



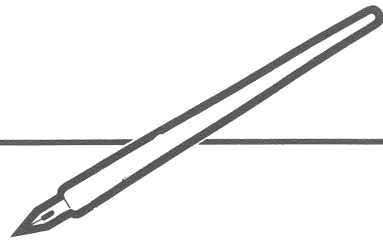
Clarion

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The Liberation of 1944

This issue of *Clarion* is devoted to the commemoration of the Liberation. Forty years ago, on August 11, 1944, a meeting was held in The Hague, The Netherlands, where members of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands were called together to discuss the situation in these churches caused by the decisions of the Synod Sneek-Utrecht 1939-1943 and Synod Utrecht 1943-1945, and to come to a response. The response was expressed in the "Act of Liberation or Return." Those who signed this Act pointed out with this that there was a deviation both in doctrine and church government in the Reformed Churches, shown and maintained by the General Synods mentioned above. They declared that they liberated themselves from the un-Scriptural and un-Reformed decisions of these Synods: from the un-Reformed church-political theories and actions, and from a synodical binding to doctrinal pronouncements to which Scripture and Confession do not bind. They saw this Liberation as a deed of covenantal obedience to God's Word, and of faithful adherence to the Reformed Confession of Articles 28 and 29 of the Belgic Confession, and to the Reformed Church Order of Dordt.

In name and contents there is a similarity between the "Act of Liberation or Return" of 1944, and the "Act of Secession or Return" of 1834, 150 years ago. I will not do that now, but we plan to print an English translation of both in our magazine, so that as reader you can compare the two and find the similarity yourself. Then you will discover that in both the Secession and the Liberation it was that obedience of faith to God's Word and that faithful abiding by the Reformed Confession which brought Reformed people to the Secession and to the Liberation. In both instances they were cast out by ecclesiastical assemblies of the churches in which there was no place for them, because they had rebuked those assemblies of the churches for their errors.

The "Act of Liberation or Return" speaks of deviation in both doctrine and church government. As for the latter, it is remarkable that leaders in the Reformed Churches like Professor Dr. H.H. Kuyper, a son, and Professor Dr. V. Hepp, a staunch defender and successor, of Dr. A. Kuyper, defended and promoted the hierarchical church polity that was used to cast out those who opposed them, while Dr. A. Kuyper and those who followed him in the days of the Doleantie, were thrown out by, and thoroughly rejected, such a hierarchical church government.

Dr. A. Kuyper and his colleague, Dr. F.L. Rutgers emphatically taught the independence of the local church and the "first-hand" authority given by Christ to the local elders, while the broader or major assemblies have only delegated "second-hand" authority, given them by the churches in their federation. Therefore it was agreed that decisions of major assemblies must/will be accepted as binding, *unless* they are in conflict with God's Word (not: *until* they are proven to be in conflict and this proof is accepted). And it was agreed that only the local consistory and not a major assembly has the authority

to suspend and depose office-bearers. On both points the Synods in the early forties failed to do justice.

As for the doctrinal deviation, Dr. A. Kuyper, in whom God gave much that was good to the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands as well as in North America, was orientated more toward theologians after the Reformation in the 17th century, than on the Reformers and their successors in the 16th century. The consequence was that a scholastic dogmatism became more and more influential in the Reformed Churches. This dogmatism worked very much with dogmatic distinctions, like *internal and external* regarding God's covenant, His Word and His grace; *objective and subjective* with regard to God's grace and truth; *essence and form* with regard to the church and the covenant; theories in this connection, with regard to the church's pluriformity, common grace, and so on.

Overagainst this scholastic dogmatism and strong subjectivistic emphasis, came a reformational movement that started by the preaching of a number of ministers. Mentioned here are Rev. J.C. Sikkel around 1900, and later on Rev. S.G. de Graaf (of *Promise and Deliverance*), Dr. M.B. Van't Veer, Rev. D. van Dijk, Professor Dr. K. Schilder and others. In their preaching and writing all placed the emphasis on the trustworthiness of God's Word in His covenant and the demand of faith and of obedience of faith as it comes to the congregation, overagainst a strong subjectivism and dogmatic distinctions.

Many experienced this as a liberation. And when synods tried to silence this reformational movement by their decisions and actions more than seventy-five thousand members of the Reformed Churches did not accept this attempt and liberated themselves, in the obedience of faith as they were taught, in order to abide by God's reliable covenant words and the Reformed Confession. In the Press Review of this issue we are shown that the struggle around the Liberation was a fight against subjectivism that places the pious Christian in the center of the attention instead of the Word and Work of God in Jesus Christ in the history of redemption.

It is clear that the Liberation was the result of a reformational movement back to the living, powerful, and reliable Word of God for all of life. A gift of God; God's work of grace, although mixed with human sins and shortcomings. Therefore, as children of that Liberation, we will gratefully remember this work of grace.

Gratitude to the LORD for what He gave in the Liberation, gratitude that, in it, He preserved His churches by His Word, now must mean something else than lip-service. It must mean that we hold on to this heritage and that we not let it slip through our fingers, either by a new dogmatism in which we live by dogmatic theories, or by a modern subjectivism, in which we see (almost) only the pious Christian and his experiences. In remembering, we are called to abide by the living, normative, obedience-of-faith-requiring-and-working, Word of God.

Then we do not live by an applied dogmatic theory that

there can be only one true church which is per definition the Canadian Reformed Church. But we also do not fall back in a dogmatic theory of a broad pluriformity of the church whereby church borderlines are erased and all kinds of groups of Christians accepted as true churches of the Lord, with whom we can worship, forgetting the norms for our gathering the church in obedience to Christ's Word.

Then we do not follow modern subjectivism coming from all sides at us, especially in so much radio and television

"Christian" "hallelujah-ism," but we place ourselves, and call others to place themselves, into the service of God and His Christ in all of life in an obedient response of faith in the way He has commanded it. So also we seek the unity with all those who seek to serve the Lord in this same faith.

May the LORD Himself preserve the fruits of the Liberation also in our Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

J. GEERTSEMA

Backgrounds of the Liberation

1. We remember

In this issue of *Clarion* we pay attention to a historic fact. We remember. We do not commemorate a victory or a joyous fact, but we do have to remember the great deeds of the LORD in the history of the churches. We do not boast in man or in our own works but we do give thanks to the LORD for what He, in spite of all mistakes, shortcomings, and failures of man, has done and still is doing.

In this issue we will pay special attention to what happened forty years ago. On August 11, 1944 an important meeting took place in s'Gravenhage, The Netherlands, at which meeting a very important decision was made. A decision which has had more impact than the people present at that time could ever have expected.

The Liberation in The Netherlands is a fact with many aspects. Elsewhere in this issue the Rev. J. Geertsema will elaborate more in detail on the practical consequences for everyday life in the covenant relation with our God and Father in heaven. In this article we will rather give historical information about the facts. Experience shows that after forty years not everyone remembers what really was at stake. Yet it is very important to remember the facts. History can teach us a lesson, but then we have to study the history of the LORD's great works in His churches, and we have to know the facts.

Some might say or think that the Liberation is a fact important for the people who lived in The Netherlands forty years ago, but of less significance for the present generation. We are living in another part of the world and we are confronted with developments in America and more specifically in Canada. That might be true to a certain extent, but we will show the

close relation between what happened in The Netherlands forty years ago and developments in this part of the world.

Sometimes we hear people say: "We, in our Canadian Reformed Churches, are just following the developments in The Netherlands. We are just a few steps behind. We should be more independent and show our own approach, without always following the Dutch example." This accusation is not quite correct, for more than one reason. In the first place, there is nothing wrong in following an example as long as the example is a good one. In the second place, it is certainly not so that the churches in America, and more specifically in Canada, always have followed developments in The Netherlands and always have been a little bit behind in this respect. In what follows we will show that the churches in this part of the world were sometimes ahead in certain developments. What happened in 1924 in this part of the world was, in some respect, a prelude of what was going to happen in The Netherlands twenty years later. We will come back to this statement later on in this article. Now we

2. Prof. Dr. A. Kuyper

Faithful readers of the column "Patrimony Profile" in *Clarion* know that the late Prof. Dr. A. Kuyper was a famous man. He was not only a brilliant theologian but also a man with many capacities. He was a minister of the Word and professor at the "Vrije Universiteit," a university based upon Reformed principles. He himself was the principal and spiritual father of this university. He was editor-in-chief of the Reformed daily newspaper *De Standaard* and of the weekly *De Heraut*. He was also active in political life and managed even to become prime minister for a number of years. He was a very original and independent worker and, besides the articles he wrote in his daily and weekly newspapers, he has published many books.

However, because he had such a great influence and such great originality and independency, he was prone to make mistakes and the danger was always there of being followed without any criticism by his "disciples." Therefore, after having mentioned the inestimable value of the services he has rendered to

"... it is certainly not so that the churches in America, and more specifically in Canada, always have followed developments in The Netherlands and always have been a little bit behind in this respect."

will first, in chronological order, give an overview of the background of what happened in The Netherlands in 1944, during the Liberation, and show the close relation with what was decided in 1924 in Kalamazoo, and what was stated in the "Declaration of Principles" in 1950.

the Reformed Churches, we also have to voice some criticism and we have to mention some errors in his doctrine, especially because of the tremendous impact these have had on the development in our churches.

In 1892 the so-called A- and B-

Churches came to a Union. The A-group were the people of the previous (first) secession in 1834. In Dutch they were called the "Vroegere afgescheidenen." The B-group were the people of the so-called "doleantie," of which Dr. Kuyper was the spiritual father.

Pretty soon after the Union of 1892 objections were brought forward against some aspects of Dr. Kuyper's teachings. We mention in particular three points, namely:

1. The justification from eternity.
2. The "immediate" regeneration.
3. The presumptive regeneration.

We will try to give a condensed explanation of the meaning of these three points in their mutual relation. To go into details on these matters would be beyond the scope of this article. It would take a series of articles to deal in a more elaborate way with them.

First, the justification from eternity. According to Dr. Kuyper, the justification of the sinner is a fact which has taken place and was established from eternity by God's eternal decree. Lord's Day 23, question 60 says: "How are you righteous before God?" and the answer is: "Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ." According to Dr. Kuyper's theory our justification before God is only a matter of "becoming aware of a fact and a reality which existed already from eternity. We are not justified through faith in Jesus Christ. Faith only makes us aware of an existing fact, something that has been a reality from eternity."

The term "immediate" regeneration needs some explanation. The English adjective "immediate" oftentimes means "instantaneous" or "without delay." The theological expression "immediate regeneration" (Dutch: onmiddellijke wedergeboorte) has a different meaning. "Immediate" means here: "without a medium" or "without any means or tools." According to Dr. Kuyper regeneration is an act of God which precedes the calling through the preaching of the gospel. Regeneration is as a seed or a core, present in the heart of all the elect, and the Holy Spirit awakens — makes active, brings to life — this already present grain or core, this "seed" of regeneration.

3. Presumptive regeneration

In the previous section we have seen that justification, according to Dr. A. Kuyper, is an act of God from eternity and that regeneration is *present* in all the elect, like a grain or a core in the ground. Therefore we have to presume that all children of believers, who receive the sign and seal of the covenant in baptism, are regenerated. In this way baptism becomes a sign and seal, *not* upon the indubitable promises of the LORD and

upon His covenant faithfulness, but it becomes a sign and seal upon the regeneration itself.

However, when children grow up we see, and many parents have been confronted with the sad reality, that not all children who have been baptized, are or become believers. Not all the children of the covenant live according to the obligations of the covenant. This sad reality



Dr. A. Kuyper

should have brought Dr. A. Kuyper to the conclusion that something was wrong with his theory. Baptism does not seal a present core or grain of regeneration. It signs and seals the promises of the covenant. However, Dr. Kuyper drew the wrong conclusion. He upheld his own theory and tried to straighten things out by making the next — an even worse — mistake in his doctrine. He taught that baptism signs and seals a "presumptive" regeneration. We "presume" (according to Dr. K.) that regeneration is present and *that* is the ground of baptism. If later the opposite appears to be true and the baptized person shows in his way of life that he is an unbeliever, the conclusion has to be that we have made a *mistake*. The baptism was not a *real* one. Our presumption does not come true. In this way Dr. Kuyper came to his concept of a "real" baptism and a "not real" baptism.

It is understandable that right after the Union of 1892 objections were brought forward against this doctrine. The objections came, as could have been expected, from the people of the "old-A." They were afraid that the theory of Dr. Kuyper would become the doctrine of the church.

The General Synod of 1905, confronted with these matters, made a decision in an attempt to satisfy both sides. They did not fully agree with Dr. Kuyper's theory, but did not outright condemn it either. Synod considered it incorrect to call the presumptive regeneration the ground of baptism because "according

to His good pleasure God fulfils the promise *at His time*, either *before* or *after* baptism." In other words: regeneration *can* take place and can be present before baptism, but the LORD can also work this regeneration at a later time during the life of His children. Synod added the following phrase, which later became a crucial point: "According to the confession of our churches the seed of the covenant is, by virtue of the promise of God, to be considered as regenerated and sanctified in Christ, until, when growing-up, the opposite becomes evident."

The intention of this decision was to take away the concern of those who were afraid that the theory of Dr. Kuyper would become the doctrine of the church, and at the same time, to leave the way open for those who wanted to adhere to Dr. Kuyper's concept. At first the decision seemed to have set the matters to rest.

4. The "differences in doctrine" on the agenda

In 1936 the same matter became a hot issue, although in a completely different way. In the course of the years some differences of opinion had become manifest between some professors at the Theological College and some of their colleagues at the Free University. These so-called "differences in doctrine" (Dutch: leergeschillen) were never put on the agenda of the General Synod by any of the churches. However, one of the professors, in his capacity of advisory member of the Synod, took the initiative and asked Synod to deal with these matters. That was in conflict with the Church Order, because a synod has to deal only with those matters which are put before it by the churches.

Nonetheless Synod decided to appoint a committee to study the matters and come with a proposal, (Acts General Synod 1936, Art. 212).

The Committee did not come right away with a unanimous report. On the contrary, many letters of protest and appeal were sent to the next General Synod 1939. Synod was implored not to deal with these matters. Before Synod was able to make a decision, World War II had begun. Communication became difficult, some periodicals, such as church bulletins, regional and national magazines were not free to publish the way they wanted, or were forbidden to publish at all, by the German oppressor. Some ministers of the Word were arrested, put in concentration camps, or had to go into hiding to protect themselves against being arrested. Others were not allowed to write publicly because they were put on the "blacklist" of the enemy.

In that situation many churches and church members asked Synod not to con-

tinue dealing with these matters or at least to wait until the country would be free again.

5. The final decision

In spite of all the requests which were put on the table to postpone the matters, Synod 1942 took a decision anyway and was very determined in the execution of its decision. The formulation looked very similar to the decision of 1905, but the intent and effect were just the opposite. In 1905 an effort was made to put matters to rest and to leave the possibility open either to adhere to the theory of Dr. Kuyper or to disagree with him. In 1942 Synod decided, among others, "that the classical assemblies during the ecclesiastical examinations have to make sure that the candidate fully agrees with the doctrinal statements (Dutch: *leeruitspraken*) of Synod 1942."

Many letters of appeal were sent to Synod. All appeals boiled down to the same point that: all children of believers are children of the covenant, they all receive the same promises and are all put under the same obligations of the covenant; baptism is a sign and seal upon God's *covenant*. Let us stick to this Biblical truth and do not bother us with any "presumption" as a ground of baptism.

General Synod rejected all the appeals and upheld the decision that each and every office-bearer had to believe and teach that all baptized children are regenerated and that those who later, after they have grown up appear to be no believers at all, were not really baptized. In this way baptism was no longer a sign and seal upon God's indubitable promises; the question whether someone was really baptized or not depended on the question whether the right *presumption* was made at the time of his baptism. In this way baptism had lost its significance.

After every effort to revoke these decisions had failed, and after many ministers of the Word and other office-bearers had been suspended and disposed from office, a public meeting was held in 's-Gravenhage. On August 11, 1944, the concerned brothers and sisters came together in a meeting, chaired by the Rev. H. Knoop who barely had survived a German concentration camp. During this meeting the Act of Liberation (*Acte van Vrijmaking*) was read and signed by many. In this Act the concerned people declared that they, according to Article 31 of the Church Order, did not consider the pertinent decisions of General Synod settled and binding, because they were in conflict with the Word of God. They declared to "liberate" themselves from this un-Scriptural binding and return to the binding to the Word of God alone.

6. Canadian equivalents

We have stated already in the first section of this article, that many people seem to have the impression that we, as Canadian Reformed Churches, are just following the Dutch "Mother church." Some consider us to be a branch of the Dutch "liberated" churches.

"To a certain extent the developments in this part of the world were ahead of what was going on in The Netherlands. What happened in 1924 in Kalamazoo was a prelude of what was going to happen in The Netherlands about twenty years later."

However, that is far from the truth. The churches in this part of the world have had their own developments and their own history. Of course, closely related and staying in touch with the churches in the "Old Country." But nonetheless having a history of their own. Not just following the example of The Netherlands, being a little behind. Not at all. The churches in this part of the world were sometimes ahead in the developments. We have promised in the beginning of this article, to elaborate a little more on this statement and give proof for it. That is what we are first going to do now.

To a certain extent the developments in this part of the world were ahead of what was going on in The Netherlands. What happened in 1924 in Kalamazoo was a prelude of what was going to happen in The Netherlands about twenty years later.

We remember.

We remember that forty years ago the liberation took place in The Netherlands. But we remember at the same time that sixty years ago a secession took place in this part of the world, and that this secession was an event, at least of the same importance for the churches in America as the liberation was for the

churches in The Netherlands. We will also see in what follows, how closely both events were related and, how they basically dealt with the same matters.

7. Kalamazoo 1924

The theory of Dr. A. Kuyper had crept in also in the Christian Reformed Churches in America. In 1924, the Synod of Kalamazoo made a statement, consisting of three points. They are therefore oftentimes called the "Three Points of Kalamazoo." More details about this development you can find in the book of the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene: *Inheritance Preserved*.

We quote from this book the following summary of the "Three Points":

"In the first point Synod stated, among other things, 'that besides the saving grace of God unto eternal life shown only to the elect, there is also a certain favour or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general.'

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OUR COVER

Salmon Arm, BC, located on the Trans-Canada Hwy.
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“The second point dealt with the restraint of sin. Synod stated that Scripture and Confession ‘teach that God by a general operation of His Spirit, without renewing the heart, restrains the unbridled manifestation of sin, so that life in human society remains possible.’

“The third point dealt with the so-called civic good. ‘From Scripture and Confession it is evident,’ Synod stated, ‘that God, without renewing the heart, exercises such influence upon man that he is enabled to do civic good.’”

These statements of Kalamazoo meant a full acceptance of the “common grace” concept of Dr. A. Kuyper. It is understandable that it gave rise to many protests, frictions, and opposition within the Christian Reformed Churches. The Rev. H. Hoeksema was suspended from office and the Consistory of the Church of Grand Rapids, where he was a pastor, was deprived by Synod “of all rights and privileges connected with the ecclesiastical connection of a Consistory with the Christian Reformed Church.”

In this way the so-called Protestant Reformed Churches came into existence. That was twenty years before the Liberation in The Netherlands, but it was basically because of the same matters.

In the early fifties the great wave of Dutch emigrants began. When they arrived in this part of the world they had to make a decision with respect to church membership. It is certainly not so that they right away established their “own” Canadian Reformed Churches as a branch of the “Liberated” Churches in The Netherlands. The late Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, one of the most prominent persons in the so-called “Liberated” Churches was strongly in favour of joining the Protestant Reformed Churches. Although he did not agree with everything going on in these churches, he was convinced that this was the only church where our people would feel at home right away and where they should go.

However, in 1950 the Protestant Reformed Churches changed their direction, and again the influence of the theory of Dr. A. Kuyper crept in. This time not in the first place with respect to his “common grace” concept but now more specifically his doctrine about “presumptive regeneration.”

8. Declaration of principles

In 1950 the Protestant Reformed Churches drew up the so-called “Declaration of Principles.”

Again we quote a summary of this “Declaration of Principles” from the Rev. VanOene’s book.

“1. The Protestant Reformed Churches reject the errors of the Three Points of Kalamazoo and maintain that the grace

of God is only for the elect.”

“2. They teach that the promise of God is unconditionally only for the elect.”

“3. They reject the doctrine that the promise of the covenant is for all who were baptized.”

What was the meaning of this “Declaration”? At the one hand they rejected the theory of “common grace.” But at the same time they introduced in the points two and three a theory of two kinds of “covenants.” One for the elect and one for “all who are baptized.” They introduced two types of promises. Some “unconditionally” only for the elect and some other, (apparently conditionally) for “all baptized.”

According to these points the sacrament of baptism does not sign and seal the covenant of God and His indubitable promises. The *real* covenant was only for the *elect* and people could not do anything else than “presume” and “hope” that the child to be baptized belonged to the elect.

No wonder that the immigrants, coming from The Netherlands, after what they had experienced during the Liberation in 1944, had little choice. This was exactly what they had fought against in the “Old Country.” First different churches appealed and fought against this “Declaration” but without any result. In 1951 the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches adopted *definitively* the “Declaration of Principles.”

The late Prof. Dr. K. Schilder who, in spite of some objections he had against the PRC, always had advised the emigrants to join these churches, stated at that time: “it is all over.” In this way the Canadian Reformed Churches were born. There was no choice. The Protestant Reformed Churches had gone back to the doctrine of Dr. Kuyper and had officially accepted the theory of the “presumptive regeneration.”

9. Conclusions

We remember.

Sixty years ago, after the decision of the Synod of Kalamazoo 1924, it came to a split in the Christian Reformed Churches, and the Protestant Reformed Churches were established.

Forty years ago the Liberation in The Netherlands took place. In the back-



Prof. Dr. K. Schilder

ground were the same matters, closely related to what happened in Kalamazoo 1924.

In 1951 the “Declaration of Principles” caused a conflict in the Protestant Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches were established. What was left from the Protestant Reformed Churches went back to the Christian Reformed Churches in 1960.

There is a close relation between the developments in The Netherlands and in our part of the world. The older generation feels more ties with the “Old Country” while the younger generation is more interested in what is going on today in their own country. That is understandable.

History can teach us a lesson, but when we have got the message, we should apply it to our own everyday life. We have seen in the previous paragraphs that there is a close relation between the old country and our part of the world. Not only because the matters at stake were almost the same, but above all because it is the same God and Father who, through Jesus Christ His Son, is at work. He gathers, protects and preserves His church. Let us keep that in mind. Then we will be able to give thanks to the LORD for what He has done, is doing, and will do, in the gathering of His church.

We do not boast in men. They all have made and are making their mistakes, they have their faults, their shortcomings, and failures. But the promise of the LORD is trustworthy. He will not let His people down, but will bring His Church, His Bride, to the day of the glorious Marriage Feast of the Lamb.

To Him be the Glory, forever.

W. POWELSE

The question in the Liberation:

What is the basis for the certainty of faith? God's Word of promise alone or also our regeneration?

It is with the above question that we shall deal in this article. This was the big question in the controversy around the Liberation in 1944. One of the sources for this article, of which I made thankful use, is a series of articles in *De Reformatie* (Vol. 57, no. 9—No. 32 [Nov. 9, 1981—May 15, 1982]), written by Professor J. Kamphuis under the title “Om het Recht van het Verbond. De strijd over het Verbond in de Gereformeerde Kerken rondom de Vrijmaking.” (For the sake of the Covenant. The Struggle in the Liberation of the Reformed Churches regarding the Covenant.) For those who know the Dutch language I heartily recommend these instructive articles. They are now also published with an addition, in the form of a book, that is translated in the English language.

I will start this article with a (for some probably) difficult quotation (but read it; it will be explained), that brings us to the heart of the matter.

In a brochure with the title *Beloofte en Werkelijkheid* (Promise and Reality), written in 1944, Rev. J.G. Woelderink, minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, (Hervormde Kerk), gave his comment on the doctrinal pronouncement of Synod Sneek Utrecht 1942. He warned that it is wrong to abandon the promise of God as the only foundation of faith and to trade it in for a certain reality which seems to provide firmer ground for one's feet than the promise, namely, regeneration planted in a person's heart.

Dr. A. Kuyper often spoke of the “kernel” of (new, spiritual) life (*levenskiem*) which God plants in the heart of a person when he is regenerated by the Holy Spirit. This regeneration or planting of the kernel of life in one's heart happens (can happen) immediately, that is: by the immediate working of the Holy Spirit. “Immediate” means here without means; without the means of the (preaching of the) Word of God. However, compare here Question and Answer 65 of Lord's Day 25 of the Heidelberg Catechism; James 1:18 and I Peter 1:23-25: *born anew of imperishable seed, namely, the*

living and abiding Word of God, that is the Word that was preached!

Rev. Woelderink wrote: “In Dr. Kuyper's doctrine of regeneration, God's grace and salvation become a created reality; the kernel of (new) life of which he always speaks receives real being; even though it is not tangible and visible, its reality is of the same nature as the reality of all created things. And what says most here, out of this kernel of (new) life all new regenerated life arises, also the life of faith. In this way the reality of salvation appears not to exist anymore in the promise, and not to be known through faith in God's promise, but it exists **besides** the promise. And this reality [the kernel of life, J.G.] carries from then on faith and the life of faith. Faith loses its root and basis in the promise and receives a new root and basis in the regenerating grace, which, in regard to the promise, has an independent, real existence. Therefore, this is a grace, which is not given in God's promise and is not made one's own in the way of faith, but grace which is poured into the human soul by the Holy Spirit immediately, without the means of the promise, without the means of God's Word.”

This quotation shows that Dr. A. Kuyper, built a construction about regeneration that goes beyond what Scripture teaches us. According to the Scriptures, the Covenant God comes to His covenant people with the promise of salvation in His Word. It is in the promise (basically: “I am the LORD your God”), that God gives in His grace Jesus Christ, and His salvation. With this promise comes the obligation and call to faith. In the way of faith the (in the promise) given grace and salvation become the believer's own. Faith can be said to be the condition for salvation.

(In order to avoid misunderstanding, it is good to add that we must not read this word “condition” in an Arminian way, as man's own work, but in the Reformed way: as the way to salvation — which God has connected with salvation, while He works faith in the hearts of those whom He has elected. Faith remains God's gift according to election, but God has given

it as the way in which He realizes His grace. God maintains man as a responsible being also after the fall into sin.)

Now we notice that Kuyper, in his doctrine of regeneration as it was made binding by the Synod in 1942, places two things beside each other. There is God's grace and salvation in His Word of promise. And there is God's grace and salvation in the kernel of life in a person's heart through immediate regeneration. God's grace in the promise of the covenant is conditional. It brings along the condition of faith. This promise of grace in God's covenant Word comes to all, both the elect or regenerated and those who are not regenerated or elected. It is promise in the true sense of this word (*toezegging van heil*).

But God's grace in the regeneration, in the kernel of life planted in the heart of those regenerated is not conditional at all. Here the “promise” is absolute, unconditional, and actually not a promise in the strict sense of this word (*toezegging*), but more an announcement or prediction (*aan- and voorzegging*) of salvation, since this concerns the elect who have the imperishable kernel of the new life in themselves.

We can render it in the following way: in the promise God says: you are saved, if you believe. With the kernel of life, as reality in the heart, God says: you are saved, because you are regenerated. Considering these two statements, we find that the second one **seems** to give more certainty than the first one.

Now it was the intention of Dr. A. Kuyper to teach the people to see the great significance of baptism as not just a vague promise of a possible salvation, but as a sure sign and seal of that salvation. Therefore, Kuyper taught that baptism not only seals God's promise, but also the reality of regeneration, that kernel of new life. At the same time, the fact is that here is brought in an element of *uncertainty*. In order to have the certainty of salvation a person must now examine himself and find out whether that kernel of life is planted in his heart and whether he has been regenerated. Here

comes the matter of self-examination into vision. It is therefore logical, that the Synod combined its doctrinal pronouncement concerning covenant and baptism with the one concerning self-examination. With regard to infants such self-examination is not possible, for no one can see whether a child has been regenerated and received the kernel of life in his soul. Therefore, they are baptized, not on the basis of the reality of regeneration, but on the basis of a **presumed** reality, a presumed regeneration. But this means, that what is supposed to give certainty, becomes great uncertainty. The word "presumed" indicates this. It is **uncertain** whether the child has the kernel of life or not.

The Synod wanted this uncertainty. Kamphuis writes (*De Reformatie*, Vol. 57, No. 17, p. 258, "The Praeadvies [the synodical document in which the synodical pronouncements were defended against the objections, J.G.]" . . . speaks very frankly and revealingly about the *element of uncertainty* that has been added *on purpose*. This is in reaction to the remark of the objectors that before the administration of baptism the parents are asked whether they 'acknowledge,' that is, 'confess' that our children (. . .) are sanctified in Christ and therefore as members of His church ought to be baptized. This 'acknowledging' and 'confessing' is a matter of positiveness and certainty, . . . while presuming includes an element of uncertainty and lacks positiveness." But that was the intention. It fitted in the synodical construction.

In the light of what is said above, we can see more clearly the meaning of the

the Synod [of 1905] correctly added that this "does not mean at all that therefore every child truly is regenerated; 4) that the church has to see and treat its members who are admitted to the Supper of the Lord according to the same judgment of love . . . ;

Concerning the self-examination, the Synod stated: 1) . . . ; 2) that this self-examination undoubtedly ought to take its starting point in the covenant of grace, but is therefore not made less necessary by baptism, since not everyone who is baptized possesses the true faith. The reader understands that the question in this self-examination is not: do I walk in the ways of the covenant, but: am I a believer, that means: am I regenerated, am I one of the elect?

In both cases sub 2) of the doctrinal statements we find the same construction: God undoubtedly promises, *but* . . . ; there is undoubtedly the covenant of grace as starting point, *but* There is the covenant with its promise, *but* there is also the question of regeneration. You must believe the **objective** promise of God's objective Word, *but* you must also be **subjectively** regenerated. You must not only **externally** have a place in God's covenant of grace, *but* you must also, through your regeneration as a reality, be ingrafted as member into the true **internal** real covenant.

In these doctrinal statements, especially sub 2), not only a distinction is made between God's **objective** covenant promise and man's **subjective** regeneration, but the two are contrasted, whereby all the emphasis falls on the second, the subjective element.

What are the consequences of this doctrine for the preaching and for the life of faith? In the preaching the emphasis will be placed on the question whether the hearers feel in their hearts that they have part in the salvation and grace of the Lord. The preaching will center around the pious believer and his regeneration, and the listeners will keep their minds busy with the question: is what God gives to His people also for me? Do I belong to those who are born again and chosen by the Lord. There will come uncertainty in their lives, because no one has received a voice of the Lord that he is elected and has been regenerated. This doctrine can also cause fatalism. Seeing that their children turn away from the

Lord, parents can (and did) say: now that our children grow up and live an ungodly life, they show that when they were baptized they might have had the conditional promise of the covenant sealed to them, but they (most likely) did not have that kernel of the new life and regeneration; and since that was not present as a reality in their hearts, this was not sealed to them either and their conclusion is: We can only accept with resignation that our children do not belong to the elect and regenerated and are lost, however terrible this is.

The consequence is also that this subjectivism denies the trustworthiness of God's covenant promises. This doctrine of the Synod makes the certainty of the promises of God and of baptism as their seal dependent on something that has (must have) happened in the heart of man. God's covenant promise ("I am the LORD your God"), for the believers and their seed, is only true if the person concerned has subjectively part of the kernel of life. God's promise is only true for you (so you may believe) if you are regenerated. Therefore, you must know whether you are regenerated. This subjectivism makes God's promise doubtful to say the least. That consequence has been accepted when it was admitted that the baptism of the non-regenerated, the non-elect was an empty baptism, and that God does not promise anything really, to the non-elect and non-regenerated.

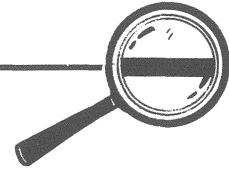
It was against making the covenant word and promises of God unreliable that the reformatory movement in the Reformed Churches fought. They stood up for the trustworthiness of God and God's covenant promises for the believers and ALL their children. They rejected all those distinctions and contrasts. And the preaching was: Thus says the LORD. He comes to you, His congregation, His covenant people, in His Word, and in it He gives Himself and His grace to you, with the demand that you believe in Him and His Word. And the question in the Scriptural self-examination is not: Do I belong to the elect? Did I receive that kernel of new life in my heart? The question is: Do I believe God on His Word? Do I believe His promises? And do I walk in the ways of the LORD in the obedience of faith?

The Liberation maintained the trustworthiness of God's Word, not just as a written objective document, but as the living and powerful covenant Word of the LORD in which He speaks to His people and gives Himself with His grace and salvation in Christ to them. Therefore, we are still thankful for what God gave in the Liberation. Our prayer must be that the LORD may give that we preserve what we received.

J. GEERTSEMA

"The Liberation maintained the trustworthiness of God's Word, not just as a written objective document, but as the living and powerful covenant Word of the LORD."

doctrinal statements of 1942. Following are some of them. Regarding the covenant of grace the Synod said: 1) . . . ; 2) that the Lord undoubtedly promises (toezegt), in the promise of the covenant, to be the God not only of the believers but also of their seed (Gen. 17:7), *but* in His Word not less reveals that not all are Israel who descend from Israel (Rom. 9:6); 3) that therefore — according to what the Synod of Utrecht 1905 (Acts, Art. 158) has stated — "the seed of the covenant, by virtue of the promise of God, must be considered [must be presumed] to be regenerated and sanctified in Christ, until, when they grow up, the opposite shows in their walk of life or doctrine," although



THE STRUGGLE OF H.J. SCHILDER AGAINST A RELIGIOUS SUBJECTIVISM

This is the title of a Press Review in *Gereformeerde Kerkbode* (Reformed Church Bulletin) for Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe, Vol. 40, No. 23 (June 9, 1984) by Rev. H.J. d. V(ries). He took over an article written by Rev. J. Kok of Amersfoort. It is fitting to have this article (for its largest part) in this issue of *Clarion*. H.J. d.V. introduces what Rev. Kok writes with these words:

Today, Saturday June 2, it is forty years ago, that at that time Candidate H.J. Schilder was barred from the office of minister of the Word. The administration of Word and sacraments in the Reformed Churches was denied him, because he fought for the preservation of the Scriptural confession of the sacraments, as seals on God's promises over against the religious subjectivism of a Reformed synod. "Because H.J. Schilder was the first one to be hit by this sentence and also the manner in which he fought this fight, the case of Candidate Schilder became a matter of church-historical significance," so wrote Rev. J. Kok in *Gereformeerde Kerkblad* (Reformed Church Magazine) of June 2, 1984. In an article he asked for special attention for this historical moment of 40 years ago, "To honour the man whom the LORD recently took out of our midst, a man who meant so much for the preservation of God's church in this land. And also to keep alive the cause for which he fought and kept fighting faithfully these forty years, although the times and names [of the opponents, J.G.] changed. It is a cause and a fight which here and now is still valid for us." Rev. Kok shows us that as follows:

What was the issue?

Twenty-eight-year-old Candidate H.J. Schilder was called at Noordeloos. He had accepted this call and had his peremptory examination taken at the classis Gorinchem. The examination was found to be sufficient. But then it happened! On order of the Synod [of Utrecht 1943-1945, J.G.] he was asked to state his agreement with the contentious doctrinal pronouncement of 1942. Candidate H.J. Schilder declared that he considered this pronouncement in conflict with Scripture and Confession and that therefore, he was unable to give the requested agreement. The classis did not come to a conclusion of the examination, and decided to arrange a discussion with the called min-

ister to try and make him as yet to change his mind. It appointed a "heavy" committee of not less than five ministers for this purpose. But young Schilder did not change his mind. His "no" to the synodical doctrine was maintained.

The classis now called on the "deputies for difficulties," which Synod had appointed and Schilder was invited for a discussion in Amsterdam. He stood there over against Dr. Grosheide, Dr. Harrenstein and others.

The intentions of the Synod were clarified. It was stated on paper in black and white that these intentions were, among others: **"to declare and confirm that the sacraments — when they are truly sacraments — seal a faith that is present."** Candidate Schilder maintained his objections. He declared to the deputies that he could not under any condition accept their statement that the sacraments seal faith that is present and therefore also not any pronouncement that would include this conclusion.

Then the axe fell. His case was brought to the Synod via a report by Dr. Grosheide about the discussion that was held . . . The Synod . . . decided to inform the Classis Gorinchem "that Candidate H.J. Schilder cannot be admitted to the ministry of the Word and the sacraments."

The barring from the office was a fact. It happened four days before D-day. In the British harbours thousands of boats were ready for the invasion that would start our national liberation. **It was June 2, 1944.**

Of church-historical significance

The "case of Candidate Schilder" has church-historical significance. The well-reasoned and maintained opposition against the doctrinal pronouncement of 1942 functioned as a *demasque*. It brought into the open the nature and background of the deterioration of the church. And it was a means in God's hand to open the eyes of many for the seriousness of the situation.

Was the controversy of the forties a common squabbling about an unfortunate sentence in a, in the meantime long forgotten, synodical pronouncement? Was it in fact not more than a storm in a tea-cup?

It was and still is suggested that way. But the "case of Candidate Schilder" teaches us differently. We were brought under the yoke of human doctrines and speculations. What was the issue? Let us listen to the man who was so much involved and to whom the intention of the Synod was revealed by its

official deputies. Schilder published a book and gave it the title *Op de Grens van Kerk en Secte* (On the Borderline of Church and Sect). In it, from an abundance of factual material, the conclusion is drawn, that we had to do with a doctrine of the covenant and of the sacraments, which "attacked" the Name of the LORD and which was "corrupting" for the souls of Gods people.

This was so because **"it [this doctrine, J.G.] made the sacrament and the covenant dependent on the presence of faith in the heart, so that the truthfulness of the sign-and-seal of the covenant did not depend anymore on the spoken words of God alone but on the experiences of faith in one's own heart . . . This corruption must be considered to belong to subjectivism, that doctrine which places the person of the believer in the centre and takes him as its starting point at the cost of the living and powerful Word of God."** We came in the strangling grip of SUBJECTIVISM.

In subjectivism the central place is not given to God, to His covenant and words, but to religious man. In subjectivism everything circles around the pious individual and the new life that rustles in his heart. [This doctrine means that] without faith there are no promises in the true sense; and that without faith there is no sacrament in the true sense. The validity of the baptism of the children is made dependent on their inner condition, on the grace that is present in their hearts. Word and sacrament are determined out of the [human] **subject**.

[With this doctrine] man does not find his final and true security in God but in his own soul. This subjectivism was placed upon the Reformed Churches with binding authority. This became evident in the procedure concerning Candidate Schilder. This he himself so sharply fathomed. And against this he maintained his opposition.

Of permanent importance

The fight, fought by the young Schilder, remains necessary, because the evil against which was made front, increases in strength. The religious subjectivism is of great current interest. People are seeking an experience ("een ervaring, een beleving, een bevinding"). There is the cult of pious man.

H.J. Schilder remained a leader in the fight against this evil: as minister, as professor, and as professor-emeritus. His work

on the pulpit gave witness of it. With his whole heart he rejected exemplarism. He sought the upbuilding of the congregation by asking her attention, primarily not for man, the pious person, the Christian person with his questions and problems, but for God and His redemptive work in Jesus Christ.

Being professor in Old Testament, he had to study the many modernist conceptions which approach the Bible as a book with testimonies of faith; as a collection of "theological thoughts"; as the result of what people experienced in their encounter with God. The rejection of these conceptions brought him as Old Testament scholar into isolation. He accepted this. And on his lonely post he stood firmly for the unique character of the Bible: as not the result of human experience, but as revelation of God.

Professor Schilder remained, as long as he could work on this earth, at the frontline against this corrupting subjectivism. Shortly before his passing away I received one of the last issues of *Klare Klanken* (Clear Sounds), of April 2, 1984. In it a contribution is taken up about "Reformed Radio Programs," signed by H.J. Schilder. Making a "Reformed radio program is placed over against the "quasi-piety method" of the Evangelische Omroep (Evangelical Broadcasting Organization) [EO].

We see here a soldier, at the front in the first hour, who keeps saying no to the

religious subjectivism to the last days of his life. With a sharp eye towards changing frontlines, he points at them and rejects them also in the pietistic-confining piety-cult of the evangelical movement. Remember your leaders who spoke to you the Word of God! Follow their faith; as well as their struggle of faith. **The evil of subjectivism threatens us from all sides; from "left" and from "right." It knocks at our door to be let in.**

Let us watch and remain sober.

In connection with its request for time for broadcasting and showing Reformed programs on the Dutch radio and T.V. which is regulated by the government, the Gereformeerde Omroep Vereniging (GOV) (Reformed Broadcasting Association) was asked to show how its programmes would differ from others, namely the EO and the NCRV (the Netherlands Christian Broadcasting Organization). Schilder complied with that request on behalf of the GOV. Schilder points at the "NORM" which the GOV confesses and takes as its starting point: the Reformed Standards, which do not rule the EO and NCRV. Under sub c) Schilder writes that having the Reformed Standards as norm and rule for its programmes would not mean that the GOV:

"would be running over with (so-called) piety. Here I think especially of the EO where this is the case. I think, e.g. of a series of programmes against evolutionism. This was so filled with senseless 'conceptions' (reasonings) that I had the inclination, out of reaction, to become an evolutionist — in conflict with my Reformed 'conceptions' (confession) concerning God's creating and upholding of this world. Moreover, the EO uses nature scenes (beautiful nature pictures) in order to pull an 'evangelizing' trick on those who watch its programs. At the end the slogan comes out: 'do you see how beautiful God's creation is-and that you, therefore, "must" become a member of the EO?' My reaction, then, is 'never.' This is sheer nonsense."

The situation in North America with so much so-called "evangelical radio and television programmes is not different. We are bombarded too by this pious "evangelical" religious subjectivism, where the religious Christian person is in the centre of the attention. Let us watch out that it does not get hold of us. It is so much easier than being truly Reformed, that means: going the way of obedience to God's Word in promise and obligation, going the way of faith in the trustworthy God of the covenant Who comes to His people with and in His Word.

J. GEERTSEMA



A VOICE FROM BEAUTIFUL BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Canadian Reformed Senior Citizens Home Society was introduced to you in the last summer issue of the *Clarion* Magazine. We outlined our intentions to construct and operate a Rest Home in the Fraser Valley, namely, Langley, BC.

The Society purchased a three-quarter acre parcel of land in Langley City, in August of 1983 for the sum of \$200,000.00. The land is in a prime downtown Langley location in close proximity to a shopping centre, library, post office, bus depot, several banks and several medical facilities. The appropriate zoning was acquired.

Difficulties were encountered in arranging of Government assisted financ-

ing so it was decided to start on our own. This leaves us many freedoms we might otherwise not enjoy.

It was proposed by the Board and approved by the membership, in March of 1984, to commence construction of the Rest Home, to be built in two phases, with the first phase consisting of fifteen units. Each unit will consist of a kitchen, bathroom, bedroom and living room with a balcony. The entire complex to include a common lounge and solarium. Each unit will be rented out for \$410.00 per month.

Actual construction was started in June 1984. Estimated completion of the project is set for end of September 1984.

The estimated cost to construct the

first phase is approximately \$600,000. This could be reduced due to the current lower building costs.

The Canadian Reformed Senior Citizens Home Society is actively seeking to occupy all the apartments in the home. In this way, the Rest Home can operate offering many needed and pleasing facilities to our Senior Citizens.

The Canadian Reformed Senior Citizens Home Society would like to invite your interest in this project and welcomes your inquiries. If the Society can accommodate your family and friends in this new and modern Rest Home, and attain full capacity in a very short time, it may proceed with the construction of the second phase which could offer an extended care service.

For further information on the new Rest Home, please refer to the telephone number below.

We thank God for our accomplishments over the last twelve months.

A sincere greeting from all of us,
CANADIAN REFORMED SENIOR
CITIZENS HOME SOCIETY

c/o C.T. Sikma
7747-184th Street, RR 6
Surrey, BC V3S 4P1
Phone: (604) 574-4485

The inaugural sermon and welcome of Rev. B.J. Berends

During the afternoon service of Sunday, July 1, 1984 the congregation of Smithers, BC worshipped for the first time officially under the ministry of Rev. B.J. Berends. Installed by Rev. C. VanSpronsen in the morning service, Rev. B.J. Berends had selected Acts 20:17-35 as Scriptural reading, while verse 28 which reads as follows formed the text: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of

such Scriptures must be opened. Therefore the summary to his sermon was: God's grace for sinners, and then he went on to explain four aspects:

1. The power from which this grace comes.
2. The salvation of which this grace assures us.
3. How this grace compels us.
4. How the gospel is the power of God to salvation.



God, which He obtained with the blood of His own Son."

Having read the text, Rev. Berends went on to say that the congregation was not to expect anything new in his inaugural sermon. He was sent from God and as

In short, Rev. Berends went on to emphasize that without faith we cannot live. We must never take the covenant for granted. It is not once God's people always God's people. We must be born anew. Serve the Lord, and there will be a rich reward. Flee

the world and temptation. Live for the Lord.

The congregation welcomed the new minister and his family on Friday, July 6, 1984. Mr. W. Kanis extended a hearty welcome to all on behalf of the consistory. The singing and reading was of Psalm 148.

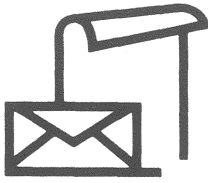
Many good wishes and welcomes were extended to our new minister and his family by those representing the societies and clubs of our congregation: Mr. G. Leffers on behalf of the Church at Houston, BC. Mr. H. VanBostelen for "De Bloeiende Amandelboom," Mr. G. Antonides for the Dutch Study Club, Mrs. Anky Stulp for the Ladies' Society, Tony Barendregt for the Boys' Club and the Young Peoples' Society, George Hofsink for the Home Mission Board, Ken Koopmans for the Men's Society, Mr. Ralph Paize for the School Board and Mr. J.W. Kanis for the school. The choir "Praise the Lord" directed by Doug Boersema also sang songs, while the Girls' Club presented poems and grocery items and the Ladies' Auxiliary introduced the congregation with poems and amusing stories.

Halfway the evening refreshments were served during which time the congregation could meet and talk with the new minister.

Rev. Berends said a few words of thanks and the evening was closed with prayer and the singing of Psalm 150.

GRETA VANDERGAAG

Letter to the Editor



Some time ago we printed some reactions to what Rev. Cl. Stam wrote with regard to "the Hofford-case." The Rev. Hofford seceded from the Burtonsville Orthodox Presbyterian Church with others and formed the Tri-County Reformed Church. These reactions were more or less critical. Now Rev. Hofford wrote a lengthy letter, with his reaction to the critical remarks. It is fair to give space for this comment. But like we shortened the letter of VanderJagt, so we did with this letter. This is also the end of the discussion as far as Clarion is concerned. No new Letters to the Editor on this point will be printed. The Synod of Cloverdale, 1983 has requested the Committee for Contact with the OPC to study the matter and come with a report to the churches. I hope that those involved in the matter have had contact with the Committee.

Editor

Gentlemen:

Since there seems to be so much confusion about the so-called "Hofford Case" as evidenced by the letters responding to an earlier article by Rev. Cl. Stam, I have decided to write in order to clarify the situation.

First, I shall comment on the letter from Mr. B. Bikker. Mr. Bikker says that the verbal warning given at the administration of the Lord's Supper in the OPC "is a form of discipline, which clearly shows that it is not a 'lack' but a 'different form' of discipline." The Complaint which I and others pursued in the OPC contended that this verbal warning is indeed a lack of discipline and not just another acceptable form of discipline. In short, a verbal warning is nothing less than an abandonment of Biblical responsibility.

Mr. Bikker also contends that the closed table is a form of denominational exclusivism. In fact, I never argued for closed communion in the narrowest sense, that is, communion only with members of my local congregation, nor only with members of the OPC. Rather, I was arguing for what is sometimes called "close communion," that is, a level of restriction which allows members in good standing of other true churches to also commune with our local congregation. Correlative to this position is the requirement that some official form of certification as to the membership and standing of the prospective participant be secured by the elders administering the sac-

rament. A major problem for my views within the OPC was the fact that that denomination does not define its relationship with other churches in terms of "true and false" according to the Belgic Confession.

Next, I shall comment on the letter from Rev. R.W. Schmurr. He says, "The original 'report of the Special Committee on Restricted Communion' that was issued by the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic on April 15, 1972 . . . includes four pages of Biblical argumentation and grounds for the present practice in the OPC." The 1972 report alluded to by Mr. Schmurr was not adopted by the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic as an official position or statement either of the Presbytery nor of the OPC. Rather, this report was received by the Presbytery as the report of a committee of three men and passed on to the Burtonsville session as advice worthy of consideration. Furthermore, the 1972 Report does not answer the arguments we advanced in our Complaint, and in our explanation of the complaint we show why this 1972 Report was un-Scriptural. (A copy of this explanation is available upon request)

Mr. Schmurr also says, "I also have before me a ten-page 'report of the Special Committee of Five to deal with the Complaint against the Burtonsville Session' that was adopted by the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic on April 15, 1983." This is not true. The Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic adopted *no* reports regarding the Complaint. The only action taken by the Presbytery on April 15, 1983, in regard to the Complaint, was to deny the Complaint. They gave no reasons or grounds whatsoever for this denial.

I turn now to the letter of Mr. Larson. Mr. Larson says about me, "Having failed in his efforts to reform their practice (i.e., about the Lord's Supper), he was still free to serve in the OPC, either by refusing to serve the Lord's Supper at his congregation, or by going to another congregation."

The only recourse open to those who fail in their legitimate and full efforts to reform the practice of a church is to apply the principles of Matthew 18:15-20 on a corporate level. In short, they must break with those who refuse to repent and follow Scripture and they must continue the true church. This is what led to our secession and succession last year.

Had I attempted to stay at Burtonsville but refused to serve the Lord's Supper, I would have been brought into conflict with my ordination vows which call for faithfully exercising *all* the duties of my office.

In Mr. van der Jagt's letter he charges Mr. Stam with "a few serious errors which distort the facts of the Hofford se-

cession, and may lead to misunderstandings." And he proceeds to supposedly "correct" these in his letter. While it was true that there were some inaccuracies in Mr. Stam's article which could lead to misunderstanding, Mr. van der Jagt's letter is even more seriously misleading not only because of several false statements, but also because of important facts being omitted. Wherever possible, I will document these matters.

Mr. van der Jagt states that one of Mr. Stam's important mistakes was, "His secession from the Burtonsville congregation did not take place after the General Assembly (June 1983) but as early as October 1982." (Quote from Mr. van der Jagt's letter) Mr. van der Jagt's use of terms is misleading. In this whole controversy between me and the OPC, the term "secession" has only been used to identify the action of a group of us from the Burtonsville Church who seceded from that congregation in July 1983. This secession was formally documented by a Declaration of Succession and Secession dated October 1983. Mr. van der Jagt's reference to October 1982, alludes to my resignation as pastor of the Burtonsville Church.

Mr. van der Jagt goes on to say that I resigned "after having carefully considered and discussed the consequences which were pointed out to him by his friends in order to persuade him not to resign." The sum total of these "friends" was Mr. and Mrs. van der Jagt. The root of the problem here is that we are not in agreement over the validity of the personal reasons for my resignation. Furthermore, we were not in agreement about the significance of resignation. In Mr. van der Jagt's view, resignation meant resignation from the office of minister. However, this was not my view, nor is it the view of the OPC. As I have repeatedly told him and others, if I knew that my resignation would have meant that I was resigning from my office as minister, I would not have done so. Within the OPC when a minister resigns, he resigns his call to a particular congregation; however, he remains on the roll of the presbytery as a duly ordained minister. There is a separate action, known as "demitting the ministry" in which a man resigns from his office as a minister within the OPC. Regardless of who is correct about these matters of church government, the fact remains that I operated within the framework of the OPC's government and did so with a clear conscience.

Mr. van der Jagt goes on to say that my resignation within the presbyterian system means that I had divorced myself completely from the Burtonsville congregation. "He was neither the pastor, nor a member of it. (ministers are not mem-

The ILPB is alive and well!!!

There are no doubt some readers of *Clarion* who are not familiar with the initials above this article.

It is 20 years ago that attempts were initiated to join the publication efforts of the League of Men's Societies and the League of Young Peoples' Societies into one organization. The League of Women's Societies joined this new organization as well and so the Inter League Publication Board was formed.

Its mandate was: Provide Reformed Bible study aids for the societies. For many years this mandate was successfully executed. Contact was taken up with the publication organization of our sister churches in Australia. Together we were able to publish some 25 titles between 1964 and 1976.

Then for the next four years little was published by either the Canadian or the Australian organization. It had come to a near standstill.

In 1980 the Leagues became quite concerned about the lack of new study

material, and the ILPB was strongly encouraged to become more active.

After an organizational change, which included the appointment of a committee by the board, the ILPB started once more to prepare outlines for publication.

Outlines on Articles 27, 28, 29 of the Belgic Confession appeared in 1982.

Outlines on Messianic Motherhood and articles on the book of Ruth were published in August 1983. In December of 1983 outlines on the epistles of James and I and II Peter were printed. This is the first outline which was prepared for printing with the use of our own word processor. It was in March of 1984 when our next book entitled: *Training in Godliness* became available. It contains outlines on the letters of Paul to Timothy (I and II), Titus and Philemon. And now our latest outline on the book of Daniel is ready.

And that is not the end of it.

There are many more books in preparation for printing. Some are being

edited at this time, while others are being translated or are planned for translation. In addition to the new ones, we also plan reprints for outlines which have proved to be in demand. One such bundle of outlines is from Prof. Rev. L. Selles on the Book of Revelation to John. The author is presently revising this outline and it will be some time before this will become available.

We have also decided to expand our service. We intend to start a subscription type book series. During the first year we plan to publish three books. The first book is on request, the title is: *Christ in the Family* by W. Meijer. We hope to be able to release this in the fall of 1984. Our second book is called: *Call unto Me* by H. Westerink. This book deals with prayer. Our last and final book for the first year is written by Dr. K. Deddens of our Theological College in Hamilton. In this book Dr. Deddens shows us how our public profession of faith is in response to our baptism.

And last but not least, this fall we also hope to be able to provide study material for the boys and girls clubs. At the present time there is little available and oftentimes it is a make-do situation. More details about the above activity will be re-

members of any congregation but are members of the Presbytery, whatever that means." Again, Mr. van der Jagt is only partially correct. The OPC Form of Government states, "Every minister shall be a member of a regional church." (Chapter VI:4). Also, "A regional church consists of all the members of the local congregations and the ministers within a certain district." (Chapter XIV:1). And, "The presbytery is the governing body of a regional church. It consists of all the ministers and all the ruling elders of the congregations of the regional church." (Chapter XVI:2).

One may disagree with the OPC Form of Government, but one cannot dispute that within that system I maintained a measure of responsibility for the Burtonsville congregation, as indeed I did for all the congregations within the Presbytery. Furthermore, if one does reject the OPC system at this point, then de facto I would have most surely been a member of the Burtonsville congregation, for that is where the rest of my family had their membership. Mr. van der Jagt cannot have it both ways at once: completely divorced from the Burtonsville congregation, and not a valid member of the Presbytery as an ordained minister.

Mr. van der Jagt concludes this section of his letter by saying, "Apparently, Rev. Hofford was well aware of the broken relationship for, from that time on, he

and his family did not attend the regular worship services, except on a few, rare occasions." This is not a true statement. The facts are that I and my family regularly attended worship at Burtonsville from the time of my resignation in October 1982, until March 6, 1983, at which time I began supplying the pulpit at a neighbouring OPC congregation without a pastor.

It may seem impossible for Mr. van der Jagt to follow us in our secession because of his interpretation of the events which have taken place in this case. However, one can be assured that the issues which keep Mr. van der Jagt from following us are not the ones which are preventing others in the Burtonsville Church from following us. For them it is a matter of not wanting to fully follow Christ and His Word.

Finally, there are two clarifications to be made in regard to Rev. Stam's "Comment." First, Mr. Stam says that I had only two choices: either administer the Lord's Supper the session's way, or resign. Actually, as already pointed out, I could have stayed, theoretically, as pastor and the session could have brought in other ministers to serve the sacrament. For obvious reasons, as explained earlier, this option was intolerable not only for me, but for the Burtonsville Church.

Mr. Stam still appears confused about the order of some events (and no

wonder!). He says, "The way of appeal had been completed; it was a matter of complying or resigning." If it is not already clear from what has been said thus far, the fact is that I resigned after the issue was raised with and acted upon by the Session (February and September 1982), but before the formal complaint process was initiated (October 1982).

Mr. Stam later says that in the OP a minister resigns from the session, but he remains a minister in full rights in the presbytery. The latter part of the statement is accurate. The first part is not entirely correct. A minister in the OP resigns his call to a particular congregation, and the congregation has to vote to approve the resignation. Again, it should be noted, that this action of resigning is not a resignation from the office of minister but only from a particular call.

Tri-County Reformed Church is continuing its profitable contact with the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. We are currently in the process of studying the Three Forms of Unity in order to compare and contrast them with the Westminster Standards. It is our hope and prayer that one day soon we may be affiliated with other true churches as we join together in confessing together the same things as Scripture.

Sincerely,
BARRY R. HOFFORD
Laurel, MD 20707

leased as they become available.

We have asked for representatives in each church and so far we have about 12 people who have indicated their willingness to work with us. We are very happy about this. However, there are still many churches where we do not have a representative as yet and we are hoping that there are still some more who will make themselves available to do this work. It means representing us in your church by announcing new books, taking orders, stay in touch with the societies, etc.

All this activity has made the ILPB committee quite busy and excited.

To share this enthusiasm with you we have put together a package deal consisting of four new books containing outlines on James, I and II Peter, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Daniel, Messianic Motherhood and articles on Ruth.

When you purchase these books for \$17.00, including postage, we will sent you free of charge five books with outlines on Deuteronomy, Esther, Haggai, Colossians and You His Guest.

Total regular market value of this special is over \$30.00. Some of you may have a few of the free books but we feel

that that is no problem: they make great gifts.

That this is a good deal has been proved already. When this package was presented to the meeting of the League of Men's Societies, fifty percent of those present purchased the sets. At the office-bearers conference again fifty percent purchased these sets. We need such enthusiastic support so we can carry on with the publication of more books.

We have many other titles available. Please see our ad in this issue of *Clarion*. It provides details about ordering these books as well as the special package. The package is only available from the ILPB. The other books in our ad are also available from Premier Printing Ltd. or from your bookstore.

You can support the ILPB in two ways. One, by purchasing our books, and two, by becoming a member. Societies in Eastern Canada are already mostly associated as members through their Leagues. Other societies, not associated with a League, may also join up as well as individuals. Membership entitles you to greatly reduced prices on our books.

To cut down on our time involved in shipping, please try to order through the

secretary of your society or through your local representative.

One last note: The special package deal expires January 31, 1985. This gives you plenty of chance to include this package in your gifts this year.

For the ILPB
London C. HOFF

CHURCH NEWS



ACCEPTED to Winnipeg, MB

CANDIDATE W. DEN HOLLANDER
of Hamilton, ON
and DECLINED to Lincoln and
Smithville, ON

CALLED to Lincoln, ON

CANDIDATE J. MOESKER
of Hamilton, ON

CALLED to Watford, ON

CANDIDATE M. VAN LUIK
of Lincoln, ON

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE



Hello Busy Beavers,

Time for our Big Summer Contest! Get your pens and pencils out! Try your very best! It's fun!

But first let's wish all the Busy Beavers celebrating an August birthday a very happy day with their family and friends. We hope you have a really great day! And may the Lord bless and keep you in the years ahead.



August

Joanne Visscher	1 Tim Hofsink	21
Janina Barendregt	6 Shane Pieterman	22
Kristi Van Popta	11 Caroline Wubs	23
Edward Stam	12 Lois Lof	26
Alice Van Woudenberg	13 Audrey Vandersluis	30
Kathryn Smid	17 Theo Wierenga	31



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Gredina Jaspers*. We are happy to have you join us. Will you write us sometime to tell us about where you live, and what your hobbies are? Thank you for the picture, *Gredina*. Write again soon!

Congratulations on your new niece, *Alida Knol*! Did you finish your bib for her yet? What is it like? How did you enjoy your sisters' wedding? You did well on the quiz, *Alida*. Keep up the good work!

How are the flowers doing, *Cheryl Boeve*. I bet they're pretty. I sure wish I could see them! Congratulations on passing your music exam, *Cheryl*. Keep up the good work. Did you have a good holiday, *Cheryl*? Thanks for the big puzzle!

Everybody knows my address?
Here it is again: Aunt Betty
Box 54
Fergus, ON N1M 2W7

BIG SUMMER QUIZ CONTEST!

Come on! Join the Contest!

QUIZ #1

Fathers

Who was the father of each of the following?

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. Ham | 9. Benjamin |
| 2. David | 10. Elisha |
| 3. Abel | 11. Samson |
| 4. Joshua | 12. Jehu |
| 5. James and John | 13. Saul |
| 6. Rachel | 14. Esau |
| 7. Samuel | 15. Absalom |
| 8. Abner | 16. Isaac |

QUIZ #2

Ready for Service

Not all the people in the numbers below seemed ready for service when first called, though they later obeyed.

How many can you name? All of them?

1. He answered the question of the Lord with, "Here am I; send me."
2. He said he could not speak when called to make his people free.
3. He would rid the men of their foreign wives. They said, "Be of good courage, and do it."
4. He came to Judah to rebuild the wall, though few of the people knew it.
5. Ordained a deacon, he obeyed the call, and he baptized a eunuch.
6. He was ready to fight for his king and kill an enemy giant.
7. These two were chosen to go and preach, and they went from Antioch.
8. This prophet was unwilling when he was sent to Nineveh.

9. When called to fight the Midianites he asked for signs of dew.
10. When asked by the judge to fight, he said he would go if she went too.
11. He gave his life for the gospel he preached. Young Paul was standing by.
12. He was ready to follow the prophet when he kissed his parents good-bye.

QUIZ #3

Writing in the Bible

1. What did Pilate write over Jesus' cross?
2. Which disciples were writers of gospels?
3. When did the Lord Jesus write on the ground?
4. When did a hand write on a wall?
5. To whom was Ill John written?
6. On what was Moses told to write the law?
7. Where was Moses to write the names of the princes of Israel in preparation of God's selection of a leader?
8. Where did God say He would write the law?
9. What instrument wrote the Ten Commandments on the tablets?
10. How many letters of Paul's are contained in the New Testament?
11. What physician was also a New Testament writer?
12. How many Bible books did Moses write?
13. Who wrote most of the psalms?
14. How did Zacharias let people know the name of his new son?
15. Where did John write Revelation?
16. Who was the chief writer and collector of Proverbs?

Try your best.

Use your Bible. (You should every day, anyway. Don't you think?)

Send me your answers soon!

I'm looking forward to those letters!

Bye for now!

With love from your
Aunt Betty

With joy and thankfulness our covenant God has granted us one of His greatest gifts, the birth of our daughter:

MELISSA ANNE

Born: July 19, 1984

Abe and Linda Roza

A sister for: *Abraham and Nicholas*

5523 Schueller Crescent
Burlington, ON L7L 3T1

With great joy and thankfulness to the Lord, we wish to announce the birth of our first son and brother:

ROBERT DARCY

Born: June 28, 1984

A brother for: *Brenda and Melanie*

George and Henry Bysterveld
(nee Fennema)

4657-200 Street
Langley, BC V3A 1L4

TEACHERS' COLLEGE

OUR PRESENT FINANCIAL TEMPERATURE AS AT AUGUST 9, 1984

Total Received
\$143,696.74

Total Expenses
\$136,618.32

On August 31, 1984, we have our financial year-end. Even though we met all our expenses so far, we did have to draw on our reserve fund of \$15,000 which we had at the beginning of the year. Presently we are about \$8,000 short of what we budgeted for. If you have not contributed to the Teachers' College as yet, we urge you to do so now. We would like to start the new year with a healthy balance. Please make your cheque payable to:

Canadian Reformed Teachers' College
c/o J. Gelderman
491 Karen Drive
Burlington, ON L7R 3J2

