same happened in 1892: a union took place of the Churches from the first secession and the so-called "Dolerende" Churches in The Netherlands.

A similar development we can notice in the history of the American Churches. In 1890 a union took place of the True Reformed Church and the Christian Reformed Church.

From all these cases it becomes clear that sometimes two true Churches do exist at the same time and the same place. Otherwise there could never have been a union in the cases mentioned above.

However — and that is another aspect of the same matter — there should not be two true Churches beside each other. In other words: if there are two true Churches, they should come together and unite with one another. The unity of the Church of Jesus Christ should be maintained, according to Art. 28 of the Belgic Confession. That is why we have contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Our General Synod decided to recognize them as true Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, as confessed in Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession.¹⁶ This does not mean that there are no differences. There certainly are. We have to study this matter to learn from each other, and we have to try to convince one another if there are things that have to be changed or improved. The final goal should not be a kind of cooperation that leaves both parties free to go their own way, not a kind of interchurch relationship, but the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ.

It would be an unhealthy situation, even contradictory to the Word of God and the Confession, if we should agree with and resign ourselves to the fact that there exists more than one true Church beside each other, without coming to and working in the direction of a union with each other.

7. Outside of it there is no salvation

There is one clause, in the Belgic Confession as well as in the Westminster Confession of Faith, which seems to give rise to many discussions and misunderstandings. It is the expression mentioned in the heading of this paragraph. In Art. 28 of the Belgic Confession we read: “We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and outside of it there is no salvation” Chapter XXV, section 2 of the Westminster Confession, speaking about the (visible) Church, says that it “consists of all those throughout the whole world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”

What does that mean? Can someone who is not a member of the Canadian Reformed Church, not be saved? In this respect there seems to be not much difference between the Belgic Confession and the Westminster Confession of Faith. It is worded slightly differently in the Westminster Confession: “no ordinary possibility of salvation.” That might sound a little less strict than the expression “no salvation.” But everyone understands that we are talking about the “ordinary possibility” anyway. Exceptions always exist. We have to leave it up to the Lord whether someone finally will be saved. We cannot judge someone’s heart. A member of the Church can be a hypocrite. And a murderer (even on the cross) can be saved. But the ordinary possibility of salvation is according to the way and the rules revealed in the Word of God.

Note that the Westminster Confession does not speak about this matter with respect to the so-called invisible Church, but, dealing with the visible Church, it says: “out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”

Having stated this similarity between the Belgic Confession and the Westminster Confession we will confine ourselves first to the meaning of these words in the

Belgic Confession. They have been quoted quite often to accuse us of having a doctrine which teaches that only members of our Church can be saved.

When we ask in a catechism class or somewhere else what the real meaning of these words is, all kinds of answers are given. Few, if any, will maintain that only members of our Church can be saved. But still the Confession says: “We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and outside of it there is no salvation, that no person of whatever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself.” Some say: The Belgic Confession, in Art. 27, speaks about the invisible Church and in Art. 28 about the visible Church, but that is an untenable statement. Art. 28 opens with the words: “We believe, since this holy congregation is” This shows the unity of Art. 27 and 28. Art. 28 elaborates on what has been introduced in Art. 27.

To solve this problem, we have to take note of what it says, especially in the original text of the Belgic Confession. On our translation two words are used: “congregation” and “assembly.” The original Latin text uses the words *congregatio* and *coetus* (the “c” pronounced as an “s” and the “oe” as the “eux” in the French word “deux”).

It is important to notice the meaning of the two words. In the original text both words are used also in Art. 27, although they are translated there by only one word, “congregation.” The word *congregatio* is derived from a word that indicates a flock. It means: to bring together the flock, to gather the sheep. It refers to the work of Jesus Christ, who is gathering His flock, calling them together from all nations, tongues, and peoples. He is the shepherd who takes care of His *congregatio*. The word *coetus* refers to the activity of the members who come together. It emphasizes the work of the members, the sheep of the flock, who have to follow the shepherd.

When we talk about the Church we always have to keep these two aspects in mind. Christ is calling us; He is gathering His sheep. And we have to follow the Good Shepherd; we have to listen to His voice. That is one of the reasons why we should avoid the expression “invisible Church.” Christ calls His people together. There are sheep who belong to the flock, but who do not follow the Shepherd, who do not listen to His voice. The Shepherd leaves the ninety-nine on the mountains to go in search of the one that went astray (Matt. 18:12). But at the same time we should realize that every sheep that goes astray and leaves the flock, is in danger of being killed by wolves and being destroyed. The sheep have to follow the Shepherd; they have to listen to His voice. That is what we can learn from Art. 28 of the Belgic Confession. The Church is and always has to be the flock of the Good Shepherd. He calls and gathers them together (*congregatio*), and they have to listen to His voice and come together (*coetus*). We do not call a lost sheep or a couple of sheep who are going astray “an invisible flock” or sheep not belonging to the visible but still to the invisible flock. We had better put it this way: all those who belong to the flock have to follow the Shepherd. Let us not separate these two aspects of the Church: Christ’s care for His people and our responsibility to follow.

You might wonder what all this has to do with the meaning of the expression: “outside of it there is no salvation.” This will become clear from what follows.

The late Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, in his commentary on

the Belgic Confession, mentions a remarkable point in this respect.¹⁷ He was an expert in Latin. He pays attention to the fact that the word *congregatio* is a feminine noun and the word *coetus* a masculine noun. In our language we do not make much distinction between the two, but the Latin and also the French language does. We have only one definite article, “the”; but the French language uses either “le” or “la.” For a human being we use the personal pronouns “he” and “she” or “him” and “her”; for things we only use “it.” The Latin language makes a distinction also in the personal pronoun for a thing. The translation “outside of her there is no salvation” does not make sense in English. That is, however, what it says literally. The word “it” refers to the word *congregatio* and not to the word *coetus*. It refers to the feminine and not to the masculine noun.

According to this explanation of Prof. Schilder, the meaning becomes clear. The Church is the flock (*congregatio*) of Jesus Christ, gathered together by Him, the Good Shepherd, and all the sheep must follow (*coetus*) and listen to His voice. Outside of His flock, His gathering and calling, is no salvation. Therefore all His sheep have to follow Him. The Church is Christ’s *congregatio* and therefore we have to be a faithful *coetus*. There is no contradiction in that. It is not the introduction of a visible and an invisible Church concept. It simply shows us two aspects of the same matter. But at the same time we have to be aware that there really are two different aspects. We don’t like the expressions: visible and invisible Church. Too much harm has been caused by the theory of the pluriformity of the Church. That, however, does not take away the fact that the Westminster Confession uses these expressions and had used them already almost two hundred years before Dr. Kuyper was born.

Our aversion to these expressions should not make us impervious to another use that can be made of them as well. What the Committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church wrote in the letter, mentioned before, boils down to the fact that they, with their use of the terms “visible” and “invisible” Church, refer more or less to the same aspects our confession means when the words *congregatio* and *coetus* are used.

It is deplorable that terms and words cause such a lot of confusion. On the one hand, we should not ignore the danger of having heresies introduced by seemingly innocent terms. That happened quite often in the history of the Church and it is still a threat. On the other hand, we should not impose our interpretations and our definitions upon someone else’s terms.

8. The communion of saints

Article 28 of the Belgic Confession says: “that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it [this Church]; maintaining the unity of the Church; . . . and as mutual members of the same body, serving to the edification of the brethren, according to the talents God has given them.”

The Heidelberg Catechism says in Lord’s Day 21, Answer 55: “First, that believers, all and every one, as members of Christ, are partakers of Him and all His treasures and gifts; second, that every one must know himself bound to employ his gifts readily and cheerfully to the advantage and salvation of other members.”

The Westminster Confession of Faith deals with these matters in Chapter XXVI. There we read in Sections 1 and 2: “1. All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their

Head, by His Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His grace, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory; and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other’s gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

“2. Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Sometimes the question has been asked, “Are there saints outside the true Church?” From the discussion recently held in a certain classis in The Netherlands during four consecutive sessions, we can learn that some are convinced there are no saints outside the true Church. However, it all depends on what we mean by “saints.” In the Roman Catholic Church the word “saint” refers to a person who is supposed to be better than others and almost without sin. We do not recognize the existence of such saints at all. Our Confession speaks in a different way. To be a saint means: to be set apart, to be chosen by and united to Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul calls the members of the congregations to whom he writes his letters: saints, beloved who are called to be saints, saints in Jesus Christ. Lord’s Day 21 speaks about the believers as members of Christ.

The Westminster Confession of Faith says that all saints that are united to Christ “have communion in each other’s gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.”¹⁸ This communion of saints is apparently a communion, exercised within the Church. Section 2 says that they “are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification.”

It is clear that our Belgic Confession as well as the Westminster Confession of Faith speak about a communion of saints to be exercised within the Church.

The question has been asked: Are there saints outside the Church? Now we have to take care not to draw a too hasty conclusion. Some saying: there are true believers, who are called and will be saved by Christ, although they are not members of the Church. So the communion of saints is broader than the Church. We have to exercise the communion of saints also with people who are not members of the Church. Others say: the communion of saints is and can be exercised only within the true Church; therefore there are no saints outside the Church.

I think neither of these theories is correct. Both are too easy-going and ignore one important aspect. The term “communion of saints” is a double expression, a term consisting of two words, namely “communion” and “saints.” Not every form of communion is a communion of saints. We can have contacts and good relations with others, although it is not a communion of saints. Not all saints have communion with each other. Although we are one in Christ we cannot exercise communion with (employ our gifts for the advantage of) all unknown believers in other countries or parts of the world.

Certainly there are saints, members of Christ's flock, called by the Good Shepherd, who do not, or not yet, join the Church. The Good Shepherd leaves the ninety-nine on the mountains in search of one that goes astray. That is not an invisible flock, but one sheep, or many sheep, going astray.

However, the communion of saints is a communion, to be exercised within the Church. That is what we can learn from the Belgic Confession as well as from the Westminster Confession of Faith. The reason that we do not have and cannot exercise communion of saints with those who are outside the Church is simply because they fail to join the flock and follow the Shepherd. It does not say anything about their heart or our attitude, but it

shows us a sad reality.

Therefore let us pray and work for it that all who are true believers, called to be saints in and with Jesus Christ, may follow the Shepherd and join the flock, that the *congregatio* may appear to be a *coetus* and all the saints can and may exercise communion with each other, in worship of God and to their mutual edification.

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¹⁵Acts General Synod Coaldale 1977, p. 96.

¹⁶*ibid*, p. 41.

¹⁷Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, *Christelijke Religie*, Kampen z.j., p. 92.

¹⁸*Westminster Confession*, Chapter XXV, Section 1.

WHICH BIBLE IN AUSTRALIA ?²

III. The New American Standard Bible *Basis and Aims*

The translators are committed to the belief that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Their aim was to provide as close as possible to a word-for-word translation from the original texts, retaining original word order and sentence structure wherever possible.

Sources

The NASB is basically an update of the American Standard Version (ASV) of 1901. This (the ASV) was a revision of the KJV, taking into account new developments and discoveries in the study of ancient texts and languages. The ASV was a very literal translation in (for 1901) outdated English. It was an excellent translation for study purposes, but unsatisfactory for worship or family use. The NASB continues in this tradition.

As in the RSV and the NIV, the NASB translation of the Old Testament is based on the Masoretic Text, and the New Testament translation on developments of the Westcott-Hort Greek New Testament, rather than the Textus Receptus which was used for the KJV.

Method of Translation

Basically formal equivalent.

Advantages

1. Translators have proceeded from conservative assumptions regarding the authority of Scripture.
2. It generally provides an accurate

literal rendering of the original text.

3. An objective reading of this translation will lead to an accurate formulation and a sound defence of all points of Reformed Doctrine (as expressed in the 3 Forms of Unity).

Disadvantages

1. In translation, insufficient account is taken of contextual meaning. Often, this translation is more of a transiteration. The excessively literal rendering of the original frequently obscures the exact meaning of the text. The translation is often lacking in clarity. Some examples:
 - a. Philippians 1:27-30 is in its entirety, stilted, awkward and unclear.
 - b. Hebrews 1:1 "in many portions": What does that mean?
 - c. A little further: "if indeed God is one" (a literal rendering which suggests that this is open to question) rather than the more correct "since God is one."
 - d. A consistent use of verb forms which are not a part of normal English usage.

Holwerda, in "Populair wetenschappelijke Schetsen" (Goes, 1962, p. 77) says: "a literal translation is often *literal*, but no translation. After all, the latter is what we are after."

2. The English language and style is often awkward and unnatural.
3. The RSV is the designated source for Scripture Quotations in the

forthcoming Book of Praise of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

4. The NASB is available in a limited number of formats, all of which are rather large, bulky, and relatively expensive.

The Present Use of the King James Version

1. The language of the KJV is so outdated as to form a definite barrier to the clear understanding of Scripture.

This is especially true for children and younger members of the Churches, for those who became members at an adult age, and for those for whom English is not their native language. Even those who by years of reading and study are "at home" in the KJV miss many nuances of meaning.

Many words and expressions used in the KJV are no longer a part of the normal English language.

More seriously, many words or expressions have entirely different meanings now to what they had when the KJV first appeared. This can and does lead to numerous instances where the Scriptures are unwittingly misunderstood or misapplied. For our time the clarity of the KJV falls far short of what is desirable and possible.

2. The KJV does not, as a whole, provide the most reliable rendering of the original text. It contains a number of mistranslations, and progress in the availability and study

of ancient manuscripts, as well as advances in the knowledge of ancient languages has shown a need for a more accurate translation.

We refer to the Report submitted to the 1980 Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, which stated as one of its conclusions: "the KJV cannot function any longer as a translation in contemporary English or as the best rendering of the original text."

J.P. Lewis in "The English Bible from KJV to NIV" (Baker Book House) pp. 44ff. cites numerous inaccuracies and mistranslations present in the KJV.

The Report to Synod 1974 of the Canadian Reformed Churches quotes (with agreement) a dissertation by J.L. Goddard which concludes that the RSV is statistically more accurate than the KJV.

3. It is becoming increasingly apparent to parents as well as teachers that the language of the KJV is often difficult, if not impossible for the children of the Church to comprehend. One of the major tasks of Christian parents and teachers is to instruct covenant children to read and understand God's Word for themselves. Clarity ought therefore to be a major factor in deciding which Bible translation is to be used.

Deputies are of the opinion that it ought not to be necessary to instruct the children of the Church in a language other than their own in order to enable them to hear what their Father wishes to say to them.

Modern Translations Considered

1. It ought to be stressed that none of the three translations evaluated can, as a whole, be considered unacceptable. All have their weaknesses, but in no case are these of such a nature as to remove the translation from consideration.
2. All three versions have based their translations on the same sources, representing the current level of knowledge regarding ancient manuscripts and languages.
3. In spite of their respective shortcomings or weaknesses, none of the three versions evaluated can be called unscriptural. For each translation it is true that there are passages or phrases of which the translation is incorrect or questionable, and which, when considered *in isolation* may cause doubts or objections. But this is true of every translation, including the KJV. And to this may be remarked that the Church has never read

Scripture passages in isolation. We cite a few examples:

- a. In Genesis 12:3 and other O.T. places the RSV has: "by you all nations of the earth shall bless themselves." This rendering does not do justice to the Messianic promise contained in this verse: "in you all nations of the earth will be blessed." Granted. But we also find this promise quoted in Galatians 3:8, where it is correctly rendered, and placed in its full Messianic perspective. As in so many other instances, the reading of the Old Testament Gospel in the light of its New Testament fulfillment resolves any uncertainty.
- b. In the RSV Psalm 2:7 is given as: "you are my son, today I have begotten you." The failure to capitalize "son" leaves out the Messianic import of this text. However, its full Messianic significance becomes immediately obvious when we read it quoted in Acts 13:33 and Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5.
- c. Isaiah 7:14 is given as: "behold, a young woman shall conceive. . . ." This rendering has been cited as evidence of an attempt to deny the virgin birth of our Saviour. Holwerda, among others, shows that "young woman" is a better translation than "virgin." The prophecy most immediately points to an event during the lifetime of King Ahaz, possibly the birth of Hezekiah. It refers indirectly to the birth of Christ. Again, a reading of the text as it is quoted in the New Testament (Matt. 1:23) gives the Old Testament prophecy its full Messianic meaning.

Conclusion

The Deputies are of the opinion that of the three versions considered, the RSV is the one to be preferred, and make the following observations:

1. Over the past 15 years, Deputies of the Synods of the Canadian Reformed Churches have made a detailed study of these three versions, most particularly the RSV. In reports submitted to the various Synods during that period, the consistent conclusion has been that the RSV is a reliable translation of the Holy Scriptures, and that no conclusive evidence to the contrary has been brought forward. We quote from the Acts of Synod (1974) of the Canadian Reformed Churches (Art. 182): "Synod Declares: That the commit-

tee has not adduced valid reasons to state that the RSV is unacceptable."

"Synod Decides: In accordance with the decision of the General Synod New Westminster 1972 Art. 33 to leave the use of the RSV in the freedom of the Churches."

For over 10 years the use of the RSV has been left in the freedom of the Canadian sister churches, and this has been a period of testing and review. At the end of this period, the original conclusion as to the reliability and suitability of the RSV still stood.

At the 1980 Synod, the Canadian sister churches chose the RSV as the preferred translation for worship and catechism instruction, and decided to use it in the linguistic revisions of the Creeds and Liturgical Forms. They did so after lengthy and detailed consideration of the issues involved, and have come to the conclusion that the RSV is the most suitable version for use in the Churches.

We quote from the Acts of the Canadian Reformed Synod of 1980, Art. 111:

"The Majority Report bases its preference (for the RSV) on the fact that the RSV is a "scholarly word-for-word translation," that the English of the RSV is "dignified and best suited for liturgical use," and that the future offers good hope for more improvements. Furthermore . . . the RSV lends itself best "for the Scripture quotations in the linguistic modernisations of the Creeds and the Liturgical Forms" and . . . the use of the RSV should be recommended to the Churches." For this reason, given the years of analysis and evaluation by competent and qualified persons, the Free Reformed Churches would have to have compelling reasons for taking a different course of action.

2. Synod 1956 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia rejected the RSV on the grounds that it was "modernistic and unscriptural." They did so mainly because marked differences were seen between the RSV on the one hand and the KJV and the Dutch Statenvertaling on the other. The Trinitarian Bible Society also largely bases its objections to the RSV on its difference from the KJV. Such criticism is of limited validity, since the reliability of a particular translation is to be determined with reference to the original texts, and not to another Bible translation.

3. It is true that a number of the translators of the RSV do not hold conservative views regarding the authority of Scripture. A number of them are theological "liberals." This, however, need not, and in fact does not, imply that the translation itself is a liberal one. If anything the RSV has been criticized as being "too conservative" in its use of the original texts, its method of translation, and its presentation in English. Synod 1974 of the Canadian Reformed Churches remarks that the RSV was chosen for evaluation because it is one of the most conservative translations presently available.

A telling example is provided by the RSV's rendering of II Tim. 3:16, which upholds the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures: "All Scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable..." etc. The translators could easily have chosen the rendering more suitable to "liberal" thinking, as the Dutch NGB-vertaling does: "Every Scripture inspired by God is also profitable..." etc. But they did not do so.

4. The main criticism constantly levelled at the RSV is that it downplays the Divine nature of Christ, and as such, has become a vehicle for liberal theology, which denies the Deity of Christ. This objection to the RSV was also the thrust of the Report to the 1956 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches. And there are places where the rendering of the RSV does not give the same expression to the Divinity of Christ as does the KJV, as e.g. Romans 9:5; Psalm 45:6,7; Luke 24:51b and 52a in notes instead of the text; I Timothy 3:16. But it has not, and cannot be shown conclusively that these differences are a reflection or a result of a modernistic viewpoint. In most cases they simply reflect the fact that choices had to be made, out of a number of ancient texts, and a number of possible translations. The argument cannot be sustained that these alterations and/or omissions detract from or cast doubt on the Scriptural confession concerning the Divinity of our Saviour. In fact the RSV, in a number of places, upholds the Deity of Christ even more than the KJV does, as e.g. in Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1.

On reading the RSV, the only conclusion one could possibly come to is that the Bible speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Christ of the Scriptures, the Son of God,

that is, God Himself. This conclusion comes through loud and clear, and is as inescapable in the RSV as it is in any other translation of the Holy Scriptures.

5. The translators of the NASB proceeded from the conviction that the Bible is the infallible, inspired Word of God, and based their translation work on this conviction. The results, however, do not differ markedly from the RSV. Both versions use the same sources, and both use the same method of translation. Both are derived from the KJV via the ARV. The only major differences between the RSV and the NASB (clarity, readability and good use of the English language) clearly favour the RSV.

6. Like the NASB the NIV was translated by scholars who proceeded from Scriptural convictions regarding the authority of Scripture as the inspired Word of God. It has already been noted in this report that the method of translation differs from that of the RSV and the NASB. This translation is freer and more interpretive. (The Report for the 1975 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches deals with this aspect at some length.) The freer method of translation of the NIV makes it somewhat less suitable for study purposes than the other versions. On the other hand, because of its great clarity and excellent readability, it might well be the most suitable of the three versions for family or private reading.

7. To summarize:

The RSV is a sound, scholarly word-for-word translation, generally accurate and reliable, presented in good dignified English, and is suitable for church worship, instructional use, and family, personal and study reading.

The NASB is a similar translation to the RSV, but falls short in clarity and readability. It is therefore less suited for worship, instructional or family use.

The NIV has strong appeal because of its clarity and readability, but is less suitable for worship or study purposes because of its method of translation.

The Canadian sister churches have adopted the RSV as the preferred translation after lengthy evaluation.

Recommendations

Deputies recommend to Synod:

1. That the use of the Revised Standard Version be recommended to


the Churches, for public worship, instructional purposes (e.g. catechism instruction and schools) and family use.

2. That Synod appoint Deputies to report to the next Synod with their evaluations and findings regarding the use of the RSV.

Further, that these Deputies are instructed to set up and maintain adequate archives of relevant matter, in order to facilitate the work of any future Deputies dealing with Bible translation matters, should these be appointed. The Deputies: S.G. Hur (Convenor); K. Brüning; J. Numan; A. Plug (Secretary).

In my opinion, this is a good report. I can find myself quite well in it. Good, also, is the goal to maintain unity between the two English-speaking sister church federations on this point of Bible translation. The report also confirms that Synod Smithville made a good decision here. I hope that the Australian sister churches will adopt the recommendations of the report, and that God may bless such a decision.

J. GEERTSEMA



THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
Published bi-weekly by Premier Printing Ltd.
Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:
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ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):
CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
1249 Plessis Road
Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2C 3L9
Phone: (204) 222-5218

Second class mail registration number 1025.
ISSN 0383-0438

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FROM THE SCRIPTURES

“Yea, at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve Him with one accord.” Zeph. 3:9.

Touched Lips

A surprising result flows out of the judgment of the nations as Zephaniah depicts it. After the LORD pours out His indignation and anger upon the nations, the speech of the peoples is changed to a pure speech, and they freely call upon the name of the LORD. This change is closely connected with the judgment and obviously arises from it. The word used for “change” here describes a *radical* turning, a change of dramatic proportions. The same word is also used in the sense of “to demolish,” “to overthrow,” and that is also how we see it used in the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Through this forceful change of fury, human speech is purified and transformed.

However, the change does not bring human lips to silence. The change is rather one of cleansing and purification. Just as the LORD touched the lips of Isaiah and Jeremiah (Isa. 6:7, Jer. 1:9) and promised Moses that He would also direct the words of his mouth (Ex. 4:11, 12), so He promises here to touch the lips of all the nations, so that all will hear His voice and worship Him. The LORD takes all uncleanness away, opening the door to *plain*, forthright, and sincere speech concerning Him. In other words, the barriers against appropriating His revelation are removed.

When was this prophesy fulfilled? The Lord Jesus Himself answers this question when He says to His disciples shortly before His death. “I have said this to you in figures; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures but tell you *plainly* of the Father,” John 16:25. That happens when the promised Counsellor, the Paraclete, comes in order to anoint the lips of the people of God scattered among the nations. And at Pentecost we see the moment arrive: a mighty rushing wind, tongues of fire, and everyone hearing the disciples speak in their own language, Acts 2:1ff.

This is the fruit of the outpouring of God’s wrath at Golgotha. He who bore the curse for His Church now fills His bride with His blessings. Along with full reconciliation, we receive the renewal of our minds, so that our hearts, mouths, and lips are changed from the service of uncleanness to the worship and praise of the Creator. That change is forceful and dramatic; indeed, it involves nothing less than total *rebirth*, through which our hearts are transformed into a dwelling place of the

Holy Spirit.

This transformation does not mean that we can escape the world we live in and avoid any confrontation with the issues of the day. Everyone is a child of his time: and fleeing our time, culture, and language either by scurrying into the past and continually reliving it, or by apocalyptically pulling the future towards us, is wrong. The Word must be spoken and lived in the language and culture of the day. But when the Lord touches our lips, we may by His grace bring the salt of His eternal truth, His counsel and will, to our situation. Touched by the Spirit of Pentecost, we may learn not to flee our time, but to address it properly, with words that “fit the occasion,” Eph. 4:28. For the Lord calls us to manifest His renewal and salvation in our day and age, confronting the climate of the day with words that are fitly spoken. That is the fruit of Pentecost!

This grace and power of Pentecost is not given to a chosen few, a select company of office-bearers; it is given to the whole Church. We are *all* anointed by the Spirit of God, I John 2:20. Through the outpouring of the Spirit, we may testify to the grace of God working and living in our time. He permits us to cultivate and apply “sound speech which cannot be censored,” Tit. 2:8, speech that applies to the culture and issues of the day and yet is *transformed*, having been freed from the essential spiritual direction of today’s culture. With such speech, the age-old antithesis between God’s truth and man’s lie carries on. With such speech, all confusion of tongues is overcome, and we learn to speak plainly and sincerely about the grace of God to a fallen world.

Since we have been anointed by His Spirit, it must now resound from our lips. The age of redemption has come! We must therefore renounce all evil speaking and proclaim God’s redemption from the housetops, Matt. 10:27. Let us joyfully seize the gift of Pentecost and “through Him . . . continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name,” Heb. 13:15.

May we say, yes, “Abba, Father,”
Say of Jesus, “Thou art Lord,”
Praise Thee all with one accord. (Hymn 36:4)

J. DEJONG

Preaching Christ or Confessing Christ₂

A Response to the Article,
“With Life and Lip’ — A Critique from Scripture and History”

3. Some Biblical Texts Considered

In his article under the sub-heading, “Decisive Argument Killed by Theological Term,” the Rev. G. VanDooren writes, “. . . I have to remove an obstacle. The beautiful term ‘redemptive-historical interpretation’ must serve to render null and void the powerful testimony of the Holy Spirit re: evangelizing by common believers: Acts 11:19-23.” There is indeed a great danger in misusing anything, including “theological terms.” On the other hand, there are also good uses for many things, including “theological terms.” Think of how theological terms like “Trinity,” “Essence,” “Persons” have been used to defend the truth revealed in Scriptures. The Rev. G. Van Dooren does not deny that the term “redemptive-historical interpretation” is a “beautiful term.” We will continue to use it. To say it in the most simple way, without going into the whole redemptive-historical exemplary debate,⁶ redemptive-historical means that we may not interpret the history of God’s redemptive work as examples of what we must do. There are things revealed in the history of Scriptures which we may not use as examples. To use an extreme example, Jacob had two wives. Through them the LORD brought forth the twelve tribes of Israel. Even though the LORD worked through those two wives to further His work of redemption accomplished in history, it does not mean that we are to follow Jacob’s example.

The point now is that we must be careful that we do not take what is written in Acts 8 and 11 out of historical context when applying them as examples. In Acts 7 we read that Stephen was stoned. Acts 8 continues the history. We read in verses 1 and 4 “And Saul [Paul] was consenting unto his [Stephen’s] death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the Church which

was at Jerusalem; and they were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.” Referring to the same incident, we read in Acts 11:19-22: “Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spoke unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.” What the Lord teaches us here is that He Himself uses opposition to the Church at Jerusalem to increase the Church and gather it from Gentiles as well as from Jews. It is in this surprising way that the Lord sees to it that the prophecy given through Isaiah and confirmed by Christ — of the gospel coming to the Gentiles — is fulfilled. Calvin says it in a beautiful way; “In like sort it came to pass, that the name of Christ, passing over mountains and seas, did flow even unto the farthest parts of the world; and by this means, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, the consumption did abound in righteousness.”⁷

Concerning what happened here in Acts 8, the Rev. G. VanDooren quotes Harnack and Green to explain these texts. Harnack wrote, “We cannot hesitate to believe that the great Mission of Christianity was in reality accomplished by means of informal missionaries,” and Green wrote, “But as early as Acts 8 we find that it is not the apostles but the ‘amateur’ missionaries, the men evicted from Jerusalem as a result

of the persecution” From both of these quotations we must object to the way in which the word “mission” and “missionary” is used. “Mission” is a Latin loan word of the verb *mitto: missum*. It means: “a sending out or being sent out with authority to perform a special duty.”⁸ Those who were dispersed on account of the persecution were not “sent to perform a special duty.” They lived in their own life situation. It was in the life situation there that, by the Lord’s providential hand, the gospel was spread. The Lord did not *call* those believers to the special task to preach the Word. Different from those who were dispersed, Barnabas was a missionary. He was *sent* by the Church at Jerusalem.

Something must be said yet about the way in which the word “preach” or “evangelize” (Greek: *euaggelizoo*) is used in those passages of Acts 8 and 11. The Rev. G. VanDooren quotes Green’s writing: “This must often have been not formal preaching, but the informal chattering to friends and chance acquaintances, in homes and wine shops, on walks and around market stalls.” It is well possible that it went this way. We do not know for certain. Just how this *euaggelizoo* was done is not written in Acts. If it was done in the way Green supposes, it is very similar to what has just been written about “confessing” above. If all they did was confess Christ in their own life situation — and that is the meaning of *euaggelizoo* here — then no difficulty remains. Those who were dispersed because of the persecution were then not sent out to do the work of preaching, and we cannot conclude from these passages that the Lord calls all to the task of preaching.

If what happened in Acts 8 and 11 is that those who have been dispersed considered themselves called to the special task of preaching the Word, then we must remember what the Lord has taught us concerning the special offices to which certain men are to be called in the letters to Timothy and Titus (see above, where Art. XXXI of the Belgic Confession was discussed); then we are not to follow the example of Acts 8 and 11. It is possible that what the Lord has revealed concerning the special offices in Timothy and Titus was revealed later than the events which took place in Acts. At any rate, when the persecution began, the apostle Paul was not yet an apostle (Acts 8:1), and those two letters in which

we especially receive instruction concerning the special offices had not been written yet.

Concerning these chapters in Acts, the Rev. G. VanDooren also writes, "Even Philip, who came later to Samaria, was not ordained as a preacher, Acts 7 (8?), but preach he did!" Although it is true that Philip was not ordained as a preacher, he was an office-bearer. In Acts 6:5 we are told that he was among those chosen to be a deacon. What is more important is that when Philip preached, it was under special circumstances. In verse 26 we read: "And the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert." After he meets the Ethiopian eunuch there, we read in verses 35-38: "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto water: and the eunuch said, See here is water; what does hinder me to be baptized? . . . and he baptized him." If from this passage we must conclude that all believers are to follow the example of Philip and preach, must we also conclude that all believers, who find that the word which they preach is received, should baptize? If not all believers are to follow Philip's example to baptize, why must they follow the example to preach? Why must one example be followed and not the other? What we are taught in this redemptive history is that the Lord Himself makes sure that the gospel message goes to the Gentiles. The Lord sends His angel to Philip so that He might accomplish this deed through him, Phillip.

The Rev. G. VanDooren mentions I Thess. 1:7-8. There the apostle Paul writes to the Thessalonians, ". . . So that you were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything." For the meaning of this text the Rev. G. VanDooren refers to Greijdanus. We will quote that passage from Greijdanus: "Obviously the believers of Thessalonica were aware of their calling to spread the Word of God. The location of the city with its lively markets and much traffic gave many opportunities for it" (my translation of: "Klaarblijkelijk zijn de geloovigen van Thessalonica

zich bewust van hun roeping, het woord des Heeren te verbreiden. De gunstige ligging der stad en het levendig handelsverkeer met de omgeving bood hiertoe alle gelegenheid").⁹ What Greijdanus writes is not entirely clear. When he speaks about the calling to spread the Word, does he speak about confessing Christ in one's daily life? — then we would agree — or does he refer to the special task of preaching the Word? — then we cannot agree. We find here the lack of a clear distinction between the office of all believers and the special offices — to which we have been objecting. In what way the Word of God has sounded forth from the Thessalonians is described in verses 9-10. There the apostle describes in what way those who have heard about Christ from the Thessalonians received the Word. He says, "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." The Thessalonians certainly did not set themselves to the task of preaching. They lived in agreement with what they had been taught in the preaching. We can visualize it in this way: The Thessalonians, upon receiving the gospel message, applied it by removing their idols. Many of the traders that came to Thessalonica would ask what happened to all those idols they say before. The Thessalonians would then explain what had happened and tell them about Christ.

Another text that should be mentioned is Eph. 4:12. Concerning what was written in the previous article, the Rev. G. VanDooren writes: "The author of the article on 'Evangelism or Home Mission' tried to make impression for his view-point with a reference to Ephesians 4: the well-known matter of that *comma*. The impression is made that a *liberal* theologian came up with the suggestion to read that Christ gave apostles . . . , pastors and teachers to equip the saints for *diakonia*. He should have read the many publications by Bible-believing authors on it, who come to the same conclusion that I did in my book. I did not and do not need a 'liberal' for that." If the impression was given in my previous article that the Rev. G. VanDooren needed a 'liberal' theologian in order to come to his conclusions concerning the comma in question,

my apology. That "impression" was not intended. Every commentary which is used, whether "conservative" or "liberal," must be used in order to help us understand the meaning of the text. Nothing more. The point is that Marcus Barth, who also is aware of the debate concerning this comma, admits that "The wording of the Greek text of v. 12 does not permit a decision." In this, my agreement. However, the admitted *theological* reason for which Marcus Barth decided to leave the comma out cannot be accepted. He, as shown in the previous article, did not do complete justice to how the Reformers had objected to the Roman Catholic clergy/laity dichotomy when he made his decision concerning this comma. He went to the other extreme which the Anabaptists and Independents had taken when he implied that in the New Testament there is no longer a distinction between the office of all believers and the special office instituted by Christ (see above, concerning Article XXXI).

4. The Distinction between the Office of all Believers and the Special Offices and between "Confessing" and "Preaching"

Much has already been said about the necessity of keeping a clear distinction between the office of all believers and the special offices. The question which must now be asked is, Where exactly is the distinction between these two offices? In Article XXXI of the Belgic Confession the special office is distinguished in a two-fold way. We are warned that no one may intrude himself into the special offices in an unlawful way, but is "bound to wait till it shall please God to call him; that he may have the testimony of his calling . . ." Here we are told about a "call" and its "testimony." The Confession speaks in a way similar to Calvin's. Calvin spoke about a two-fold call to office, one internal, the other external. By internal call he means "that we undertake the offered office neither from ambition nor avarice, nor any other selfish feeling, but a sincere fear of God and desire to edify the Church." By external calling he means that "which relates to the public order of the Church."¹⁰ The Confession, along with Calvin, warns against mysticism. Among the Independents and Congregationalists, some members would arise claiming to have a "call" from the Lord to do a special task. What Calvin says and what is taken

over by the Confession is that such an “internal” call cannot stand on its own. A person may have dreamed or assumed that he has received a call from the Lord. Such a call of the Lord must be confirmed by an “external” testimony of it. This is necessary not only to distinguish well between a psychologic assumption and a true call, but also that everything be done in the Church in an orderly way. It is through the Church that the Lord Himself confirms the “internal” calling. A person called through the Church is ordained and by it is publicly declared to have the *authority* for that particular office to which he has been called. Such a person is an office-bearer. He must perform a divinely given task. The English word “office” is derived from the Latin *officium*, meaning “duty, task, function.”

The first and primary special duty which is given to the Minister of the Word in this way, according to the “Form for Ordination of Ministers of the Word,” is to “declare the whole counsel of God to his congregation [for a missionary: to “preach the Word of God revealed in the Holy Scriptures to those who are without Christ . . .] proclaiming the Word . . .” To distinguish this special office or task from the office of all believers can be best illustrated by an example from civil life where specific offices are also given. Everyone has the duty as a citizen to prevent and stop crime. When someone whom you know and with whom you relate always breaks the speed limit, you warn him as a citizen. In this way you prevent crime. At the same time you are not given the *special office* to prevent and stop crime. It is not your duty to stop every car on the highway which is speeding and bring the driver to justice. You are even forbidden to disrupt traffic and the good order of the civil state in this way. In a similar way we must understand the distinction between the office of all believers and the special offices. The one is called to a particular task, the other is not.

In order to clearly distinguish between the office of all believers and the special office of Ministers of the Word, the words “preach” and “confess” have been used to preserve it. To fully preserve this distinction, a theological student who has not yet been ordained when given permission to speak during a worship service is not said to “preach” but to “speak an edifying word.”

It was my contention in the pre-

vious article and it still is, that, in the way in which the terms “evangelism” and “home mission” are used, the impression is given that this Scriptural distinction (as shown above) between the office of all believers and the special office is completely overlooked. The impression is given that all believers are assigned a *special* task *besides* confessing with word and deed in their daily walk of life. For example, when a Consistory appoints an “evangelism (or home mission) committee,” the impression is given (maybe unintentionally) that all believers are assigned to a *special* task (or office) by the Church *besides* confessing Christ by word and deed in their walk of life. Evangelism or Home Mission then seems to be a spare-time task. This impression is reinforced by the definition the Synod of the Dutch Churches has given to evangelism. They say that “evangelism means: to call those that have been estranged from God’s Word and serving the Lord, back to the Lord and thus also to the Church of the Lord” (my translation of Dutch *Acts*, Kampen, 1975: “de Evangelisatie bedoelt degenen, die vervreemd zijn van Gods Woord en van den dienst des Heeren, te roepen tot den Heere en dus ook tot den Kerk des Heeren”). From this statement of the Synod of our Dutch sister Churches we get the impression that all believers must do the *special* task to which missionaries are called and ordained; it is only to be done closer to home.

We do not want to get stuck on words, but we must remain clear in our definitions in order to communicate. If evangelism means to confess Christ by word of mouth in daily walk of life, we agree: all are called to evangelize. Our whole life must then be evangelizing. In this respect there is much which the Rev. G. Van Dooren wrote in his article that is to be applauded. However, if by evangelism it is understood that the Lord calls all believers to a special task (office) *besides* confessing Christ with word and deed in walk of life, we must object. The Lord does not *call* all believers to a *special* office.

P.K.A. DEBOER

⁶ For a good historic outline concerning this redemptive-historic/exemplary debate, see S. Greijdanus, *Sola Scriptura*, “Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts” (Wedge Publishing Foundation), 1970. His conclusions, however, are disappointing.

⁷ J. Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Baker Book House), 1979, Vol. XVIII, i.e. original “Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles,” Vol. 1, translated by H. Beveridge, pp. 465-466.

⁸ *Webster’s New Word Dictionary*, College Edition, (Nelson, Foster & Scott, Ltd.), 1968.

⁹ The passage to which the Rev. G. Van Dooren obviously seems to refer here, was not written by Greijdanus but is found in the series of Commentaries he edited with F.W. Grosheide. Although here attributed to S. Greijdanus, the Commentary which is quoted here was written by J.A.C. Van Leeuwen, *Paulus Zendbrieven aan Efeze, Colosse, Filemon, en Thessalonica*, “Kommentaar op Het Nieuwe Testament,” ed. by S. Greijdanus and F.W. Grosheide (H.A. Van Bottenburg), 1926, p. 309.

¹⁰ J. Calvin, *Calvin’s Institutes* (Mac Donald Publishing Co.), publication date not given, p. 567, i.e. Book IV, Chap. iii, par. 11.

CLOSING THE DISCUSSION

Why?

My colleague, Rev. P. DeBoer, deemed it necessary to write many pages in counter-criticism to my criticism of his original article, *Evangelism and Home Mission*. I will not help to make this “tree” bigger and thicker.

Reasons for ending the discussion (as far as I am concerned) are many. There are some minor things. Was there no “fear of competition” in his article? I do not say, in his heart, but certainly in his terminology. Believers, if active in home mission, would “overshadow” the God-given special offices. . . . One must fear such “overshadowing.”

Another minor thing: my brother changes the meaning of “*vocation*” (a believer should confess Christ in his vocation), giving it a wider meaning. That is not allowed during a discussion and renders communication impossible. Check WEBSTER, etc., on the meaning of this term, and stick to it.

My main reasons, however, are, first, ignoring arguments; second, confusion in reasoning, leading to absurd statements.

Arguments Ignored

My brother maintains that scattered believers, as in Acts 8 and 11, were allowed to “preach the Word,” “to preach the Lord Jesus,” *only* because there were no regular special offices yet. I said, “I beg your pardon, there were apostles who had been specifically mandated to preach to

Samaria, Judea and the ends of the world." No word is said against this.

I stressed that, if you forbid believers-without-special-office to "preach" (that's a term of the Holy Spirit!) the Word outside the church, you abolish evangelism and/or home mission, because we do not have a special office for evangelism. And even if we created such an office (Scripture would not forbid that), that would be a disaster if, then, all common believers would have to keep their mouths shut. This argument is also ignored.

Confusion and strange reasoning

1. Pages on Confession Art. 31 (and 30, 32) could (should) have remained unwritten, because the Confession speaks here about the mandates of the three offices *within* the already-gathered congregation. *Outside* that the minister (overseer) has no mandate except that of every common believer.¹ Thus, when such a believer "preaches the Word, the Lord Jesus," he simply *cannot* come into conflict with his minister's task! This confusion mars my brother's long answer and renders it ineffective.

2. It took me some time to discover that, in his view, there is nothing in between the preaching mandate of the minister (which is limited to the pulpit within the church) and the "confessing of Christ" in one's "vocation" (for this term see above).

3. It took me more time to believe my eyes when I read that, according

to "redemptive-historical exegesis," believers are no longer allowed to do what their brothers and sisters did in Samaria and elsewhere: "preach Christ" to the outside world. Why not? Because Paul wrote his letters to Timothy and Titus, describing the conditions for overseers and deacons. According to this exegesis the believers, if not called to a special office, are simply forbidden to do more than "confessing in their vocation." I am sorry, but I call this an absurd reasoning. With it is condemned what simple church members did in the first centuries (see my previous articles), although "the hand of the Lord was with them." With this reasoning will be condemned that "scattered believers "go about preaching the Word" when again the church will be persecuted and the regular execution of the three offices will be impossible. With this are condemned all those children of God in China who, after the murderous removal of all mission by communism, have kept on preaching Christ on a personal basis, in groups and homes; and thus the church survived as during the early persecutions.

Clericalism?

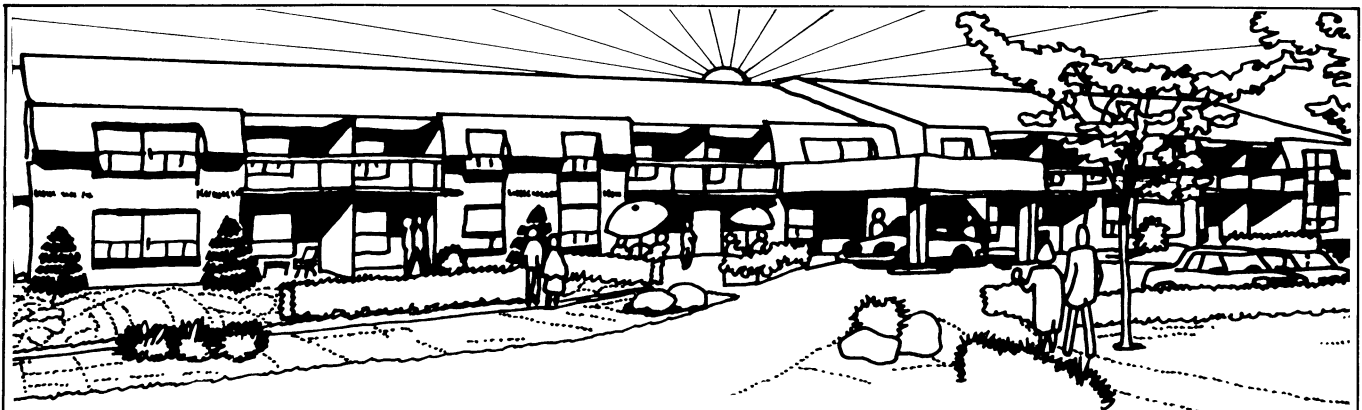
This term is borrowed from C. TRIMP in *Zorgen voor de Gemeente* (1982) ("care for God's church," I Tim. 3:5). As in other publications, Dr. Trimp "fights" against certain concepts of ABRAHAM KUYPER about the relation between special offices and "the

office of all believers." While translating, I quote: "The special office-bearer does not have the monopoly of the Word. If anything conflicts with the Pentecost dispensation, it is this concept of monopoly," p. 51. Alas, this is also Rev. DeBoer's concept. "A Kuyper ran the danger of clericalism. His son, H.H. KUYPER, drew the conclusion: *evangelism* as ministry of the Word belongs to the instituted church, not to the individual believers," p. 52. Again. . . . On p. 53 Dr. Trimp exclaims, "What difference in the world does it make, when a believer explains John 3:16 ("for God so loved the world . . .," vD) to his neighbour or when the local pastor does it in his own proper person?" "The 'dominee' does not have the monopoly of the Word nor of the pastorate," p. 54. "Let's not fight independentism with clericalism," p. 55. JOHN CALVIN fought against both when he stressed that Christ did not give authority to the *person* of the preacher, but to *the Word* He entrusted to him. Dr. A.N. HENDRIKS says in his recent publication, *Om de Bediening van de Geest*, "special office-bearers serve in order that the congregation may serve," p. 20.

On this note I close the discussion.

G. VANDOOREN

¹Outside this congregation — where "evangelism" is done — the difference between special office-bearers and common believers disappears.



INVITATION

Ebenezer Villa — Hamilton, Ontario

With pleasure, the Board of Directors cordially invites you to attend the

OFFICIAL OPENING

of the Senior Citizens Home
on June 25th, 1983, D.V. at 2:00 p.m.

in the Cornerstone Church
353 Stone Church Road East Hamilton, ON

news medley

Yes, the heading of this column reads "News Medley," but this time I must confess that there is no news, at least, it has not reached me. The number of bulletins which I received for this issue of *Clarion* was very small and what I did receive did not contain items which should be passed on to our readers. Whether it is the approaching holiday season or some other reason, I don't know.

Some time ago someone said to me, "I think that every one who has to write in a bulletin has become more careful with what he writes and the manner in which he writes it, otherwise he is afraid things will end up in the news medley."

Is it really that bad? I look only for items which are worthy to be passed on to the readers. When these items are of such a nature that I discover a dangerous or wrong element in them, I deem it my duty to point this out in order that what I think is wrong may be corrected and what I see as dangers may be avoided. I can assure you, however, that I am most happy when I can pass on good things.

Since there is no news to pass on or to comment on, I could have skipped this time, but did not wish to do this. How could I disappoint all of you who are looking forward to this your favoured column? That's why I decided to write some lines anyway. It also gives me the opportunity to touch upon a subject which concerns practically all our Churches.

I am referring to the stipend which is paid to our ministers.

If I am not mistaken, it is in practically all the Churches so that there is a fixed, set stipend, irrespective of whether the minister has a large or a small family, irrespective of whether he is a young minister or has served already for many years in this office. I doubt it very much that the *need* of the minister's family is the deciding factor. And would this not be the proper criterium, seeing that we always have maintained that what a minister receives is not a salary in the strict sense of the word, payment for the work which he does, but support which enables him to do his work without being burdened with the task of providing for his family by other regular work?

When one is paid for his work at an hourly or monthly rate, the condition of his family has no bearing on the amount that he receives: he works so many hours, he gets paid so much.

When, on the other hand, what one receives is support to provide for the needs of the family or — to put it more officially — to see to it that one can live off the gospel without undue care, things are different. Then the stipend is to be determined by what the minister's family needs. The result is that the stipend of the one is higher than that of the other, even though they serve in the same Congregation. Fortunately we do not have any Churches with two ministers, but if we had them, there would be a difference on the ground indicated above.

What I, therefore, would plead for is a change in the "calculation" of what a minister's family needs.

As an example I take the set-up in one of the two Churches which I served in The Netherlands.

There was a basic stipend (which can be revised from year to year).

Then there was the provision that for each year a minister had been in office he would get an additional one hundred guilders a year with a maximum of twelve hundred.

Then there was the child allowance: for each child a certain amount would be added to the stipend. I think it was Fl. 250 per year.

Thus a minister with a growing family would see his income increase by the yearly increment and by child-allowance.

When a child left home, or became eighteen years of age, the child-allowance for that child was dropped. This decreased the minister's income; but then: he did not need that much any more either, for he had one child less to support.

And: when he accepted a call and another minister came, the Consistory could with a free and good conscience pay the next minister less when his family circumstances justified this.

It is not my intention to set up a whole schedule. There are persons more capable than I am to do this. The basic thought, however, is well worth to be considered. I am convinced that things would become easier for our Consistories in this respect if they sought a solution of the question in this direction.

As we deal with some other topics this time anyway, I might as well draw your attention to a few records.

On my birthday I got a record entitled "Jan van Weelden en Loek van der Leeden Spelen op Orgel en Piano." I must say that this is a delightful record. I can find no better word for it. The record I have is the second volume. The number is S.T.B. 220206 and it is available from Church & Music Records, Box 154 Neerlandia, Alta., T0G 1R0. It is also available on cassette. We enjoy listening to it and I think that it would also make a nice present for some of our older members, for the two musicians play some of the old favourites such as "In den hemel is het schoon," "Weet gij hoeveel sterren kleven," and more.

What I am wondering about is whether anyone can tell me who Loek van der Leeden is. When I was in Schiedam one of our organists was Jan van der Leeden, and I am wondering whether the pianist of this record is related to him.

Perhaps I should, at the same time, talk about another record I acquired. It is an EMI record, issued on the Angel label. The number is ASD 3418. This record contains Vivaldi's "Magnificat" and "Gloria." When I mention that one of the singers is mezzo-soprano Teresa Berganza, this may give an indication of the professional quality. The New Philharmonic Chorus and the New Philharmonic Orchestra are under the direction of Riccardo Muti. I am certain that our music-loving readers will enjoy this record to a great extent. This record, too, is available from the address above and the music is on cassette as well. The price ? \$16.00.

If we had had news for our column, I might have postponed mentioning these two records until there would be sufficient material for a separate entry under "Reading and Listening." Now our medley had to provide place for it.

As there really is not much more to mention, we had better conclude our chat for this time.

Hopefully there will be more bulletins with more news next time, although we realize that the work of societies, at catechism classes, etc. has been concluded.

Anyway: Thank you for tuning in this time again. Our wavelength remains the same. Look forward to our next broadcast.

VO

“Forth from Thy Courts”

Preamble

In a recent *Clarion* (Feb. 11, 1983) an organist and minister set out to enlighten the readers about the woes of an organist. That in itself is laudable. What bothers me is their escape into anonymity. Ordinarily, writings by the nameless should be ignored. However, the subject's importance and the misinformation presented compels me to write a reply.

“Prophet on the organ bench”

After a cursory, convoluted exposition of the various offices, the anonymous author, without further inquiry into what Dr. Schilder meant with the phrase “a prophet on the organ bench,” concludes with confidence that this cannot be true. Zwart, in his *opinion*, could be a prophet while writing music, but when he played that music, in particular during the worship service, he was not a prophet. That is absurd. One is a prophet or one isn't. It is curious that Zwart's compositional endeavours are singled out for this distinction, for Zwart himself was convinced “that composition was not his forte” (Willem Mudde). Moreover, in composing, Zwart was a child of his time, a time greatly influenced by German decadence, and marked by French romanticism. Was he then “a prophet on (or off) the organ bench?” Yes. Let's listen to Dr. Schilder (*Reformatie*, Aug. 2, 1947). Dr. Schilder writes on the tenth anniversary of Zwart's death. “We can once again [after the war, VDP] . . . with word and deed, also from the ‘organ bench,’ give witness to our faith, that he who knows the revealed God in Jesus Christ, according to the ancient confession formula, is not only appointed but also equipped to prophetic confession of His Name, also in art; to the priestly loving and adoring of God, also in the purposeful execution of the liturgy, i.e. the service of His Kingdom, in and through the songs of the Church and private worship; to fight the royal battle against all humanistic values, i.e. false cultural values, and to subdue the earth, to discover in the music of this created world what its Maker put into it” — in other words, to be, in the true sense of the word, in all areas of life, art included, prophet, priest, and king (See Lord's Day XII).

Jan Zwart, according to Dr. Schilder, was such a man. “Thanks to God's grace, Jan Zwart ‘longed earnestly, yea fainted to enter the (wide) courts of the Lord’ as such a ‘liturg’ . . .”; and “If I have understood Jan Zwart, then from the above summary sketch his picture emerges.” As organist-musician Zwart took the “office of all believers” seriously and practised it in all its aspects. Schilder, on the occasion of the unveiling of Zwart's tombstone, put it thus: “Jan Zwart was driven by God's Spirit. His task in life was to prophecy from the organ bench, and if we say that, we give a complete, true picture of what imbued the man.” Just because “Organist” does not feel himself to be a “prophet on the organ bench,” doesn't give him the right to bring someone down to his level. With Moses, I wish “that all the LORD's people [— organists included —] were prophets, that the LORD would put His spirit upon them!” (Num. 11:29).

The task of the organist

The task (duty) of the organist is in the first place a *congregational one*. On him rest the care and responsibility of lively congregational singing. It is his task to build up a singing congregation worthy of its name, a congregation on whose “praises God the LORD is enthroned” (Ps. 22). He should strive to develop congregational singing in such a way that they can do without him, if need be.

His task, in the second place, is a *liturgical one* — liturgical in the sense of “doing things together,” with equal emphasis on “together” and “doing.” In the house of the Lord we come together as God's people; we are as congregation one body and we may as one mouth praise God the Father. The organist's function, then, with regard to congregational singing would be more that of an accompanist than that of a leader. However, his function also involves doing that which specifically has been assigned to him. If we consider for a moment that he has inherited the position of precentor, meaning that he functions as a choirmaster, his work is more that of a director than that of an accompanist. It is foolish to play the one off against the other: one (ac-

companiment) a Dutch *opinion*, the other (leading) the author's *firm belief*. Ideally the organist's work embodies both functions. The trouble is: what is accompanying and what is leading? Leading the congregation is certainly not what “Organist” makes of it — interpretation according to the words.

1. The song of the congregation is by its very nature folk song not art song. As such it is not subject to rules of delivery, interpretation, or execution.
2. The organ was not placed in the church to tell the congregation how to sing; soft when the words express prayer or mourning, loud when the words express praise and thanks. The organ does not interpret the psalm, the congregation sings to its accompaniment.
3. To interpret the psalm musically according to the words is a romantic notion. The song of the Reformed Church is objective; a subjective musical interpretation as accompaniment is an imposition, and has no place in the worship service.

For the unknown psalm tunes (why are they unknown?) “Organist” suggests to play “the melody cantus firmus.” Now I think I know what he means, but as stated it does not make sense, for the melody is the cantus firmus. What he probably means is that the cantus firmus should be soloed. That is a good suggestion, provided the organ is equipped with a strong, clear solo voice. If not, playing the melody unison, doubled at the octave is just as effective, as follows:

The image shows two musical staves. The first staff is a single melodic line in G major, starting on G4 and moving stepwise up to G5. It is labeled 'Cantus firmus' and has a 'Cantus firmus' instruction below it. The second staff shows the same melody with a 'Cantus firmus' label and a 'Cantus firmus' instruction below it, but with a 'Cantus firmus' instruction above the staff, indicating a different interpretation or performance style.

The trouble with “unknown psalms,” however, is that the congregation needs so much concentration

to imitate the melody to some extent, that no justice is done to the text. That is not singing, that is "aping"; it carries no conviction; the text does not reach us, let alone the Lord God, whose throne it is.

"Organist" opines on two more aspects of the organist's liturgical task: the playing after the sermon (Amenspel) and the postlude. I thought that the practice of "playing a suitable piece" after the sermon, a musical reflection or reinterpretation or illustration of the sermon, thankfully had gone the way of the dodo. Obviously, this liturgical anomaly is still alive and kicking in some Reformed worship services. Even if it were liturgically correct, the "playing of a suitable piece" is in reality an impossibility. "Often or not the organist seizes the opportunity to display his sentimentality in order to create atmosphere. In most cases such playing degenerates into the playing of saccharine, tremulous 'ditties'" (George Stam). Much the same can be said for the so-called suitable hymns used as postludes. "In church buildings with 'suitable' organists seedstealing birds are often spotted" (Milo).

In the third place the task of the organist is an *artistic one*. In the Church only the best is good enough, and in the liturgy, "the highest example of Christian art" (Maritain), only art which is truly art has a place. The organist takes part in the worship service as a member of the congregation, not as a "free artist." He employs his gifts for the benefit of the other members (I Pet. 4:10). (Needless to say, this also applies to the congregation with respect to the organist). His musical contributions should not only satisfy the highest aesthetical requirements, but also be bound to the Word (the liturgy, the choral). No subjectivism here. Polyphonic music is the best expression of this, for polyphony (independent voices woven into a higher unity) is not only the organ's mother tongue, but also the true representation of the real communion of saints.

Lastly, the task of the organist is

OUR COVER

Horseback riding at Lac Rond, north of Montreal. Photo Courtesy Government of Quebec.

an eschatological one. "We practise on earth what we want to use in heaven" (M. Praetorius). All our earthly endeavours are but a beginning, a foreshadowing of the heavenly choir, a foretaste of eternal life. In all of an organist's work, in all his playing in the worship service, the earthly echo of the heavenly "Gloria in excelsis Deo" must be heard.

The Psalm list misery

It is rather tedious, disconcerting at the same time, to waste words on the psalm list (orgelbriefje). For as long as I can remember, it has been the subject of discussion in ecclesiastical papers and books; for as long as I can remember it meets the ministerial approval; for as long as I can remember that is where the matter ends, mere approval; for the rest nothing changes. If it were not for the remarks of "minister" in the postscript, I would have left the subject for what it is: a tiresome, bothersome nuisance. "Minister" (of the Word) agrees "200%" (rather inflationary and verbicidal, don't you think) "if that is possible." No, Reverend, that is impossible. You either agree or disagree. Unless, of course, you want to make a mockery of the English language and undermine your credibility. The organist's predicament is compared with that of young ladies typing bulletins. They, he reveals, "achieved what all organists together have never been able to do." Remarkable! Maybe, just maybe, typewriters, typing skills, and bulletins are rated higher in ecclesiastical matters than organ, organists, and music. Let me assure "Minister" that it is not for lack of trying that the organists have not achieved the objective. It is the proverbial "brickwall" of ignorance they run into — ignorance on the part of the ministry about the function of music in the worship. When the singers in Nehemiah's days had not been given their portions, they went on strike. Everyone of them "fled each to his own field" and the temple courts fell silent (Neh. 13:10, 11). Is that what needs to be done?

A Thought

"The music of the Church invokes and sustains the vision which lies behind the Word. The vision is as constant as the Word itself; when the vision fades, it is the invocation that is *inconstant*" (McCormick).

S. VANDERPLOEG



Letters to the Editor

For some time I have been pondering to write a little piece against "With Life and Lip," *Clarion*, March 25, 1983, signed by G. VanDooren. This will be the Rev. VanDooren, for in his article he also mentions "my book *Get Out!*" The last part of Rev. VanDooren's article made me write a few words. He writes, "You may hear in these words a measure of indignation." I heard something worse in them; I heard a biting sarcasm in them, and this hurts.

You write that you don't want to mention any names, but you do write against the writer of "Evangelism or Home Mission," *Clarion*, Jan. 14, 1983, signed by P.K.A. de Boer. This is Rev. de Boer of Watford, I presume.

Are you fair in your criticism, Rev. VanDooren? Do you really think that the way Rev. de Boer sees it means the end to all evangelism? For that's what Rev. VanDooren writes.

How can Rev. de Boer then write, "They are all called to confess Christ in their own vocation," Lord's Day 12?

It says in Lord's Day 12 that I confess His Name and present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him. This means that our whole life is involved, that our whole life is to be dominated, in His service, by His Word.

As long as this is still being confessed with our beautiful confession and is put into practice, we don't have to be afraid that the end to all evangelism is near.

You use the expression "Instructors and Front Soldiers." Don't you know that when the war is really going on and people fall in battle, the instructors are *also* front soldiers? I know it by experience in the most literal sense of the word. Or does this not apply in this case?

And then your very last sentence, the word "Imagine . . ."

As if Rev. de Boer has ever said or intended this.

Did I say too much in the beginning of my letter?

I cannot say that this is very encouraging for a young minister when he has to hear all this from a retired minister.

G. ANTONIDES
Smithers, BC

Dear Editor:

After having read the article "Evangelism or Home Mission" by Rev. DeBoer in the Jan. 14, 1983, issue of *Clarion*, and the articles of Rev. Van Dooren, plus the letter of W.D. Meester, and then Rev. DeBoer's reply (to W.D.M.), I am very much in a quandary still and also rather disturbed by Rev.

PARALIPOMENA

MINISTER OF JUSTICE ABDICATES

Pastoral advice

A friend of mine, a reverend friend, who happens to know who I am, suggested to me that I, for a change, turn my attention from inside to outside. He even added some topics. The first one is what the papers told us recently. The minister of justice wanted "the victims of criminals to have a voice in the punishment."

Sounds nice

"Yeah, that might be a good thing," said one whom I asked for an opinion. There have been so many complaints in recent years that the victims (of rape and other horrible crimes) suffer more than the criminals. Public protest has been heard against judges who let child molesters, rapists, and murderers get off the hook with three- or four-year jail terms; or parole is given to "lifers" after seven or eight years, and the first thing they do is repeat the crime.

Therefore, so says our minister of justice, let's correct the situation by giving the victims of these crimes a say in the duration (and kind?) of punishment. After all, they are the ones who suffer; they have a right to . . . yes, to what? To "revenge"?

Is not nice

If you ask me, I think it is a very bad thing that the minister of justice comes with this suggestion. He may have been shocked by the fact that in the U.S.A. they refuse to return a Canadian criminal to Canada, where he might get three years at the most; south of the border they gave him what he deserved: a life term. But apart from that: try to imagine what we will get if this minister gets his way. First of all, what I wrote in the heading: he actually abdicates. He should step down after this public suggestion. He is really a colleague of Mr. Lalonde (on him next time): having robbed what he calls "the private sector," he now admits that this "sector"

must get Canada going again. The justice minister, instead of upholding justice by firm leadership in his field, gives it out of his hands, and to the ones who are the last to sit on the jury!

What you would get

I suggest that there are three groups of victims. The first group is so full of hate and revenge that they wish to see the criminal dead, period.

Their opposites are those victims who, either by Christian motive or by misplaced pity, would wish the criminal only the best. There are such people. They say: his jail term, or capital punishment even, does not bring my beloved wife or child back, so . . . what's the sense; let him go. Let his conscience punish him.

A middle group — the smallest I fear — are such victims who would try hard to be "objective" on their day in court to give their opinion on what punishment is right. But they can only "try." But it is all wrong. Subjective feeling will replace the "objective" norms of the law. Judges have to uphold the law. They must be beyond hate or love towards the criminal. And when a jury is selected, everything is done to make sure that the jurors are not prejudiced. Would any victim ever be without prejudice?

Justice stumbles on the streets

If I am not mistaken, this is a Bible word. And it is true today. Norms are abandoned. Killers are paid. Canada gets a bad name abroad, also with regard to its courts. Innocent people suffer. Damages are not restored. And now, on top of it all, the man who should fight all this wants to hide behind the poor victims who, when they see the one who caused their misery, simply cannot do justice.

Where are we heading?

CHRONICLER

DeBoer's way of reasoning. In his reply, point 1, he draws the conclusion from I Tim. 5:7 and II Tim. 2:2 that a clear distinction must therefore be maintained between the preaching of the gospel and confessing the gospel. I do not find that in those texts at all or anywhere else in Scripture. As Rev. Van Dooren points out quite clearly there are many instances where just the so-called ordinary people "preach the gospel." One danger in the distinction that the Rev. DeBoer makes is that you can get a superiority complex (pride) on the part of the ministers of the Word. I am sure that we know from history (e.g. read J. DeHaas, *Dominees en Gemeenten*), if not from experience, that that happens all too easily. We are *all* called to be prophet, priest, and king, and that includes evangelizing (preaching); it has to. One cannot be a Christian and not preach. Let us not create two or more classes of Christians. Yes, honour those who rule well, but do not put them on a pedestal; that can have disastrous results. Service is our *first* duty, John 13; let us never forget that; and let us not deny each other the fulfilling of the task that Christ has given us. Certainly, some are more capable than others in preaching, teaching, etc., but does that fact exclude all others from *any* activity in that direction? Yes, we must have *order* and we must have ministers of the Word, elders and deacons, but not at the cost of limiting the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. As it is, we fall far short already; let us not add to our list of inadequate excuses. A Christian who cannot proclaim the gospel is not a Christian. To state it maybe more clearly, the church is (should be) always involved in so-called unorganized evangelism. That you can make a concrete distinction between preaching and confessing is, as far as I can see, an un-Scriptural distinction as well. If I may quote from the *New Bible Dictionary*, "And although all Christians doubtless performed this sacred task (evangelizing) as opportunity was given to them, there were some who were pre-eminently called and endowed by the Holy Spirit." There is simply no doubt about it: all are called to proclaim what the Lord has done for them. Is that not evangelizing or preaching?

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Church  News

The Board of Governors of the Theological College at Hamilton has granted Prof. C. Van Dam permission to begin the lectures three weeks after the opening of the academic year 1983/1984, in order to enable him to complete his doctoral studies at the Theological College at Kampen, The Netherlands.

PATRIMONY PROFILE¹³

By Rev. W.W.J. VanOene

On the 3rd of December, 1833, the Rev. J.J. Damsté, president of the Classical Board, hastens to reply. He informs the "Secretary and Adviser" that he was already planning to write him about that "scandalous writing." The Classical Board also received a complaint about the baptism of infants and the teaching of members not belonging to the Ulrum Church, but "since I cannot find an express decision to the contrary in any law or regulation . . . I was at a loss how to act further, and that had already made me decide to write to you, whose willingness to provide others with good counsel has already become very evident to me." Also in the matter of de Cock's latest publication, the president of the Classical Board would greatly appreciate receiving further advice.

On December 7, 1833, Janssen passed Damsté's letter on to the Rev. H.H. Donker Curtius, president of the General Synod. He observes that within the Classical Board of Middelstum "it seems that they are lacking not so much the eagerness to correct the slanderer as the insight how to tackle the matter." Don't worry: Mr. Janssen is only too happy to give the requested advice. Sufficient material for action, he wrote on December 10, can be found in Articles 2, 4, 7, and 8 of the Regulation for the Ecclesiastical Discipline. Therefore, as soon as the Classical Board of Middelstum considers the writing and conduct of Rev. Cock shameful and of such a nature that it disturbs order and peace, it is not only authorized but even obligated to summon him." Then you can deal with him. "I am very much aware that this ecclesiastical procedure will raise a storm and initially can cause unrest and an outcry, but I share your feeling that de Cock, who may be considered as the mere tool of the party which is out to cause revolt, encouraged by impunity, would be able to go to any length When Cock has enough nerve to light a fire in the church, one has to have sufficient courage to deal with him as an arsonist."

With such scheming and backstair influence, it is no wonder that any appeal which would be sent in later, even to the King, was doomed to failure beforehand; in fact, that de Cock's condemnation was assured before there was even the beginning of a trial.

Is that, however, not the regular procedure in days of crisis and did any of God's children who held on to the true and Scriptural doctrine and who did his best to bring the Church of Christ back to obedience ever get a "fair" trial? Name one, if you are able to.

Hendrik de Cock was no exception.

Some Encouragement

De Cock's defense of the Sheepfold of Christ against wolves and hirelings brought him reproach and scoffing besides the enmity which soon was to lead to his suspension. On the other hand, those who feared the Lord and longed for the ancient truth rejoiced. From more than one brother the Rev. de Cock received encouraging letters. One came from the Rev. L. van Loon of Welsrijp, another one came from the Rev. H.P. Scholte, minister at Do(e)veren and Genderen in the Province of North Brabant.

Let us read a few passages from Scholte's letter. He begins with the assurance that he had been planning to write to de Cock for quite some time, "but experience had taught me, alas, that in our days one cannot completely trust those of whom it is rumoured that their preaching is orthodox." One example is the Rev. Molenaar. I was sort of in low spirits when I read the blasphemous denial of the basic truths of our faith in a periodical, but de Cock's writings were ointment in the wounds, Scholte writes. "On Sunday I preached with renewed courage and openly thanked the Lord in the midst of the congregation for this new proof of His unshakable faithfulness."

Scholte also informed de Cock that he abolished the hymns, especially with the Catechism sermons. Initially, he says, I had included some which did not conflict with the truth, but I have been approached by the secretary of the Classical Board, first by means of a little note, after that orally; he wished to compel me to include the hymns. I then asked for a law, but one could not be found anywhere.

I also have an example, Scholte writes, that the enemies can be greatly angered because of the hymns. On a certain Sunday afternoon, just before the beginning of the service, I was told by a deacon that a strange minister was sitting in church. I immediately suspected that he was an enemy, because he had not called on me in the parsonage. I had to preach on Lord's Day 11. When I came into Church and saw him, I recognized him: he was one of my examiners and a member of the Synod of South Holland. Instead of Hymn 93:2 — which was on the list of the precentor — I asked the congregation to sing the first and last stanzas of the hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." While I was reading the text and while we were singing the hymn, the gentleman alternately turned red and white.

"The Lord made me able and bold enough to testify of Him, in and through whom alone there is a complete salvation . . . against all enemies, reverend and very learned ones as well as non-reverend and dumb ones, and the minister got so much that after the sermon he left without greeting and drove away."

De Cock Suspended

The correspondence between the president of the Classical Board of Middelstum and "Secretary and Adviser" J.D. Janssen of the Department charged with the Affairs of the Netherlands Reformed Church certainly bore fruit. On December 14, 1833, de Cock received a summons from the clerk of Classis Middelstum to appear in Onderdendam on Thursday, December 19, at noon, in order to be heard regarding complaints about him. The summons did not mention what those complaints were, and de Cock knew no better than that the whole matter consisted in the points discussed by him with the Classical committee about a month earlier: the baptism of infants and the teaching of persons not belonging to the Ulrum congregation.

Since minister and consistory were convinced that they were both equally involved, all travelled to Onderdendam. However, the consistory could just as well have stayed at home: they were not admitted to the meeting; even de Cock's request that the meeting be opened with prayer was denied.

What transpired at the meeting? De Cock had to answer the same questions which the committee that visited him in Ulrum had posed regarding the baptism of infants. Further he was asked whether he indeed admitted to his catechetical instruction persons living in other places. And, finally, whether he was the writer of the booklet against Brouwer and Reddingius and was willing to recant.

The reply to the first two questions was that he wished to be obedient to proof from God's Word or even from the ecclesiastical regulations. To the third question the answer was that he was willing to recant if he were convinced on the basis of God's Word that he was wrong in what he had written. When, however, he wished to continue speaking "and to defend his actions on the ground of God's testimony, he was prevented from doing so by the president and the usher was ordered to bring father out of the meeting," his son writes. No defense was permitted, no explanation allowed, no elaboration tolerated: his guilt had been established beforehand and his condemnation was sure. Why take the risk of letting the man defend himself?

Towards the evening of December 20, 1833, a messenger from the Classical Board delivered to H. de Cock the sentence of the Board, passed the previous day. De Cock was suspended for an indefinite period without loss of salary; however, the cost of

preaching by circuit ministers had to be defrayed from it.

As for the grounds for the suspension: the booklet against Brouwer and Reddingius is mentioned first. In that booklet, the Board declares, he has "permitted himself various expressions which are not becoming for a meek, modest, and peaceable preacher of the Gospel." De Cock, the Board considered, "has rendered himself guilty of punishable offense and loveless condemnation of two very respectable ministers." By the distribution of such a libel, he sows the seed of revolt and division, seeks to invert the good order of the church, to deprive other ministers of the esteem of their congregations, and inflicts much damage and harm to their ministry." Such, the Board stated, he did "without having lodged any previous objection against the above mentioned ministers with any competent ecclesiastical board or having waited for its decision." The Board conveniently "forgot" that de Cock did lodge a complaint against the Rev. Brouwer, but had been told that he should write against what he considered to be a denial of the old, Reformed, Scriptural doctrine, and deviation from the Word of God. But then, who can remember all things, especially when it is very inconvenient to recall them?

Had de Cock been an H.P. Scholte, he would have succeeded in shooting holes into the entire sentence, for it was full of holes and it was illegal in every respect.

In accordance with the decision of the Board, a copy of the sentence was sent to, among others, His Excellency, the Minister of State, charged with the general direction of the Reformed Church. The accompanying letter does not mention — of course not — the previous contact with the officials in The Hague. As if the Minister had not been aware of anything as yet, the letter informs him that "the Classical Board found itself in the unpleasant position of having to take this step for the maintenance of the good order in the Reformed Church, for the protection of the reputation of ministers of the Gospel, and for the prevention of even more disorder, division, and rebellion in various congregations in our Fatherland." The Board therefore "does not doubt at all that its decision against Mr. H. de Cock will meet with Your Excellency's approval."

The behind-the-scenes conspiracy seems not to have remained completely secret, for a member of the Provincial States of Groningen wrote on December 26, 1833, that the "notorious" Rev. de Cock of Ulrum was suspended "by the Classical Board of Middelstum, as is being said, by order of Your Excellency . . ."

— *To be continued.*

YAK'ISDA BIK'AH

Smithers Indian Ministry
Newsletter No. 3

A DEFINITE START

Sunday, February 27th, marked another milestone in our life in the service of the Lord, when the Rev. G.H. Visscher of Houston installed me as missionary to work among the native population of this area. The Lord's words, "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt. 28:20), are a source of strength and encouragement we certainly need also at this time of once again leaving the regular ministry in a congregation for an unknown future of working in mission, whether abroad or at home.

At the same time it is good to be able to devote oneself full-time to the work that so far had to be a "sideline." These first months have been very busy, also because the congregation still demands my time while they remain vacant. We certainly did not have to wonder where to begin or what we could do. We could already see some very positive developments and reactions and may report with gratitude that a definite start has been made.

Christian Indian Centre

Our search for a building as a base of operation had good results. We were able to lease a very suitable place only one block off Main Street, a former restaurant. The interior needed quite some renovations, but with free labour and much of the material donated costs could be kept minimal. Other artistic hands made some attractive signs: "Christian Indian Centre" and (above the door): "Yak'isda Bik'ah" with the silhouette of a fireweed. Furniture and other equipment was largely donated, and special gifts covered the purchase of a number of stacking chairs and tables. All in all, it became an attractive and inviting place which will certainly facilitate the work.

Adult Bible Study Group

In many ways all the above work was still fairly easy, but what about the most important aspect of it all? Would the people come when they

know that the purpose is to study the Bible? Or would the "Christian" in the name keep them away? We felt that one of our priorities should be to provide an evening of Bible Study and fellowship for those adults with whom we have established contacts throughout the years, either through the children or otherwise. Wednesday evening was set aside for this purpose. Invitations were made and personally delivered to many. Posters were put up on bulletin boards in town, while it was also on the air as a free notice under Communications.

And so the first evening, April 6th, arrived. We hoped some would come but also were prepared that not one would show up. However, some did come! Three adults and six older children. We were able to explain to them what we intend to do and why we chose the name "Yak'isda Bik'ah," "going God's ways," referring to Psalm 25, to Jesus calling Himself The Way, and to the book of Acts where the Christian faith is also referred to as The Way. A brother came along to accompany our singing on his guitar, while my wife also came along to assist.

The next evening, four adults attended, as well as two older boys. We spoke about sin, the effects of sin, and true repentance in the light of II Sam. 11 and Psalm 51 (David and Bathsheba). Attention and participation was very good. Some of the visitors have a Pentecostal or charismatic background, but they hunger for explanation of Scriptures. This also showed in the third session on April 20th when five adults (four from Moricetown) came, as well as a number of children. The Bible lesson was on faith. We spoke about Abraham and how the Lord tested his faith by requiring of him to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22), also referring to Heb. 11. We again enjoyed good interest as well as a good discussion afterwards. They have many questions and appreciate having the opportunity to learn more. You feel that this is new for them. Some also inquired where they could get

"our" Bibles, the RSV, because it is so easy to read and understand, compared to the KJV which some of them had brought along.

They promised to come again and tell their friends about it as well. It seems that we do not have to be too worried anymore about not having people to share the Word of God with!

Coffee Hour

Twice a week I also spend an hour at the Centre during the morning, from 11:00 to 12:00 on Wednesdays and Fridays to begin with. The purpose is to give people the opportunity to come and see me on an informal basis. Each time I was there so far, one did drop in to inquire about our work and some good conversations developed.

Further Activities

Gradually we hope to increase the activities in the Centre. We are now working towards a Teeners' Bible Study Group by soliciting responses to this idea from the teenagers we already know. Indications are that there is interest among this age group as well, but this will be a difficult part of the work. Contacts and Get-Togethers with the regular Youth Group continue.

Summer Camps

Our thoughts must also drift ahead to the Summer Camps that we hope to hold again. We could not forget, since the children and young people already ask about it often and know of more friends who would like to come as well! Last year two camps were held, and we wonder if that can hold the number of interested people this year. However, there are limits also as to the number of counsellors we can recruit as well as to the funds available. At the same time it is difficult to say no to anyone who asks if he/she may come too.

Language Study

Twice a week I study the Carrier language with a local woman who is also the official interpreter for the Carrier Indians. Although she knows Carrier and English very well, the

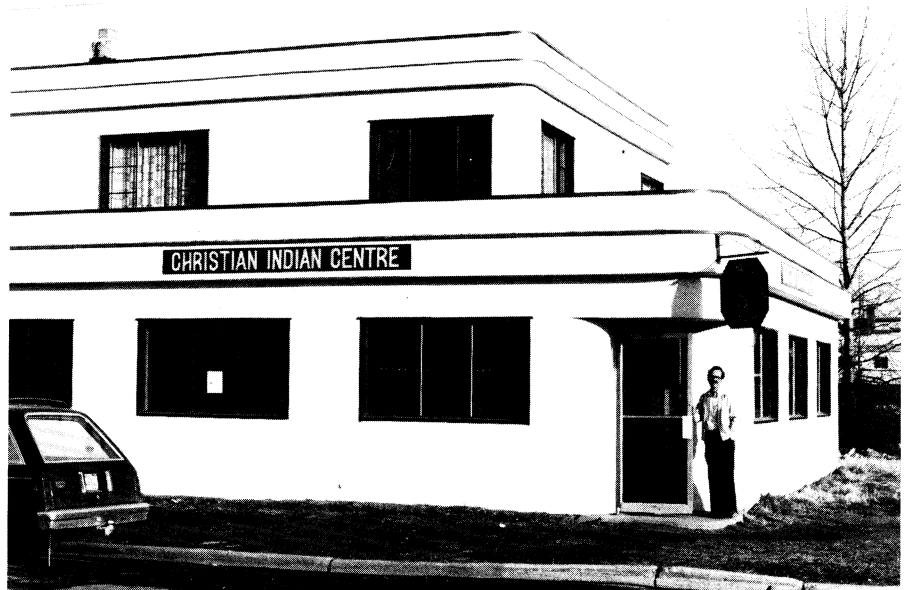
The CENTRE of activities (Main floor only).

study is a slow procedure without the help of books, grammars, or dictionaries. It was an unwritten language and some of the material available at present is in different dialects again. However, we are making progress and learn much more from her than only the language. At the same time she and her husband often inquire about the contents of the Bible. A useful contact.

Public Relations

One of the functions of the building is also to make our work known in the community. The building, with its clear signs, is located on a busy corner. By now the people know of its existence, and when I introduce myself as the pastor working in the Christian Indian Centre, the public realizes we mean "business"! We have also contributed an article to the local paper introducing the Centre and its purpose. The Board of the Indian Friendship Centre has expressed interest and intends to invite me to one of their meetings to give me the opportunity to explain our work. For some the name "Christian" and "Indian" cannot go together, but I think that on the whole they accept — some even gratefully — that there is a place where help is offered and where they can turn to with their many and serious problems, especially with their young people. May the Lord by His Word and Spirit also renew the life of these Indians.

C. VAN SPRONSEN



FROM THE TREASURER

Financial Report — February and March 1983

Balance, Jan. 31/83 \$12,364.20

We received on requisition from:

Edmonton (Providence)	\$ 1,213.16	
Chilliwack	596.06	
Smithers	2,215.95	
Total	\$ 4,025.17	4,025.17

Collections:

Carman	\$ 469.00	
Toronto	534.00	
Ottawa	195.66	
Burlington (Ebenezer)	917.15	
Fergus	358.00	
Langley	921.39	
Chr. Ref. Smithers	719.99	
Smithville	536.50	
Chatham	163.55	
Total	\$ 4,815.74	4,815.74

Private donations: 300.00

Total Expenditures for February and March \$21,205.11

Balance 10,347.32

\$10,857.79

**Subscribe
to**

That was the balance on March 31, 1983. This amount is a little deceiving though, because most bills were paid on the 2nd of April. These bills came to a total of \$8,864.88, leaving us with a balance of \$1,992.91. One of our major expenses was the purchase of a used vehicle to be used by the missionary for his work. It is a '78 Mercury Zephyr station wagon. The total cost of the car plus insurance and tax was \$5,119.90. Also as of March 1st, 1983, Rev. Van Spronsen's salary became the full responsibility of the Home Mission Board.

At the moment the Churches

who have committed themselves to support this work are in arrears to the amount of \$12,706.45 as of April 1st. You can see from this amount that if all the Churches would honour their commitments we would be in a very good financial position.

So, please, pay your due amounts as soon as possible! We are very happy and thankful to the Lord that so far it has been financially possible to do this great work. The Board asks for your financial support, but also for your prayers.

For the Home Mission Board,
D. BANDSTRA, Treasurer

our little magazine

Dear Busy Beavers,

Does your calendar have PENTECOST SUNDAY on it?

Mine didn't!
 People don't celebrate Pentecost like Easter.
 But Pentecost is just as important as Easter!
 Just look at what happened to the Lord Jesus' disciples.

On Easter Sunday they were so sad.
 They were scattered.
 They were confused.

When the Lord Jesus was going to go to heaven they didn't understand about His kingdom.

But on Pentecost it was different!

The Spirit of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit changed them completely.

See what happens that day!

Through Peter's preaching and the disciples' witness the Lord adds 3,000 people to His church. In one day!

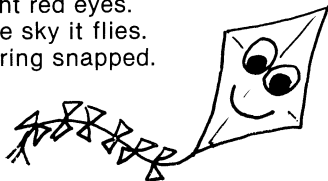
What a wonderful day that was!

Today, still, the Lord Jesus gives His Holy Spirit of power and joy to all His children.

* * *

Here are two Spring poems for you to enjoy. This first one is from Busy Beaver *Mary-Ann Van Woudenberg*.

My kite is big with bright red eyes.
 It looks at me. Up to the sky it flies.
 But then! Oh no, the string snapped.
 The kite flees.
 I look for it.
 There it is!
 Way up in those trees.



I hope you've got it down by now, Mary-Ann!

The second poem is from Busy Beaver *Felicia Viersen*.

You'll like it, too.

It's called:



Two Robin Red Breasts built their nests within a hollow tree.

The hen sat quietly at home, the cock sang merrily,
 And the little ones said, "Wee, wee, wee, wee, wee."
 One day (the sun was warm and bright, and shining in the sky)

Cock Robin said, "My little dears, 't is time you learn to fly."

And all the little ones said, "I'll try, I'll try, I'll try."

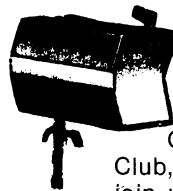
I know a child, and who it is I'll tell you by and by,
 When Mamma says, "Do this, or that" she says "What for?" and "Why?"

She'd be a better child by far if she would say "I'll try."

FOR YOU TO DO

Make a picture to go with the poem "SPRING." Send it to: *Aunt Betty*
 Box 54
 Fergus, ON
 N1M 2W7

The best picture wins a prize!



FROM THE MAILBOX

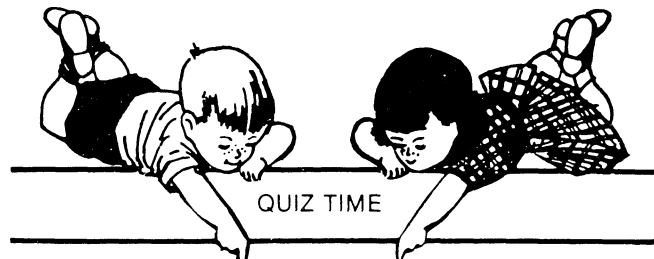
Of course you may join the Busy Beaver Club, *Angela Mans*. We are happy to have you join us. I guess you think spring is just great with all the skipping! What's your highest, Angela? Write again soon.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Michael John Mans*. We hope you will like being a Busy Beaver and joining in all our Busy Beaver activities. What do you like to play outside now that it's spring, Michael? Bye for now.

Did you help put the seeds in the garden, *Mary-Ann Van Woudenberg*? And did you get your kite out of your neighbour's tree? I hope you've had a really nice birthday, Mary-Ann. Thank you for your poem, and especially for your contribution to our BIRTHDAY FUND!

Sounds to me as if you had a really good time on your trip to the coulees, *Sylvia Leffers*. I think the Busy Beavers will enjoy your story, too! Thanks for sharing.

Did you have a good time with all the birthdays in your family, *Felicia Viersen*? Are you having fun, too, skipping at recess time? Thank you for the poem, Felicia. Bye for now.



QUIZ TIME

Vegetable Word Find

O	W	S	L	B	E	A	N	S	T
P	E	P	P	E	R	S	L	A	O
C	O	R	N	A	T	B	A	E	M
L	N	T	I	F	E	T	E	S	A
B	I	C	A	M	L	G	U	S	T
C	O	M	L	T	A	B	E	C	O
H	N	W	O	B	O	G	D	I	E
S	S	R	B	N	B	E	E	T	S
M	Q	A	P	F	R	T	S	V	E
Y	C	U	C	U	M	B	E	R	S
T	I	R	A	C	E	L	E	R	Y
R	A	D	I	S	H	E	S	P	V
L	O	Y	A	R	H	I	G	N	T

by Busy Beaver *Anne Kottelenberg*

Look for:
 beans
 peppers
 corn
 onions
 squash
 radishes
 cucumbers
 tomato
 beets
 potato
 lettuce
 peas
 celery
 cabbage