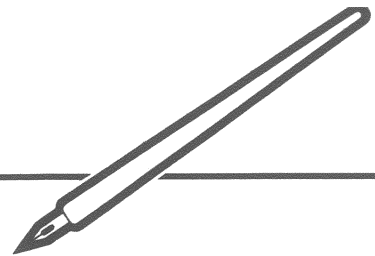


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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The age of information — The age of the computer, the age of evil?

Computer and questions

Some time ago I was told that if all the present computers in North America would break down tomorrow, and could not be repaired or replaced, one billion (1,000,000,000) workers would be needed to do the work which these computers do now. A superficial conclusion would be that this proves that the computer takes many jobs away from people and drastically increases unemployment. Is, then, this conclusion not correct? Is the computer not a great danger for man? Can we call the computer an evil instrument? Let us pay some attention to these questions.

There are not many businesses anymore, at least among the larger ones, that do not make use of computers. The computer has already found its way into many homes. And the process continues. The computer is becoming more and more sophisticated, easier to use, constantly able to do more, and cheaper all the time. Even if we wanted to we simply could not stop this development. The computer will have an increasing impact on our modern changing society. Let me first make a few remarks concerning:

Computer and unemployment

It is true that the computer takes jobs away from people. There is no doubt about it. A university student, working in a research program in physics, told me she made certain calculations with a computer in less than five minutes, for which, if done with pencil and paper, she would need about two weeks.

We are all aware of the fact that the car industry uses more and more computers and robots, eliminating many jobs. And this is only one of the many industries where computers have been introduced. We find the same picture in modern offices. Today, computers do for businesses what many clerks did before, saving the company many hours for which otherwise wages had to be paid. Therefore, it cannot be denied that the computer has taken many jobs away from people and will continue to do so. Does this then justify the conclusion that the computer is an evil instrument? A comparison of the computer with the machine can be helpful here.

Computer and machine

When machines were invented, and the Industrial Revolution took place, one machine could produce the equivalent of what many human hands did before. A farmer who before worked his fields with ten farm labourers, needed only two workers when the machine took over. However, this is only one side of the story. The other side is that the machine created more jobs than it took away. Factories that produced machines came into being. With the machine came cars, trains, airplanes, etc. The result was that many agricultural workers found a new job in industry, becoming industrial labourers.

It is very interesting to follow the historical development here. Before the Industrial Revolution took place approximately ninety per cent of the population of the United States was

employed in agriculture. Through the Industrial Revolution the majority of the labourers found employment in industry, in factories. Today this is no longer so. Since the beginning of our decade the white-collar workers in the office are in the majority. "Farmer, labourer, clerk — that is a brief history of the United States. Farmers, who as recently as the turn of the century constituted more than one-third of the total labour force, now are less than three per cent of the work force. In fact, today there are more people employed full-time in our universities than in agriculture."¹

In my opinion we can draw a parallel here. Like the machine, the computer is taking jobs away. But it creates jobs as well. As the machine made things possible that before could not be done, or could not be done to the same extent (e.g., mass production, travel with great speed, travel through the air), so the computer allows man to do what was impossible before. Without computers and computer technology man could not place functioning satellites in space or make trips into space with the space shuttles. A whole new computer industry is developing, bringing along with it new institutions where people are trained to work with computers, to repair them and to program them. Computers store and provide easy accessibility to enormous amounts of information. That is why our time is called "the Information Era."

Some consequences

As the machine conquered the world in the Industrial Revolution, so the computer will conquer our modern "Information Era," whether we like it or not, bringing along with it certain consequences. As people had to get used to the machine and needed retraining in order to learn to work with it, so we have to adapt to the development of the computer in this time of the Computer Revolution. This adaptation process means training or retraining for many people so that they can build up skills to work with this modern tool, and find a new job.

There is also another, related consequence. In a book about computers, their development and consequences for our modern society, Christopher Evans compares the Industrial Revolution with the Computer Revolution. He writes that in the machine "man found means to supplement and amplify the power of his muscles." But with the Computer Revolution "we move from the amplification and emancipation of the power of muscles to the amplification and emancipation of the power of the brain."²

I find truth in this comparison. The consequence is that in our time the emphasis will be placed more and more on the need for schooling, training, learning, in short: brain work. It is the consequence of the historical development of "farmer, labourer, clerk," or, to say it with different words: field, factory, office, with the emphasis respectively on feet, hands, and head. A farmer going through his fields in former days behind his plough had to have strong feet, a labourer working in a factory with a machine had to have skilled hands, and a clerk busy

with a computer in his office needs a head filled with knowledge. Of course, all three need(ed) feet, hands and brains all the time; it is a matter of emphasis.

What is my aim in saying this? It is this: sometimes we hear and see that young people, also in our churches, quit school before they graduate. They prefer to become part of the workforce, to earn money and to be free. The youth has to be aware that jobs for unskilled workers will become less and less available. The evidence of this shows itself in the fact that more and more people finish Grade twelve and go to a college or other training institute, a number of years after they quit high school. "Back to school" is for many the only road to a job-secure future.

This situation will make it harder to find a job for students who have problems with learning and absorbing all kinds of information. I do not say that it will become impossible for them to find a job. The machine did not bring farming to an end, and so the computer will not bring the factory to an end. But it will become harder. Automation will have an enormous impact also on the farm and on the factory.

For this reason, we as parents, teachers, and whoever else there is including *Clarion*, have to urge our youth to use their talents and to develop their skills, to finish high school and if possible to continue their training at a university, a college, a trade school or some other institution of learning. We have to accept this as a consequence of living in the "era of information." If we do not go along with the development of our modern age, we shall be forced to stand on the sidelines where the unemployed will be, and those who are considered useless by a hard, uncharitable, business-society.

Computer and evil

Does this mean that the computer is an evil instrument and an instrument of evil? We cannot say that. When the machine came, and the car or the airplane, the radio or the television, they were called evil and instruments of the devil. And yes, there are dangers in cars and airplanes, in radios and televisions. And there are definitely dangers in the computer as a modern tool because it is an "amplification and emancipation of the power of the brain." But one thing we must not forget. Evil is not in things, tools or instruments. Evil is in man who makes tools and works with them to reach his own wicked goals.

A combustion engine pollutes the air, which is a great disadvantage. But can we therefore call it evil? The same engine in a car makes it possible for ministers to preach the gospel in more than one place, and it enables people who live quite far from the church to attend the worship services. But when the same engine is used in tanks and airplanes to wage a war against and conquer other nations, that engine becomes a mighty weapon of evil in the hands of wicked people. Industry with its machines became a terrible amplification of evil power of a man like Adolph Hitler.

As the machine increased the power of man, also of evil men, so can the computer even to a greater extent. It can become an awful and terrible tool in the hand of anti-Christian powers. But that still does not make the computer, as such, evil or in itself an instrument of evil.



“. . . the computer belongs to the possibilities which God laid down in creation.”

Like all other products of modern technology, the computer belongs to the possibilities which God laid down in creation. And "everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the word of God and by prayer," I Timothy 4:4,5. And "to the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted . . . they are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good deed," Titus 1:15,16. This is the wisdom of the Scriptures. This wisdom may be our guide, also in the matter of computers and the development which they bring along.

But let us, living in the beginning of the Computer Age, remain on the alert. Let us not allow the computer to take a hold on us, like the television rules so many instead of being ruled by us. Let us hold on to God's Word as the guide for our lives, in the surety of faith that the Lord will lead His people also through the Computer Revolution and the Computer Age into His eternal kingdom. There the marvels of His new creation work will be infinitely greater than whatever modern man will be able to discover and accomplish on this temporal earth and in this passing world.

J. GEERTSEMA

¹ John Naisbitt, *Megatrends* (New York, Warner Books, paperback edition, 1984), p. 5

² Christopher Evans, *The Micro Millennium* (New York, The Viking Press, 1979), p. 10ff.

Marriage and procreation₃

5. Abstinence

In the past total abstinence was seen as the only alternative when pregnancy had to be avoided. This was more or less a result of the Roman Catholic attitude with respect to sexual life and abstinence. This point of view becomes particularly clear in the celibate. A Roman Catholic priest is not allowed to marry but must abstain from every sexual relationship during his whole life. They often refer to Paul who was also unmarried. He writes in I Cor. 7:32-35 "The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband. I say this for your benefit, not to lay a restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord."

If this text is used to make abstinence mandatory for everyone who preaches the gospel and who wants to serve the Lord with his whole life in a special way, this text is taken out of context. The apostle Paul also says that not

everyone has the "gift" of abstinence. In I Cor. 7:7 and 9 he writes in this respect: "each has his special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another . . . if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion." The apostle does not say that sexual life is something to be ashamed of or of something which cannot go together with the service of the Lord. Paul lived in a specific situation, in which he had to fulfil a unique mandate. He speaks in I Cor. 7:26 about "the present distress" in which they "will have worldly troubles." Overemphasis on the unmarried state has led to a wrong idea about sexual life. In the past sexual intercourse was considered to be almost indecent. It was necessary to bring forth children but, apart from that, it was a carnal matter and could not really go together with spiritual things. It was never openly discussed. Nowadays things are quite different, almost to the other extreme. There seem to be no "secrets" at all and sexual matters are discussed very

openly, but unfortunately not always more respectfully.

Sex is no longer a "taboo"

but has come in the open and, in the opinion of many, it is not inseparably connected with the married state any longer. There seem to be no norms at all, or mankind has become its own norm. Good is what makes you feel good, as long as it does not hurt anyone else.

The result of this attitude in the past was, that total abstinence was seen as the only acceptable method in cases in which a pregnancy was not desirable. Every other solution was considered immoral and unnatural. However, there was a certain hypocrisy in this attitude. Theory and reality were often miles apart. Moreover, it was a denial of the wonderful gift of unity which the Lord has given within the holy married state. Sexual intercourse is certainly not a "carnal" matter, it is not an indecent act. It is a gift of the Lord, given already in paradise. The Lord will use this act to bring forth new life. But also in cases in which the procreation of new life is not the intention or cannot even be expected, it remains a very important part of marriage and a way in which husband and wife express their feeling of love and unity. In Ephesians 5:31,32 the apostle Paul says: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church." The unity of husband and wife in the married state is used as a symbol of the relationship between Christ and His Church and it is called a profound mystery. In the same way the caricature of this relationship is used as a symbol of sin and the work of Satan. In the Book of Revelation the dominion of the devil and his activity is compared with a harlot (Rev. 17:1 and 19:2). In the Old Testament unfaithfulness to the Lord is often called spiritual adultery. In Jeremiah 3:6 the Lord admonished His people and says that they "have played the harlot" by serving other gods.

Is total abstinence the only acceptable alternative in cases in which pregnancy has to be avoided? Other methods are called "unnatural" but the question has to be asked whether it is "natural" when a husband and wife are living together, sharing everything in life, without having the opportunity to come to



a very essential act in the married state. Isn't that an unnatural and unhealthy situation? Of course, self-control is important and to abstain from sexual intercourse for a certain period of time can even strengthen the bond of marriage. In I Cor. 7:5 the apostle says: "Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempts you through lack of self-control." Here he speaks about abstinence for a specific reason, with mutual agreement. And he adds: but then come together again "lest Satan tempts you." If a couple permanently has to live in total abstinence, it will have its impact on the relationship. The consequence can be that they cannot share the same bedroom any longer. Let us be realistic. If a boy and a girl are engaged, we will not allow them to live together in the same house and certainly not to sleep together in the same room. Even if they would say that they are strong enough to withstand the temptation, it would be irresponsible. It would cause unbearable tension. Under the same token it is almost impossible to expect that a young couple, with normal sexual feelings and reactions, can live together without having sexual intercourse. It would at least bring them in an extremely difficult position and put an enormous stress on them. No one can, in all honesty, call this a "natural" situation. Today we are confronted by a society in which sex seems to be the most important thing in life. That is a caricature and to a certain extent idolatry with the body. We wholeheartedly reject this worldly attitude. But we should not, as a reaction, go to the other extreme and consider sexual intercourse unimportant and indecent. It is given as one of the most wonderful ways of expressing the unity within the holy married state. It has to be reserved for the married state and restricted to the relation between husband and wife, but used and seen in the proper context, it is a gift of the Lord which we should not underestimate or debase.

6. Other acceptable means

After we have seen that there are situations in which a pregnancy has to be avoided or postponed, and that there are even situations in which causing a new pregnancy would be irresponsible, and after we have acknowledged that *total abstinence* is not the ideal and natural

way out, we have to consider which other possible options there are. The main point has to be, as we have stated before, that the couple, in all honesty before the Lord, has considered their task and mandate and has come to the conclusion that they have to avoid a pregnancy within the scope of their own responsibility. It is important to *repeat* this, because our heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). We are all prone by nature to go the way of least resistance and to seek our own pleasure, rather than being concerned about the commandments of the Lord.

One of the most commonly used methods is the "pill." Are Christians allowed to use this? Let us first state that the pill has to be seen as a medicine, prescribed by a physician. Every use of this and other medicines without the supervision and advice of a doctor is dangerous. There are many rumours about known as well as unknown side-effects. We have to be careful with these stories. It is for a person who is not a doctor very difficult to draw conclusions. Every medicine has known side-effects and there is always a risk of unknown side-effects. Therefore advice and supervision of a doctor is necessary. But, provided that there are valid reasons for postponing a pregnancy and provided

that proper consultation with a doctor has taken place, we cannot see that the use of this medicine under all circumstances has to be condemned. Moreover, this "pill" was originally not developed to avoid pregnancy but rather to cure infertility. After the use of this medicine for a certain period of time, the chance of pregnancy increases. That is the way it was originally used and it is still used that way in many instances. However, this same medicine can also be used to avoid pregnancy for a longer or shorter period of time. There are situations in which this method can be used also by Christians. Some say: it is unnatural, it is intruding into the secret works of the Lord, which are beautifully described in Psalm 139. However, is not every use of medicines a matter of interference with a "natural" process? Still we accept the work of the doctor in most cases. A caesarean section is not a "natural" process either, but nonetheless acceptable. Another argument is that medicines should be given only to people who are sick, and that in these cases there is oftentimes not a trace of sickness. However, there are many situations in which we use medicines without being sick but only to avoid certain unpleasant things which *might* happen. Many people ask the doctor for a "shot" to avoid a possible bout of flu in the winter season. Vaccination

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editors: J. Geertsema and W. Pouwelse
Co-Editors: J. DeJong, Cl. Stam and
W.W.J. VanOene

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION
9210 - 132A Street
Surrey, BC, Canada V3V 7E1

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE

MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

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and all kinds of prophylactic medicines are used regularly, and in most cases there is no trace of any illness. Let us not forget that a total abstinence can build up a psychological tension and put the relationship between the partners in jeopardy. It can do harm to the whole family. If one of the partners cannot carry the burden any longer, he or she might go to the doctor to get a "tranquilizer." Under certain circumstances it is more "natural" to avoid such tensions by using a contraceptive medicine than to take medicines to cope with the stress caused by total abstinence.

One remark we still like to make in this respect. It is impossible to mention all available means. The choice is rather a matter which has to be discussed with a doctor and has to be decided on medical ground, after the principle decision has been made by the parents on Biblical ground. However, there are methods which are unacceptable under *all* circumstances and that are the so-called abortive means. The word "abortive" refers not only to an abortion, as performed today in many hospitals and abortion clinics, but also to such means which do not *prevent* conception but *destroy* already present human life. To these abortive means belong the "morning-after" pill as well as IUD's. An IUD is a device, inserted in the uterus to prevent a fertilized ovum from being implanted in the uterus. These methods are unacceptable because they basically cause a small scale abortion, they kill the beginning of human life.

7. A marriage without children

There is still one aspect we like to touch on and that is a very important one for many a young family. We hear quite often about couples who have decided to get married but who want to wait a number of years before they "start a family." Many reasons are mentioned. Some want to finish a study, others want to save some

than the hypocritical way of some, who are using the pill, while they are only engaged. It is certainly true that those who marry without accepting the responsibility for raising a family are more honest and less hypocritical than those who live together without being married. However, that does not make it right. We have to remember that the Lord has given mankind the instruction, within the holy

"The Lord has laid the connection between marriage and having children."

money or buy a house, or they first want to get better acquainted before taking on the responsibility of raising children. In The Netherlands, in the Reformed press, a public discussion has taken place about this matter. The main point in this discussion was the position of students who do not have a job or the means to provide for a family, but who do not want to prolong their engagement. Many years of engagement, they say, make it almost impossible to live a "chaste and disciplined life." Therefore they would rather get married in an honest way, and wait with having children until they can afford it. This reasoning sounds honest and it seems to make sense. They don't want to separate sexual unity from the married state. They say they prefer this rather

married state: "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it." The Lord has laid the connection between marriage and having children. There can be valid reasons to delay the birth of a next child. We have to consider carefully the circumstances. Not all cases are the same. But we should not separate what the Lord has joined together. If a couple is not yet ready to begin a family because they have no house, no money to provide for a family or because they are not mature enough for it, they should not marry. It is not correct to want the privileges of the married state, without accepting the responsibility that goes with it. What the Lord has joined together man should not put asunder. That is quite a different situation than with parents who are married, who have accepted their responsibility, and who for one reason or another have to "regulate" the size and the tempo of the growth of their family. The sexual relation between husband and wife is a beautiful gift of the Lord, which can be enjoyed within the holy married state, also when the procreation of children is not the prime intention. But we should not *separate* the two and try to *grasp* the one without *accepting* the other.

We realize that these matters are not easy to deal with and very delicate. Not everything that has been said may be agreed upon by everyone. However, we hope that we have given some food for thought and some guidelines in a matter which is on the minds of many of our members, but which is not enough discussed in a Christian way, to the upbuilding of each other.

COLLEGE CORNER

As Dr. J. Faber already indicated in a previous issue, this fall the Theological College hopes to present two series of popular lectures on Thursday evenings, starting at 8:00 p.m., for the general Church public. There will be opportunity for discussion after each lecture. Admission to these lectures will be free.

The first series of six lectures begins on September 19 and ends October 24. Prof. C. Van Dam hopes to speak on "Some aspects of the book of Leviticus with special attention for its relevance for today."

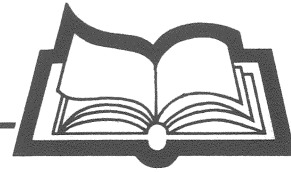
The second series of six lectures runs from October 31 until December 5. Dr. K. Deddens hopes to speak on: "Mission and Ecumenism."

These lectures will be delivered in the new college building, 110 West 27th Street, Hamilton, ON.

Parking on both streets 27th and 28th and park lot at 28th.

C. VAN DAM
K. DEDDENS

W. POWELSE



"I will restore Israel to his pasture, and he shall feed on Carmel and in Bashan, and his desire shall be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead."

Jeremiah 50:19

Balm in Gilead

The closing chapters of the book of Jeremiah closely parallel, also in form, the visions recorded in the last Bible book, the Revelation to John. Amidst the continual row of prophesies of impending doom over Babylon, we find interludes which speak of the recovery and restoration of God's people, — specifically, a remnant faithful to Him. So we read how Israel and Judah will again feed and be satisfied on the fertile regions of Ephraim and Gilead.

This represents a major change in tone of the prophet! To be sure, Gilead was a region known for its fertility, Numbers 32:1 ff. Micah 7:14. The region was also known for its plants which produced juices having strong medicinal powers. Passages like Jeremiah 8:22 and 46:11 indicate that almost everyone knew there was healing balm in Gilead. But, as Jeremiah 8:22 indicates, this was before the devastator came and totally destroyed the land. The LORD struck His people with an incurable wound because they had so stubbornly and repeatedly refused to listen to Him. But now the glorious change is coming! The Sun rises with healing in its wings.

What time and age does this promise of restoration speak of? The focus is certainly not on the earthly Gilead. There the pain is still present, and each passing day only stamps the wounds as all the more incurable. There the world sinks into hopelessness with each passing day. But the Revelation to John gives us the right answer, and a different focus. There we are led to seek the fulfilment in Jesus Christ, and His work for His church. He came to heal the incurable wound — the wound which no man could heal. He came to make double payment for Israel's sins, Isaiah 40:2. He came to seal the judgment of the oppressor, and deliverance to the captives. When He came, rivers of healing flowed forth from Him, and He said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick," Mark 2:17.

So we see the spiritual focus of the passage for the church today. The time of healing and restoration has come in Christ Jesus our Lord. The green pastures

of Ephraim and Gilead are ours in Word and sacrament, and in the care and healing richly lavished upon us by the risen and ascended Saviour. And just as we read of a sudden reversal in Israel's favour in earthly terms in Jeremiah, so we may experience and anticipate the great reversal in universal and cosmic terms as it is mapped out for us in the last Bible book, the book of the visions given to John. For Jeremiah sees how Gilead is restored, but now it is Babylon that needs balm, 51:8. So, too, with our restoration, we may see and anticipate the full destruction of the evil power, the full end of the beast from the bottomless pit and world power that exalts itself against the Lord and His Anointed, Revelation 17-19. Then the great aggressor, who was first used by the Lord as an instrument to purify His own, will — by virtue of his own hatred against God and his own abuse of his position — be cast into outer darkness — leaving the earth cleansed and renewed for those who wait upon the Lord.

The doors of healing are opened to us, if only we live in faith and heed His commands. His full payment implies that the wholesome words of His commandments have new meaning and new power in us. As His Church we are privileged to be the new remnant, healed and restored in Him. And with the appeal of His Word and commandment, He gracefully and carefully nudges us to His home — if only we believe anew every day!

Yet those delivered are not those who can pride themselves in their own faithfulness and their own sinlessness. Rather, those are delivered who renounce their own will, and seek their help in Him, who gave Himself for the sins of His people. He made the real payment! He opened the doors of green pasture for us again! Therefore it is only in Him that we can know and be assured:

There is a balm in Gilead
to make the wounded whole —
There is a balm in Gilead
to heal the sin-sick soul.

J. DEJONG

Our Cultural Mandate₂

Combining the protological and eschatological texts

Let us now lay the two types of texts side by side and compare their messages. Basically, if we try to combine them in this way, we see they are not really all that different, and that there are many false and needless dilemmas in the debate. This has led Professor Kamphuis to speak about "a disturbance in the lines of communication," in which parties to the debate seem to a certain extent to be talking alongside of each other, rather than directly to each other.⁶

The first thing we can be sure about is that the cultural mandate remains in force, however great the changes in man's life and environment are. God does not alter His command. However, the power of sin is so great that man is unable to fulfill this command after the fall. There is only one way in which he may make a new beginning again, the way of faith. He must believe in the promise, and through faith in this promise the LORD God restores him to his place as image of God, and grants him a foretaste of the renewed dominion by directing his heart towards deeds of justice and righteousness.

One might say that Adam received the power to rule again, but actually received it only in promise and not in deed. He still had to live under the curse. However, in the way of faith, the curse became a blessing for him, because it led him to seek the fulfillment of the promise in Jesus Christ. And in order to move his sinful mind to seek that fulfillment more and more, God gave Adam a foretaste of the victory and new ruling power that Christ would bring.

We live in the New Testament dispensation, in which the promises have been fulfilled. The Spirit has been poured out and dwells in our hearts. In principle, all the restrictions and punishments of the first 11 chapters in Genesis have been overcome, including the restriction of language. Through the power of the Spirit, the disciples were able to communicate the gospel in many different languages. The gospel reaches out to all peoples.

However, today we still have only a foretaste of the restored dominion and ruling power, and the old man still lives and

works within us, leading us into sin. We still have a daily struggle and we labour under the curse. Today we experience little of an actual dominion over the whole earth. The creatures and elements are certainly not subject to us. Unbelieving man may have made some progress in harnessing the earth's power, but his method and attitude indicate that he is still very much a slave. The Church may begin to experience deliverance from sin, but in many ways lives far removed from the seats of power and influence in the world.

Indeed, what we have today and what we may do must direct us to seek a heavenly Kingdom, a Kingdom which is coming. The firstfruits of that Kingdom have already come in Christ, the principal elements, i.e. the spiritual renewal and the work of the Holy Spirit. But the new order and scheme of this Kingdom are still coming. This order and scheme will be much more beautiful and wonderful than the paradise order of the beginning. It will be an order in which heaven and earth are, as it were, fused together.

The basic way of sharing in Christ's Kingdom is the way of faith, faith in the living Word of God. This is why the preaching task of the Church is so important. The visible Church and its task stand

be found in Schilder's book *Christ and Culture*; all I have done is put things in my own words. My aim has been to adequately combine and compare Scripture with Scripture, in order to present an integrated and unified Christian view of culture. How successful the attempt has been is a matter for others to decide. Since I have borrowed so much from the Schilder text, however, it might be in place to discuss some of the critical notes to his work presented by Douma and Velema.

In the first place, as I read Schilder, I do not think Velema's charge of dualism is in place. It seems to me that the book is trying to avoid that everywhere. It is also difficult for me to see how the call of the New Testament is limited to the Great Commission, as if this is the new way Christ has introduced to lead the world to its end. The way of faith and believing acceptance of God's promises, the demand to listen and obey His word was present in the Old Testament as well as the New. The demand to live and share the gospel was as real for Israel as it is for us. The Lord wanted them to be a light to the nations. He demanded of them a pattern of cultural living directed to His service, in order to manifest His Name abroad. When Israel sinned and

“Cultural activity, in order to be a cleansing power, must be tied to the living preaching of the Word.”

central in Christian cultural activity. The gospel must be preached. However, it does not stop there. The preaching of the gospel should lead us to a life of renewal by which we do all in our power to make the victory of Jesus Christ known in every area of life. As Christ Himself said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*" Those last words stress the same cultural mandate of the beginning.

Was Schilder wrong?

Most of the points raised above can

profaned God's name before the nations, that in no way detracted from the command that the LORD had given.

The big change with the coming of the new dispensation is not a change of *mandate*, but a change of *scope*. Israel's rebellion was the catalyst to turn the gospel over to all nations of the earth. With the coming of Christ, the gospel is declared to be for *all*. Hence the fundamental change of Pentecost is not a new commandment. All is not subsumed under the preaching of the gospel. The fundamental change is that God's concern is now fully directed to the whole world. The LORD seeks and manifests that new directed cultural living among peoples of all nations.

I do not think Schilder's book tends to depreciate the preaching of the Word as the task of the Church. His point is that the full-bodied kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ must show in as many ways as we are able to do it. That involves more than just the proclamation of the gospel. It also involves a heartfelt obedience to it, and a life of thankfulness in which the new principle that the Lord instituted is manifest in the world in every area of life, including social relationships. The gospel initially always accepts given social relationships but over time can also transform them by the power of its newness.

The danger of dualism arises when we consider the cultural mandate to be fulfilled, and not at all operative anymore. Thus, I see more danger of dualism with Velema than with Schilder. The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the cultural mandate does not mean that it no longer applies to us. The Lord Jesus fulfilled the whole law, but it must still be upheld as a rule of thankfulness to us. The same holds for the cultural mandate. That mandate was nothing more than the demand to be prophets, priests, and kings, to live a full-orbed life of thankfulness to the Creator.

Professor Douma has suggested that Schilder's work seems to give the impression that he thought of the cultural mandate in terms of fulfilling a fixed program, a set pattern of development and discovery that man had to uncover in the earth and present to the Father, His Creator. In other words, Douma holds that Schilder's work is oriented to the beginning mandate more than it should be, and lacks appreciation for the fact that even as believer man is unable to make a beginning anything like that of the first Adam. The immense number of changes and restrictions that have been imposed do not permit us to think in terms of a fixed program.

There may be some justification for this criticism. It really is a matter of accent and stress, and not a matter of substance as Douma has said.⁷ While an eschatological note is present in Schilder's work, it does not come out strongly. Douma has pleaded for more attention to the idea of being strangers here on this earth, and living with the awareness that we live in the last days. To a certain extent, the criticism may also reflect the different time periods of the two authors.

On the other hand, the criticism contains a bit of a caricature of Schilder as well, as far as I know, Schilder never used the term "program" in speaking about the cultural mandate. He did speak of "systematic endeavor" in his definition of culture, which may be the trouble spot. However, Schilder does not indicate that

he sees such a systematic line in man's work in the new covenant.

While the book *Christ and Culture* may give that impression, Schilder elsewhere indicates that he sees a different sort of line in history. He certainly wants to maintain a line, a "system," particularly in opposition to the Swiss theologian Karl Barth, who maintained that there was no system at all in the Bible. That line is not especially man's work or his cultural endeavor (as Barth rightly



Klaas Schilder

pointed out), but it is the line of gospel or revelation. It is the line of God descending down to man in order to make His home with man. That is the revelation of the Kingdom of God, which culminates in Jesus Christ.⁸

The eschatological note that Douma missed in *Christ and Culture* is quite vividly present in *Wat is de Hemel?*, and we do well to briefly consider Schilder's reasoning here. The line of revelation and believing response is the only line that survives the onslaught of godless culture, and this line testified to a certain divine-patterned development, namely the development from garden to city. Time and time again the Bible reveals that this is God's work and not ours. We are only instruments. Yet faithful and believing acceptance of the Word of God moves God to go on with the salvation purpose He has in mind, that is, to dwell in the midst of His people again. With every offering of thankfulness the Lord is moved to act and appear again, to come closer to man. With every sweet-smelling savour offered

in thankfulness to Him for His freely showered grace of salvation, the LORD goes forward and takes new steps in the realization of His goal to come and live with His people.

So we meet the line of God descending again to man: from high-place and oak tree to tabernacle, and from tabernacle to temple, only to be fulfilled in the real Immanuel, Jesus Christ, the temple made of God, made without hands, John 2:21, Hebrew 9:11. Through the Spirit of Christ we are gathered upon the foundation of the apostles to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city that God is building, and we as members and citizens of it are ordained unto good works to manifest the power of that citizenship over every and all kinds of worldly allegiances. So we look, as Abraham our father did, to a lasting city.

To my mind, this line of reasoning certainly retains the element of being strangers to this world, and of seeking life in the world to come. While Douma may have found points which he felt needed more emphasis, I doubt he would actually reject Schilder's essential argument.

Liturgical creatures

An important and perhaps to some extent overlooked element in Schilder's definition of culture is that man is described as a liturgical creature. In my view this expression points strongly to the revelational line so apparent in Schilder's other works. A point missing in the *Christ and Culture* text, which at the same time is only too obvious in other places, is that the full depth of the offering of thankfulness is realized only in Christ. The liturgical offering of thankfulness that man presents after the fall is much deeper than any offering of thankfulness given before the fall, or any offering of thankfulness that would have been given had the fall not happened. The liturgical offering — a life of thankfulness to the Lord — has much more depth in this world because we not only thank God for His creation and government of our lives, but more especially for the deliverance from the power of sin and death in Christ Jesus.

All this means to say is that while the cultural mandate is still in force for us today, it has acquired new depth and richness with the completed work of Jesus Christ behind us. The small beginning of thankfulness we may show today certainly may not physically accomplish anything more than the thankoffering of the first man, yet the degree of thankfulness has certainly increased. Adam's thankfulness was indeed deeper after the fall than before. And our thankfulness may be even greater because more has been revealed. That is why prayer and worship become the chief elements

in our cultural mandate today, and that is also why the Church and her gathering is so important for truly liberating and meaningful cultural activity.

Church and culture

If we see man as liturgical creatures, called to respond obediently to God's Word at all times, and follow Him every step of the way, then it becomes apparent why the dynamic of Christ's church-gathering activity is so important for truly Christian cultural activity. We cannot build the Kingdom without praying and worshipping together in the gathered congregation in fellowship with the saints of all ages. We cannot pool resources to do Kingdom work while simultaneously forgetting about ecclesiastical differences. In all our Kingdom work, we are being built up as living stones of the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem. Consequently, it is important that in all our activities as Christians, we are sure to be following Christ in the building of His heavenly city.

That requires continual obedience and continual renewal. We must at all times be prepared to give up our possessions and even our relationships for the Lord and His gathering work. We should never rest with acceptance of present conditions and present situations. A divided and dividing Church does more damage than anything else to a positive witness of the gospel in the world. That is why we cannot be content to ignore the Church question in any field of cultural endeavor. Cultural activity, in order to be a cleansing power, must be tied to the living preaching of the Word.

Living in apostate culture

In my view, the substance of our cultural mandate today is showing in word and deed that we belong to the line of revelation, and have our citizenship in heaven, as living stones of the heavenly Jerusalem. We have to show that to each other in the first place, and also to others. We must pass it on to our children in the line of the covenant and let others know about it as much as we are able.

All our goods and possessions must be placed at the service of the coming King.

This should result in believing, thankful and yet reserved participation in the Cain culture of our day. Keeping ourselves unspotted from things that can pollute us, and yet making thankful use of those things that can enrich us — that is shining as lights in the middle of a wicked and perverse generation. Whenever the Lord puts us in new and different situations, He wants to use us in order to manifest His victory and reveal the extent and depth of His Kingdom. Following Him in our office and calling with the obedience that is His due, is the heart of true Christian cultural activity.

Conclusions

In conclusion, I must say that I am opposed to any false dilemma between cultural mandate and gospel mandate, as if these were in any way two different mandates in Scripture. They are the same mandate. The only thing we may say is that the second mandate adds depth to the first. We can only distinguish between a world where the thankoffering precluded thankfulness for deliverance, and our world today in which our thankfulness is a thankfulness to God for being delivered from the power of the devil in Christ Jesus.

That means that preaching, praise and prayer is essential to the cultural mandate today. Believing and prayerful support also in financial terms, of the ministry of the gospel is one of the most central Kingdom tasks there is. The Church is and remains the beachhead of the Kingdom. For that is where God addresses us, and that is where God speaks to us and comes down to us time and time again. Redeemed Christian living means following Abel's footsteps: offering the firstfruits to the LORD. This is the greatest testimony to His victory.

Yet this does not imply that we as members of the Church are restricted to preaching or witnessing as our only way of being thankful to God and showing that thankfulness. We do not all have to be preachers. And our home mission activity

should not be so zealous and avid that we become poor mothers, poor fathers or poor workers on the job. In fact, organized evangelism should only be a small part of the Kingdom task that we do. Our whole life (in all its relationships) should be a living witness to the gospel. To bring salt to all the areas in the Cain culture that are still open to us — that is our task. We are strangers here only with regard to sin and its power. The preaching of the gospel and the active support of the preaching of the gospel in the missionary task of the Church should only facilitate this broader task of living as redeemed believers in the world. Great commission or gospel mandate is really the first step to cultural mandate, that is, positive Christian living wherever we are placed.

This does not mean that we should form Christian associations in every area of life while simultaneously sweeping ecclesiastical differences under the carpet. We should do as obedient members of the Church that which our resources allow us to do. And while not every form of cooperation must be rejected out of hand, we certainly should not accept any cooperation with the ease and light-heartedness that is so prevalent in the "evangelical" world today. Being built up as living stones in Christ's Church requires ecclesiastical obedience before any other kind of obedience, and stresses God's work more than our own.

For we may one day lose everything we have built up in this country, and that one day may not even be far away. We may have to suffer persecution and poverty. Doing it for Christ's sake can, however, fill us with joy in knowing that even with our small means, He is using us as His instruments, and will have His glorious victory over sin manifested through us. That victory reveals itself in weakness as much as it reveals itself in strength. Therefore against hope, we work in hope, awaiting the day of His coming, Romans 4:18ff.

J. DEJONG

*This is a revised version of a speech presented last fall at a Teachers' Convention and an Officebearers Conference.

⁶See Kamphuis' review of Douma's dissertation in *De Reformatie*, 1967.

⁷Cf. his article in *FQI Almanak*, 1968-69.

⁸The eschatological line appears in § 20 and 21, of *Christ and Culture*, the line of revelation in § 22, which is properly speaking the end of the book.

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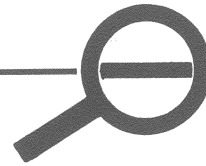
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The 52nd General Assembly of the OPC and the RES

Recently I gave some information in this column about matters that were to be discussed at the 1985 General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). I hope to report on decisions made concerning these matters at a later date. This time I ask the attention of the reader for the decision, and its grounds, regarding the continuation of the OPC's membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES). *The Presbyterian Journal* of June 19, 1985, gave its readers an ample report on this issue. I quote most of it here. The italics are added. It reads:

The Orthodox Presbyterian general assembly . . . spent half of one day's sessions debating the merits of withdrawing from the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) . . .

The report of the OPC Committee on RES Matters, presented by Westminster Seminary professor Richard Gaffin, furnished a lengthy review of the RES Chicago meeting in 1984 and its failure, by a tie vote, to give an ultimatum to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) for its doctrinal and ethical deviations, including "pastoral advice" allowing active homosexuals privileges of church membership and ecclesiastical office. Acknowledging that this problem has been developing within the RES since 1968 without satisfactory resolution, the committee's report nevertheless *concluded that the OPC testimony within the RES is clear, that the RES has not changed its basis for membership, and that the RES did vote to require the GKN to withdraw its pastoral advice on homosexuality; therefore Scripture does not require that the OPC withdraw from the RES, and with regard to whether the OPC may withdraw for prudential reasons the committee recommended that it was important for the OPC to remain in the RES at least until 1987, when the GKN response would be evident. Particularly at stake would be the contacts with the young and growing "Third World" Reformed churches.*

Rev. G.I. Williamson of Carson, N.D., who in an earlier devotional had commented that he felt like Rip Van Winkle returning to the OPC in North America after 20 years in New Zealand (whose Reformed Churches he represented at the RES Chicago meeting), told the OP Assembly, "The lack of alarm of the committee's report does not

do justice to the reality of the situation. RES 1984 was a disaster in terms of discipline." The only hope in the committee's report, said Williamson, is that the GKN would withdraw, but this is not likely. If the OPC should stay in, he felt its worldwide reputation would be drastically diminished.

Rev. John P. Galbraith, who had been elected to an unprecedented third term as Moderator of the RES, challenged supporters of a substitute motion to withdraw from the RES, effective with the dissolution of this year's General Assembly, to give Biblical reasons for their position. Recalling the history of J. Gresham Machen's founding of the OPC in 1936, *he claimed the issue is not sin within the GKN (and hence within the RES), but rather whether the OPC by its presence is involved in support of a false gospel, or whether there is departure from confessional standards. Without these issues, he said, withdrawal would make the OPC guilty of schism.*

The substitute motion was defeated overwhelmingly and a motion was adopted to prepare a plan for future response to the crisis created by continued membership of the GKN in the RES, and to report to the 54th general assembly in 1987.

One irony of the OPC situation is that the PCA has been inclined not to join RES because of the kind of problem that the GKN represents. As one OPC minister commented, "You have to choose between ecumenicity with the PCA or ecumenicity with RES." *One of the most compelling arguments for RES membership is the contact with other Reformed churches internationally, and particularly the crucial influence on the Third World churches. OPC participation in key RES positions far exceeds the proportion of its membership.*

Since our churches have an official relationship with the OPC, I feel free to give my comment with regard to the arguments that are used to defend a continued membership of the OPC in the RES.

The first argument, as reported, is "that the OPC testimony within the RES is clear." I can readily accept this. The OPC protested in the matter of homosexuality, as well as in other matters, e.g., the membership of the GKN (synodical Reformed Churches in The Netherlands), the Indonesian Reformed Church in the World Council of Churches, and the GKN's officially accepted view on the Scriptures. However, in my opinion this

ground is a weak one. It is exactly this argument that has been used by the GKN to defend its membership in the WCC. Someone could stand up in the OPC and defend, on this ground, a proposal that the OPC should join the WCC, because the OPC could give a good Reformed testimony within this organization of churches. Moreover, must we not fear that our clear testimony will become less clear when we have to defend our continued and maintained membership in an organization that allows in its midst members who clearly go against the Word of God and the confessions that were adopted? Is accepting joined membership as such not already a compromise and a weakening of one's testimony?

The second ground is "that the RES has not changed its basis for membership." This is true. Although a committee has been appointed to prepare a new Constitution, the Chicago Synod 1984 "adopted the following guidelines for revision so that the Constitution will:

continue to affirm the Scriptures in their entirety to be the infallible Word of God, fully authoritative for all people and in all matters of faith and life, and the Reformed Confessions, as the Basis for the RES and the substance of Article V. 1, as the requisite qualifications for membership.

state with clarity what it means for the various churches to "subscribe" to the Basis.

indicate that the main purpose of the RES is to assist the member churches.

a. to fulfill their ecumenical calling, both with their fellow churches of Reformed Confession and character and with other churches in the world.

b. to affirm and maintain their Biblical and Reformed confessional integrity.

c. to promote their witness and service. . . ."

With these guidelines the delegation of the OPC had a strong hand in trying to ensure that the RES maintains its Reformed Basis. However, the question is: does the RES in fact maintain its Basis? Is the fact that the GKN, after so many years of being admonished, still is a member of the RES, (even though by a tie-vote), not fully evidence that the RES does not really maintain its Basis? And when one has a good basis, but does not maintain it, what is the use of that basis?

The third argument is "that the RES

did vote to require the GKN to withdraw its pastoral advice on homosexuality." In my opinion, the word "require" is too strong. The text of the RES decision is:

"that Synod

expressed its profound sorrow over the tensions that have arisen in the RES over the membership of the GKN (in the RES), and assured the GKN of its heartfelt desire to do everything in its power, under the final authority of Scripture, to insure that the GKN remain in the fellowship of the RES.

expressed to the GKN its conviction and concern that on certain points, of which some are listed below, the GKN are departing from the testimony of Scripture and the substance of the Reformed confessions:

a. Deficiency in the discipline of the GKN continues to be indicated by the fact that Herman Wiersinga, whose views on the atonement have been condemned by the Synod of Maastricht (1975-1976), has recently published another book (*Doem of Daad*) in which he repeats his views on the atonement and "also offers a view of sin which is in sharp contrast with the Reformed Confession" (IC Report, Agenda, p. 48). Yet he continues to be a minister in good standing in the GKN.

b. The study report, *GOD WITH US*, has perceived to be confusing and to undermine the absolute authority and reliability of Scripture, especially by its formulations of the idea of truth as relational and by its failure to make clear distinction between inspiration (the work of the Holy Spirit in the Biblical writers)

and illumination (the Spirit's work in all believers).

expressed its most urgent concern for restoring relationships among the churches in its fellowship, in the context of the crisis occasioned by the practice of the GKN's allowing homosexual relationships even for its office bearers. In this respect Synod *appealed* to the GKN to respond to the disappointment and disillusionment of the churches of the RES and to withdraw its pastoral advice in the matter of homophilia.

stated that if the GKN is unable to move away from this position, the GKN must seriously consider that several churches would find it difficult to stay in the RES with the GKN. . . ."

Let us say that one must state on the basis of the Reformed Confession, (Article 29 Belgic Confession) that the GKN show themselves to be a false church, maintaining totally un-Scriptural decisions. Although strong words are used in the decision regarding the GKN, a tie vote maintained them as members of the RES. This means that the RES allows true and false side by side. And the OPC was advised to remain part of it.

The fourth ground for the OPC to stay in the RES was that "particularly at stake would be the contacts with the young and growing 'Third World' Reformed churches." This ground receives positive comment from the reporter in the concluding remarks of his article, speaking about "the crucial influence on the Third World Churches;" and adding "OPC participation in key RES positions far exceeds the proportion of its membership."

I can appreciate this ground that expresses concern for the young and growing churches in Africa, Asia and South America. However, appreciation does not mean agreement. Over against the influence of the OPC is the powerful influence of the GKN and CRC. Leaving the organization could be of more help than staying, since so far the battle is being lost through the lack of firmness in the RES.

Rev. Galbraith "claimed the issue is not sin within the GKN (and hence within the RES), but rather whether the OPC by its presence is involved in support of a false gospel, or whether there is departure from confessional standards."

It is clear that there is "departure from confessional standards in the GKN. By keeping the GKN in the RES, the RES allows this departure in its midst with all the bad consequences for the young and growing churches in the "Third World." And by remaining in the RES the OPC takes part in allowing such a situation, even though it urged the RES to exclude the GKN from the RES.

When Dr. J. Gresham Machen left Princeton Theological Seminary in 1929 because of its liberalism and founded Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in 1929, and when he, with others, founded the "Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions" in 1933, (which latter act caused his suspension), then he showed that he did not want to cooperate with liberalism in the same organization.

I write these lines out of concern for the OPC.

J. GEERTSEMA

LETTER TO THE EDITOR



IVF in Australia

The Western Australian State Government has appointed a study committee to report on the ethical aspects of IVF. The committee is called the "IVF Ethics Committee of Western Australia."

In Western Australia exists a political and social study organization, called "The Calvinistic Political and Social Association" (CPSA) of Albany, consisting of members of our sister church, the Free Reformed Church of Albany. This CPSA has appointed a sub-committee to study the report of the State Government Committee, and to prepare a submission for this purpose.

In November last year we published in *Clarion* a series of articles on test tube babies. In that series we discussed different aspects of IVF. The sub-committee has used these articles as reference in

the preparation of their submission. The secretary of the sub-committee, Mr. J. Van Duyn was kind enough to send us a copy of their submission. We have taken note of it with great interest. Accompanied a "Letter to the Editor" was sent, which we will publish in full.

For the information of the readers we repeat that IVF is short for "in vitro fertilization," usually referred to as test tube babies. AIH stands for artificial insemination with sperm of the own husband. AID means artificial insemination with sperm of a (usually anonymous) donor who is *not* the own husband.

The "Letter to the Editor" reads as follows:

Dear Sir,

We wish to bring to your attention the articles written by Rev. Pouwelse in which

he draws our attention to the area of artificial insemination, both husband and donor (AIH, AID) and in-vitro fertilization also by husband and donor (IVF), in two articles headed under the title "TEST TUBE BABIES".

In the latter article towards the conclusion Rev. Pouwelse compares AIH over against IVF and AID. Here points were found which we felt needed to be corrected and explained. We refer to the following statement on page 461, 2/11/84 (2nd paragraph, middle) "There are cases in which a physical defect prevents a woman from becoming pregnant. In such a case AIH can overcome such an obstacle. The fact that this medical procedure is not 'natural' does not make it unacceptable per se."

From this quotation and what follows two points are raised:-

1. With reference to the quotation "In such a case AIH can overcome an obstacle" queries are raised. Can AIH in

fact be used to overcome an obstacle within the mother? Any defects in the woman which prevent her becoming pregnant usually (as far as we are aware) have to be overcome by IVF. From information we know of, AIH cannot be used to overcome an obstacle within the mother;

2. Rev. Pouwelse uses caesarean section as part basis of accepting AIH, as both are unnatural. It is agreed that caesarean section is unnatural. However one vital point is missed, and therefore discounts caesarean section as an argument, that one procedure is to *preserve* life, the other to *create* new life.

Caesarean section is an operation to preserve the life of an unborn baby, which has fully developed without outside medical interference, but cannot be born naturally either because of some defects in the mother, or the baby is in distress for one reason or another e.g. as a result of prolonged labour, or it is severely deformed. Therefore it can be said that, not only does caesarean section preserve the life of the baby, it also preserves the life of the mother. AIH is not to preserve the life of a child as yet unborn. It is an intervention by man to create life by human effort in an unnatural way.

Further to use an argument because it is 'generally accepted' is very vague, and therefore holds little ground.

Rev. Pouwelse's 'final remarks' were nicely put together as a conclusion. It is a pleasure to know that we have a Reformed magazine where-in it leaves opportunity for discussion between brothers and sisters.

The Western Australian State Government appointed a sub-committee in June 1984 to look into the ethical and moral nature of IVF. In August 1984 an interim report was prepared by this IVF sub-committee requesting public submission on the report. In answer to this request the "Calvinistic Political and Social Association" (CPSA) of Albany likewise appointed a sub-committee, to prepare such a submission. While the submission was being prepared the articles of Rev. Pouwelse "Test Tube Babies" came to our notice. The articles were used as reference material and in so doing points were noted that needed clarification and correction.

Therefore the "Letter to the Editor."
(was signed) J. Van Duyn
for CPSA Albany.

We appreciate this reaction very much. It shows how current an issue it is and how necessary a public discussion appears to be. We are and will be confronted by these kind of things more and more and therefore study is necessary. From the "Letter to the Editor" we learn that the sub-committee agrees with what we have written about IVF. Their submission shows that they consider IVF unacceptable. Their first recommendation to the IVF Ethics Committee is to halt all IVF programs. If the State Government Committee can not agree with this recommendation, the sub-committee stresses that

strong restrictions should be made in the application of IVF. We are thankful for this clear public testimony.

In the "Letter to the Editor" two questions are asked and further clarification is requested with respect to a certain remark in one of our articles. It does not concern the main issue at stake, with which they agree. The remarks are related to a minor point, namely the question whether AIH is acceptable, while the major issue on which they agree is, that AID and IVF are unacceptable. At the end of the second article we compared AIH on the one hand with AID and IVF on the other hand. We rejected AID because there is a third party involved and the child is not the child of the husband. We considered IVF unacceptable for at least two reasons, namely that it infringes too much on the process of conception *and* that during the procedure a selection is made to decide which ovum will be "used" and which will be "killed." With respect to AIH we said that this is not "unacceptable per se." The formulation "not unacceptable per se" indicates already a restriction. "Not per se" means that there certainly are situations in which it is unacceptable. We have to be careful. Caution is required. We mentioned that "there are cases in which a physical defect prevents a woman from becoming pregnant. In such a case AIH can help to overcome such an obstacle."

The first question is: "With reference to the quotation." 'In such a case AIH can overcome an obstacle' queries are raised. Can AIH in fact be used to overcome an obstacle within the mother? Any defects in the woman which prevent her becoming pregnant usually (as far as we are aware) have to be overcome by IVF. From information we know of, AIH cannot be used to overcome an obstacle within the mother.'

We are more than willing to elaborate on this point and answer this question. It may be of interest not only for our Australian brothers and sisters but for others as well.

We do not like to go too much in medical details. Let us for simplicities sake put it this way: conception means that an egg of the mother meets a spermatozoon of the father and that after a union the fertilized egg or ovum is embedded in the uterus-wall of the mother. Because the egg and the sperm are reaching the uterus from two *different directions*, an obstacle on *both* sides can prevent pregnancy.

There are many cases of infertility in which no doctor can determine the cause. There have been numerous instances in history that prominent people did not receive children, while no doctor could tell why. In the past a monarch or a despot

sometimes sent away his wife if she did not provide a successor for the throne, even when it was not possible to determine whether the cause lay with the husband or with the wife.

There are, however, cases which can be cured through an operation. Many minor or major operations are performed in an effort to take away an "obstacle." Such operations are performed on both "sides" of the uterus, that means on the fallopian tubes as well as on the vagina. The "Letter to the Editor" says: "Any defects in a woman which prevent her becoming pregnant usually (as far as we are aware) have to be overcome by IVF." This is not quite correct. It is true that IVF can be used to overcome "obstacles" on *both* sides. However, IVF is intended in the *first* place to overcome a blockage of the fallopian tubes. If there is a problem, either with the father or with the mother, which prevents the sperm from *reaching* the uterus, it can be "overcome" in certain cases by AIH as well. (In the sentence quoted by the Australian committee we did not say that AIH can overcome, but can *help* to overcome an obstacle. However this is probably a typing error on their part).

So far about the first question.

The second question deals with the relation between AIH and caesarean section. Both are "unnatural," but still caesarean section is generally accepted. We agree that something is not right because it is generally accepted. Still it gives us an indication how people in our churches feel about these things, and most of them must have thought about it and have their reasons for accepting it.

More important is their statement that caesarean section *preserves* existing life, while AIH is a procedure to *create* new life. The "Letter" says in this respect: "Caesarean section is an operation to preserve the life of an unborn baby, which has fully developed without outside medical interference, but cannot be born naturally either because of some defects in the mother, or the baby is in distress for one reason or another e.g. as a result of prolonged labour, or it is severely deformed. Therefore it can be said that, not only does caesarean section preserve the life of the baby, it also preserves the life of the mother. AIH is not to preserve the life of a child as yet unborn. It is an intervention by man to create life by human effort in an unnatural way."

Although this point is worth to be considered and has a certain value, we do not consider it decisive and as clear-cut as it might seem to be at the first glance. That counts in two directions. First with respect to the caesarean section. In the past, caesarean section was

— Continued on page 361

The International Conference of Reformed Churches

On Tuesday, September 3, 1985, the first International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) will be held, the LORD willing, in the St. Columba's Church, Edinburgh, Scotland. On the eve of this assembly a Prayer Meeting will be held in the same church, organized by the Free Church of Scotland. Rev. M. van Beveren, one of the delegates of our Canadian Reformed Churches (the other one is Rev. J. Visscher), sent me the Provisional Agenda for the conference with additional information. This information I pass on to the readers of *Clarion*.

In connection with *item 2* of the Provisional Agenda, "Credentials," we learn that

"The following churches, participating in the Constituent Assembly 1982, have decided to join the ICRC: the Canadian Reformed Churches; the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland; the Free Church of Scotland; the Free Reformed Churches of Australia; the Presbyterian Church (Kosin) in Korea; the Reformed Churches on East-Sumba/Savu; the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands.

Churches applying for membership are: the Free Church in Southern Africa; the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia; the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

The following churches have indicated that they will send observers: the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa; the Dutch Reformed Church in Southern Africa; the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Other Churches, having expressed interest in the ICRC, may have to be added."

Item 4 is "Adoption of the Agenda." The following information is given:

"The office of the Free Church of Scotland will prepare a tentative program for each day of the Conference.

The Canadian Reformed Churches request to deal with

- a. the doctrine of the church in the Reformed Confessions;
- b. the doctrine of the Covenant in the Reformed Confessions;
- c. the exercise of interchurch relations, and to give these matters priority, after amendments in the Constitution, before attending to matters of mission."

This request received support from the

Australian sister churches.

Item 6 is "Application for Membership." We are informed that

"The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia and the Free Church in Southern Africa (both recommended for membership by the Free Church of Scotland) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (recommended by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland) apply for membership.

The applying churches adhere to the Westminster Standards.

The Provisional Committee proposes that the Conference appoint a committee to read the documents made available by the applying churches (cf. Article IV of the Constitution), and report to the Conference."

Item 7 deals with "Correspondence from member churches." We read that

"The Free Church of Scotland informs the Conference of the following decision:

"The General Assembly direct that the Free Church of Scotland shall take up membership of the International Conference of Reformed churches without prejudice to their relations with bodies which are faithful to the Confessional Standards stated in the Basis. They would anticipate that the Conference itself will be open to amalgamation with any bodies or organizations the aims and practices of which are not in conflict with the stated basis."

The Canadian Reformed Churches invite the International Conference of Reformed Churches to hold its second Conference (1989) in the Vancouver, BC, area as guests of the Canadian Reformed Churches."

Item 8 will place "Proposals from member churches" on the table of the Conference.

"The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands propose

1. to insert in the *Regulations* that at the constitution of the Conference the delegates rise to signify their agreement with the Basis of the Conference.

2. to appoint a study committee with the following mandate:

- a. to provide the member churches with information regarding relevant literature on missionary matters;
- b. to provide the member churches with information about existing colleges

and/or courses for missionaries and about the possibility of coordination;

- c. to serve the member churches, if possible, by setting up a missiology on a Scriptural basis, for instance by writing an Introduction.

3. to appoint a consultative committee with the following mandate:

- a. to write an inventory of all mission activities of the member churches, including mission among the Jews;
- b. to advise the member churches on choosing mission fields;
- c. to investigate and indicate the possibility of coordination of development work on mission fields;
- d. to investigate and indicate the possibility of exchange of missionaries.

In their report to the General Synod of Heemse, 1984-1985 of our Dutch sister churches, the Deputies for Correspondence with Churches Abroad came with the above mentioned proposals to this Synod Heemse, in order that this Synod might bring them to the Conference. In connection with these proposals to the Synod, the deputies also stated (p. 32):

"At the request of the Korean delegate in Groningen (at the Constituent Assembly of the ICRC, J.G.) a special meeting was held with him and the Australian and Dutch delegates; here the possibilities of mission work in Indonesia and of possible cooperation in this respect were discussed.

In his paper for Constituent Assembly, Dr. M.K. Drost made the suggestion to an international study and consultation organ for mission matters. Deputies are of the opinion that this organ can be set up by the International Conference of Reformed churches, or, anyway, be closely connected with it. A proposal is formulated in this matter for the synod.

"The Scottish delegates thought it was a good proposal."

I find it remarkable that mission matters receive such a place of priority with the Dutch churches. But it is understandable. There are many things going on in mission work in our world. Many questions are raised. Much emphasis is placed on a social gospel, on the theology of liberation, on the dialogue with other religions, on contextualization (placing the Christian message in the cultural context of the people to whom the gospel is

preached), on the moratorium concept (foreign missionaries have to go home), and so on. All these questions require Scriptural, Reformed answers.

I am not including the proposals of the Canadian Reformed Churches regarding changes in the *Regulations* of the ICRC. They can be found in the *Acts of Synod Cloverdale, 1983, Article 121, D, page 86.* These changes are of a somewhat technical character.

The "*Information re the Provisional Agenda*" tells us the following in connection with the proposals with amendments for the *Constitution*:

"It is to be noted that proposals to amend the *Constitution* cannot be dealt with at this Conference (cf. Article VI of the *Constitution*). The Interim Rules have no provision for such proposals, and the time-limit of two years as required by Article VI of the *Constitution* could not be observed: two years prior to the September 1985 Conference only two churches had informed the Provisional Secretary of their decision to join the ICRC."

Proposals for changes in the *Constitution* from the Australian and the Canadian churches are listed as follows:

"The Free Reformed Churches of Australia propose

a. to add in Article IV, sub 1,d, after 'World Council of Churches,' 'Reformed Ecumenical Synod';

b. to add in Article IV, after 1,d: 'e. show willingness to strive for unity with member churches of the Conference in their own country.'

The Canadian Reformed Churches propose

a. to insert in the Basis of the ICRC (Article II) the stipulation that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are members;

b. to change Article III, sub 5, 'to present a Reformed testimony to the world,' into 'to encourage each other as member churches to present a Reformed testimony to the world';

c. to add to Article IV, sub d, that membership of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod is an impediment to membership in the ICRC;

d. to change Article V 'member churches are urged to receive the decisions of the Conference,' into 'member churches are urged to consider the decisions of the Conference'"

Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda reads: "Speakers."

"The following persons have made themselves available to address the Conference:

Professor Dr. J. Faber (Canada) on 'The Doctrine of the Church in the Reformed Confessions.'

Professor Donald Macleod (Scotland) on 'The Relations of the Sacraments to New Life in the Spirit.'

Reverend J.N. Macleod (Scotland) on 'The Doctrine of the Covenants and the Reformed Confessions.'

Professor H.M. Ohmann (The Netherlands) on 'Piety in the Book of Psalms.'

Reverend J. Visscher (Canada) on 'The Exercise of Interchurch Relations.'

I hope that these speeches will be made available for everybody.

With respect to the "Finances," Item 10, we read:

"Re Finances, the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands propose

a. the cost of the proceedings of the Conference be borne by the participating churches on the basis of the number of their communicant members;

b. the participating churches pay for the travelling expenses of their own delegates;

c. for those participating churches which are not in a position to bear their own expenses, a special fund be formed to which the participating churches contribute on the basis of the number of their communicant members.

The Provisional Committee supports the above proposals of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands.

The Provisional Committee further proposes that

a. a Treasurer be appointed;

b. the Interim Committee prepare a budget for the next four years so that payments can be called in by the Treasurer by the first of June in the year of the Conference."

In *CHURCH NEWS of the Canadian Reformed Churches* in the Fraser Valley it was said: "We know that the International Conference is small compared to other existing organizations of churches. But we should be thankful that we have an opportunity to meet other churches in the world. Whether or not this contact will be fruitful can only be answered in the future. Today, however, our churches should use the possibilities the Lord is giving us."

Meeting each other means learning from one another and working together. It shows the unity of the church of the Lord in this world. In a world with so much unbelief and apostasy such unity and mutual help of churches that are faithful to the Reformed Confession should only be approached with a positive attitude.

J. GEERTSEMA

PRESS RELEASE

Australian Synod press release

What follows here is the PRESS RELEASE of the Synod 1985 of our Australian sister churches which was sent to *Clarion*. We gladly publish it in our magazine for the Canadian readers. It is also good to listen to some of the words spoken by its chairman, the Rev. K. Bruning, at the closure of this Synod Launceston 1985. Making some remarks about the agenda, he said:

"The heavy load of this agenda contained items such as: several appeals re Synod 1983, reports from deputies — Bible translation, Correspondence with Foreign Churches, Church Book, Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, Mission, Training for the Ministry, etc.

This programme has caused concern in us because of the seriousness of some topics. However, through the grace of God, the discussions at Synod were held in a brotherly atmosphere, and the most important decisions were taken by mutual agreement! Not many Synods in the past have been able to show a unity of trust and conviction as this one.

This fact is even more enjoyable when we consider the nature of the decisions of this Synod! This Synod had a real Reformed character by the grace of God. The historical line of the Churches of the Reformation was maintained, confirmed and continued. This was done with caution and prudence. And we can thank the Lord for His blessing. . . .

At the end of this address we think of the future. This is always difficult, especially in the present world situation. How long can we still meet as Churches in freedom and peace? Can we continue our contacts with sister churches and other ones for a long period? Will we have time, opportunity and means to complete what has started or is halfway to its aim?

We have plenty of questions, and we face a lot of insecurity in all these matters. However, we have the Word of God. In the critical situation of God's church at the Red Sea (Exodus 14), there was no need to count the chances and to weigh the possibilities. The Lord said: *Tell the people of Israel to go forward: Exodus 14:15b.* This is a simple commandment; not a naive instruction, because it was sure that the Lord Jahweh was with them! When His Church goes in His ways, she is safe, and sure of her progress to the promised aim.

What else can we say on this evening? Our Churches have a secure future; they are safe; they are protected because of the blood of Christ that was shed for them, and as long as they will remain in the way of His Word."

After having listened to these words, one can now read the following PRESS

OUR COVER

God's River, Manitoba

Photo courtesy
Manitoba Government Travel

RELEASE with somewhat different eyes and with a little more attention. These closing words give more character to the press release. They show that synodical decisions are more than cold factual pronouncements. In those decisions and pronouncements we can feel the heartbeat of delegates of the churches who love the Lord and, therefore, His churches, and who were seeking the well-being, the preservation, the defence and the continued gathering of the church, as well as its unity, in obedience to the Word of the Head of the church. J. GEERTSEMA

Launceston Synod, Australia, June 1-10, 1985

Opening. On June 1st 1985, on behalf of the convening Church of Launceston, the Rev. K. Jonker extended a cordial welcome to all the delegates and addressed the meeting of Synod, stressing that the bond of love in Jesus Christ binds us together nationally into this bond of Churches. He wished the Synod the guidance of the Holy Spirit for its work.

Constitution Of Synod. Following the examination of the letters of Credentials of the ten delegates from five Churches, the following officers were elected:

Rev. K. Bruning	Chairman
Rev. Dr. S.G. Hur	Assessor
Rev. K. Jonker	First clerk
Rev. A. Veldman	Second clerk

After Synod was constituted, the delegates testified to their agreement with the *Three Forms of Unity* by rising from their seats.

Greetings From Other Churches. Synod received greetings from the following sister churches: The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia di Sumba Timur-Sabu, the Presbyterian Church in Korea, and De Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika.

Greeting were also received from Churches with which our Deputies have contact: The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in New Zealand.

Synodical Work. The Synod introduced a new system of working in committees, and appointed three committees. Towards the end of Synod it was concluded to be a great improvement over previous meeting procedures.

Synodical work commenced by dealing with a number of appeals from one Church, and from Church members. One of these appeals (from the Church of Kelmscott) requested Synod to declare that the previous Synod had been wrong in not admitting her letter, lawfully placed on the agenda. Synod unanimously decided to uphold this appeal. Hereby the

Synod commenced its work in a Reformed way, acknowledging its fallibility.

Bible Translation. Since the Revised Standard Version of the Bible was taken into use in 1983, a number of objections from Church members were brought forward and tabled at Synod. It was decided to appoint new Deputies with the instruction to undertake a thorough study of the issues raised; to evaluate the validity of the objections; to monitor further work of the Translation Committee of the RSV, and to report to next Synod.

Church Book. Synod 1983 already dealt with the matter of the Church Book. This Synod adopted some further Revisions to Psalms, Prayers and a number of Hymns. Also adopted were nine Liturgical Forms, and provisionally adopted were the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity (provisional adoption meaning that such materials have not been dealt with previously and the Churches must be given an opportunity for testing). The proposal to delete the word 'Christian' from the Apostle's Creed was not adopted, as it was not possible for this Synod to properly and carefully evaluate the various arguments in the matter.

Training For The Ministry. The Synod observed that the Australian Churches must improve their financial support for Training for the Ministry, in accordance with Article 18 of the Church Order; and decided to instruct its Deputies to explore the possibility of our Churches becoming formally involved in the maintenance of Kampen or Hamilton seminaries, as our Churches rely completely on the sister Churches for Training for the Ministry.

Mission. The previous Synod appointed the Church of Albany to investigate our future mission task either inside or outside Australia. This Church took the initiative to work in Papua - New Guinea among the refugee Reformed Christians from West Irian, and requested the Churches to co-operate in this work. The Synod decided to advise the Churches to fully support this work.

On Relations With Other Churches. It was a practice in ecclesiastical contact that Synod recognized a certain Church as being "true and faithful Church of the Lord Jesus Christ," but it was not clear what this actually meant. Synod 1983 already went part of the way to stipulate that such recognition could be made only after Deputies had gathered information and discussed important issues with such a Church, rather than at the beginning of such process.

Synod 1985 decided to define it to mean: that both our Churches, and that recognized Church, stand on the foundations as expressed in Articles 27 to 32 of our Confession, and that as a conse-

quence, sister Church relationships can be established; and our Church members must join that Church and vice versa in the case that such a Church is their nearest Church, in accordance with Article 28 of our Confession. In other words, the recognition of a Church as being "true and faithful" must come at the end of the process of ecclesiastical contact, when all essential matters between these Churches have been satisfactorily resolved. Synod stated also that following such recognition "historical developments may well give cause to several stumbling blocks still lying on the road to a practical realization of unity."

The Presbyterian Church Of Eastern Australia. The Synod received a letter from the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) in which that Synod recognized the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to be true and faithful Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. Synod decided to convey to the PCEA its joy and gratitude with the mutual recognition of the need to seek unity of faith on the basis of God's Word, and to continue the work of the ecclesiastical contact, towards the decision whether or not this Church can be acknowledged as a true and faithful Church in accordance with Article 29 of our Confession.

On Relations With Churches Abroad. It was decided to continue sister Church relationships with the following: the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Presbyterian Church in Korea, De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, the Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia di Sumba Timur-Sabu, De Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika.

The previous Synod acknowledged the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Free Church of Scotland to be "true and faithful" Churches. This Synod decided to maintain the present level of contact until the next Synod has dealt with further Deputies' Reports on specific matters, seeing that there is insufficient information concerning these Churches.

Further, Synod instructed Deputies to urge the Reformed Church of Japan to break its ties with the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES), and to write to the Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand that their membership of the RES as well as their sister Church relationship with the Reformed Churches of Australia are impediments to continue the existing contacts. More information will be gathered about the Presbyterian Church of Uganda.

Further, Synod stipulated that any Rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact shall make clear that such contact has as

its aim the establishment of a full sister Church relationship.

The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)

A number of appeals and requests to rescind the decision of Synod 1983 to join in the ICRC were tabled. Synod decided not to revoke the decision on the grounds that this can be done only when such a decision is proved to be in conflict with God's Word or the Church Order (Article 31 C.O.), and that appellants had not

done so. Synod acknowledged the briefness and lateness of the reports to Synod 1983.

Synod decided to re-define and expand the 1983 decision:

1. to support the proposals for Constitutional amendments made by our Canadian sister Churches as recorded in the Acts of Synod Cloverdale 1983;

2. to propose that the ICRC will deal with the doctrines of the Church and of the Covenant in the Reformed Confessions, and the exercise of Interchurch Relations; and to do so before attending to matters of mission work.

Other matters

Synod dealt with a host of other minor matters.

On Monday, 10th June, Synod was closed after an address by its chairman, Rev. K. Bruning, who spoke about God's grace in that the work at the Synod could be done in a brotherly atmosphere, and decisions made in the historical line of the Reformation. Our Churches have a secure future; they are safe; they are protected because of the blood of Christ that was shed for them, as long as they will remain in the way of His Word.

IVF in Australia — *continued*

a last resort with a great risk. Through the improvements of medical procedures the risk involved in this operation has become considerably less. It has become a matter of weighing and comparing the chance of possible complications and discomfort during a normal delivery over against the disadvantages of a caesarean section. Sometimes, and in certain hospitals a caesarean section is performed very easily, without a real imminent danger but simply to avoid a rather remote possibility of complications. It has become a matter of preference, almost a routine in case of doubt, and certainly not only to save or preserve human life. On the other hand it is an overstatement to say that AIH "is an intervention by man to create life by human effort in an unnatural way." We can *accept* this qualification for IVF. There the conception, one of the most essential parts of the "creation" of human life, takes place outside the womb, in an unnatural way. That can be called too much an intervention by man. However, with AIH it is a different matter. We fail to see why corrective surgery to unblock the fallopian tubes or to shorten or reshape the vagina can be accepted, but not a medical treatment like AIH. Of course, every operation is to a certain extent unnatural, but we are allowed to use the means available, as long as they are not in conflict with the Word of God. The corrective surgery, mentioned before, is to a certain extent also human intervention, not in the *creation* of human life but in the process that leads to the creation of human life. Still the great difference with IVF is that the conception as such takes place in the natural way. The two main objections against IVF are that the conception, that very essential part of the creation of human life, takes place outside the body of the mother *and* that a choice has to be made which ovum will be killed and which will be kept alive.

One might say that again the argument is used that some medical procedures are "generally accepted" and that this is not a valid argument. Something is not right because it is generally accepted. Still here lies a very important basic rule of ethics. Most cases to be dealt with in Christian ethics are new situations or developments for which no rules or moral standards have been formulated. If there is a clear rule or commandment in Holy Scripture, we need not discuss the matter. The Word of God decides. However, in most cases there is not such a clear commandment. In such practical situations we have to find our way, using our own responsibility and listening to each other, to be on the alert and to resist all temptations to give in to a wrong or dangerous development.


An important aspect of Christian ethics is that we have to be consistent and not opportunistic. Therefore we often have to judge by analogy. Such a reasoning does not make a generally accepted matter a moral standard, but it gives us an important help. It works and has value in two directions. If a judgment by analogy seems to justify something, while at the same time we feel, for one reason or another, that it still is not quite right, then we are confronted by an inconsistency. In such a case we have to reconsider whether this previously "generally accepted" matter was and still is right. It might very well be, and it has happened more often, that such a reasoning brings us to the conclusion that we have derailed somewhere along the line and that we have gone on the wrong track, without being aware of it. Therefore we consider it an important part of Christian ethics that we judge by analogy. Especially in the matters which we are dealing with right here is important. There is an impressive and overwhelming development in the medical field. Abortion, euthanasia and genetic engineering have far-reaching

consequences. The developments with respect to fertilization in vitro and manipulations with ovum, the technique of microsurgery and organ transplant, all these things have enormous implications and it might very well be that we have to reconsider a previous lenient position. "Generally accepted" matters might appear to be not as innocent as they seemed to be at the first glance. Things are sometimes much more complicated and are penetrating our life in a more subtle way than we are aware of. Therefore ongoing study and discussion is necessary. A reasoning by analogy can be of great help in this respect.

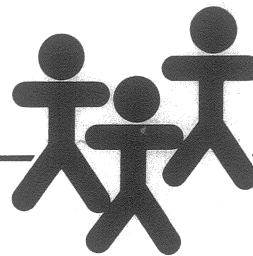
It is for these reasons that we are very thankful for the reaction from our Australian brothers and sisters. The submission of the CPSA with respect to the report of the IVF Ethics Committee of the Australian State Government is an important contribution to the discussion about these matters and the "Letter to the Editor" was a welcome opportunity to give some further explanation about certain points.

We hope that these matters remain in the attention of our study societies, to prevent that we are caught by surprise by a development which we are not enough aware of or prepared for.

W. POWELSE

CHURCH NEWS 

CALLED to Attercliffe, ON
CAND. A. VAN DELDEN
of Hamilton, ON



Reformed education — aims and objectives

As was reported a few months ago in School Crossing, personal and societal values of our Reformed community, had the attention of the Ontario Principals Club, during the 1984/85 school year. Concerns were expressed about the general lack of a positive response from our students in matters of faith and religion. After receiving so much Reformed education, why do the teachers (and the parents) still see so much un-Christian conduct and attitudes? This question continues to be very difficult to answer, although it has often been addressed at PTA meetings, in school bulletins as well as in School Crossing. Part of the reason is the complexity of the topic and the lack of agreement among many Reformed people as to what a "proper life-style" should entail. Most discussions seem to dwell on generalities or emphasize only the more obvious symptoms of our secular society — sex, alcohol, and "contemporary" music.

Dr. VanderMeer's contribution to this very important topic is valuable. It takes the reader beyond some of the obscurities. His article is meant as a contribution to the ongoing discussion on the life-style of our children and tries to place this problem in a larger framework of the spiritual climate in our churches. It was written as an immediate response to two articles by Rev. Geertsema and Mr. VanOverbeeke in *Clarion* 34 (12), 1985.

Knowledge of the Truth accords with Godliness¹

The *Clarion* of June 14, 1985 contains a striking expression of a problem that we as Reformed believers face, that is the problem of religious subjectivism and objectivism. I am referring to Geertesma's editorial on "Attention for man in the preaching?" and to a report on a meeting of school principals entitled "Where do we go wrong" by Mr. A. VanOverbeeke. Geertsema's article, and previous ones, explain that the certainty of our faith cannot rest upon religious feelings (subjectivism) or on a rationalistic faith (objectivism), but only on the promises of God given in a covenant relationship. However, Mr. VanOverbeeke suggests that we may not have enough attention for our young people. He claims that there is something wrong with the

practice of our children's faith. He reports on dissatisfaction among school principals, about "the lack of a positive response from the students in matters of faith and religion." The principals, and not only they, wonder why we see so much un-Christian conduct in children who have received so much Reformed education. I quote: "Why have these students not internalized this Christian behaviour? What are we doing wrong or what should we be doing which is not being done?" In summary, the problem is that our children don't practice what we preach. What we see in our children is an unholy split between the knowledge of God and a life pleasing to Him, between faith and life. In this article I want to ask whether these problems with life-style are related to a climate of religious objectivism and formalism in our churches.

It was this discordance between knowing and living which struck my wife and me most, when we came to the Canadian Reformed Churches, three years ago. It was going to become a lasting concern. Often we were puzzled and at times baffled by attitudes and behaviour that we experienced not only of children of elementary and high school age, but also of parents.

I shall try to be as specific as possible and list some examples of un-Christian life-style that we experienced.

1. Foul language among children in elementary and high school.
2. Gross disrespect for teachers and other school personnel.
3. Unawareness, insensitivity, and sometimes outright denial by parents of such misbehaviour.
4. The habit of adults at meetings to frame questions, suggestions, and discussions in terms of conflict instead of cooperation.
5. The disinterest and lack of support of parents for affairs related to school and catechism.
6. The lack of self-discipline at parties and camps, as expressed in the abuse of alcohol.
7. The inability and lack of interest of many to relate their faith to their life's activities and to share their faith with others.

This list is of course based on limited personal experience. It was compiled after careful consideration, not to criticize, but to help clarify a problem. I

am thankful for all the exceptions! However, if the principals of our schools see fit to pay special attention to the problem of life-style, it cannot be incidental. We need to speak out because we are responsible for the upbringing of God's children.

Our initial reaction to all of this was to blame ourselves. After all, Reformed people are all equally sinful, and so, who were we to be baffled? Unfortunately, this "not guilty by reason of common sinfulness" is one of Satan's well-known ways of moving us into complacency. Our Lord Jesus did not think that our sinfulness ought to prevent us from addressing concrete sins in our lives and in the lives of others. So we thought and prayed about the possible reasons for this secular life-style. So far, we have not publicized these thoughts, partly because we cannot be very certain about their general validity, also because they are upsetting, and finally because we are still trying to find ways to approach the problems in a positive Christian way. This article intends to be a contribution towards such a positive approach. To begin with, an inventory of reasons for life-style problems might contain the following:

Mr. VanOverbeeke wonders whether we are preaching our children to death. In other words, are we overdoing the religious instruction of our children in the sermons, in catechism, in school, and in the homes. This may be so. I cannot answer this question in general, because I do not have the required information.

However, the quantity of religious instruction is unlikely to become a problem if it is framed in a living relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. If such a frame is absent, even a minimum of religious instruction will become a burden. The life-style of our children is under the influence, amongst others, of their growing faith, their home and their non-Christian environment. The reason why our children internalize secular instead of Christian behaviour may be that we as parents, teachers, or pastors do not exemplify the faith we teach, by our own life-style. Such a dishonest life-style leads to religious cynicism in our children. As any parent knows, children take their examples not from what you say, but from what you do. I know that one should not lightly blame the parents,

teachers, or pastors. Sometimes there is an outright rejection of God's promises. However, such a rejection is hardly ever an isolated event.

It must be recognized that a Christian life-style can only develop as a result of a living and personal relationship with God and a sound knowledge of His Word. This cannot be taught the way we teach math or language. It is a gift of grace that is promised to all of us, if we train ourselves in the knowledge of God, that is, if we follow Christ and His teaching. This teaching was so disturbing to the Jews precisely because it was not a transfer of academic knowledge, but often teaching *by example*, in the form of parables or of His own actions. It therefore affected their very lives. I suggest that in our religious instruction, teaching by example may not have the place it ought to have, and that our lives do not sufficiently or adequately reflect the example of our Lord. The life-style of the whole community of saints ought to be the climate in which this teaching is offered. This in turn requires an examination of our own life-style, in the light of Scripture.

This brings me to the theme of communication between parents and their children about matters pertaining to their faith and life. This communication begins long before the children are able to absorb the religious teaching in church, catechism, or elsewhere. It begins again by example of the parents. If the parents do not live close to God and do not show the fruits of the Spirit in their lives, how can we expect their children to show a Christian life-style? It is true that the presence of these fruits cannot be the ground for our certainty of faith, or a guarantee that our children will behave likewise. However, the absence of these fruits is a sure sign of a sick branch on the vine. Why then is it so difficult for children, adolescents, and parents to speak about their faith and its meaning in life? Could it be that we just aren't used to speaking about our faith in the homes, in class, and with our friends? As with many other things, the training ground for this is the home.

If we as parents want to seriously address these problems, then we have to begin by looking at our personal and family situation. One of the things that comes to mind is the absenteeism of the father. Whereas in secular circles the househusband is becoming more and more common-place, the opposite trend is seen in many Reformed circles. In addition to his regular job, the father spends many nights outside the house for "kingdomwork." That makes it all the more easy to justify the neglect of many families by their fathers. We have become too adjusted to the mistake that the mother is the one who is supposed to bring up the children. Neglect of family responsibilities by the father has been

associated with religious difficulties in the children. A father is needed for his irreplaceable contribution to the upbringing of his children, and especially to communicating about matters of faith. Rather than playing out all sorts of church-related activities against time to nourish your faith or availability to your family, it should be the latter that receive priority. Any other activities can be decided on after these priorities have been set, depending on personal circumstances.

Another aspect of the family situation of many is the busyness of the mothers, about which I am sure I do not have to expand here. We certainly are hard-working people. This is understandable from our history as immigrants. It is a history of hard work and many blessings. But is it possible that we have become focussed too much on our material blessings so that they have turned into the curse of materialism? Have we stopped to consider whether the growth of our success has become the tumor that has led to the deterioration of our spiritual health? If we have given up the essentials of our family-life to maintain our schools then we have to be reminded that these schools cannot operate without healthy families. Haven't we put the horse behind the cart?

This finally brings me to the relation between home and school. The attendance at society meetings at which tuition or bus routes are discussed is often strikingly different from those organized for parent-teacher interaction. A frequent complaint among teachers is the parent's relying too much on the teachers for a Christian upbringing of their children. Much improvement is needed (1) in the support of teachers by parents over against their children, (2) in the mutual support of parents to reduce unacceptable behaviour which is constantly reinforced by peer pressure, and to discuss problems in the upbringing of their children.

So far the inventory. Its issues point to a common theme, namely an inadequacy or lack of a Christian way in our community of saints.

In summary, I suggest that the problems with the life-style of our children may well be the result of a failure of us as community of saints to effectively exemplify a Christian life-style. If this is true, then it is not at all surprising. The existence of Gods people on earth has always been characterized by the struggle to be in the world, but not of the world. In this struggle the pendulum of response of Gods people has swung between the extremes of denial and acceptance of the world, between mysticism and rationalism, religious subjectivism and objectivism.

Is it possible that our problems with life-style come from a religious objectivism that is growing in our churches, possibly as a reaction against subjectivism

in our own church history and in our contemporary culture? In addition, is it possible that our determination to produce the material means to maintain schools and other institutions may have produced unintentionally the image of materialism for our children? This may be so, especially if this determination remains unconvincing for a lack of the simple basics of a Christian life-style which ought to give rise to such a determination. A possible objectivism is also testified to by many Evangelicals who abhor the secular ways of many Reformed people.

If this is correct, then the problem has to be addressed in the wider context of the spiritual climate in our churches and its effects on the religious upbringing of our children by parents, teachers, pastors, and peers. As a Reformed community we should prayerfully begin a serious examination of the practice of our faith in the light of Scripture.

As Reformed believers we are often suspicious of the loving care and friendliness among Evangelicals, because it may fall short of the Biblical norm of Christ-centredness. However, we Reformed people, in reacting against the excesses of evangelical subjectivism, tend to lose sight of the fact that to have the proper doctrine without the fruits of the Spirit ("love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control . . ." Galatians 5), is just as unacceptable in the sight of God, as to show the fruits of the Spirit in order to gain your own salvation.

It is not to be taken lightly when James says (1:17): ". . . faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." If our communal self-examination is to bear fruit, we should neither allow ourselves to be forced into a reactionary strategy, nor aim for a balance between the two evils of objectivism and subjectivism. The key is not "a pinch of pietism or evangelical spirituality" to compensate for the perceived formality of the Reformed doctrine and religious life (C. Trimp: *De Reformatie* 60 (22) 446). It is "not the subjective voice in the heart or the objective pronouncement of the doctrine, but the normative address of the covenant God who speaks with authority" (Geertsema: *Clarion* 34 (12) 255). Psalm 111:1 captures the aim of this self-examination: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all who *practice* it."

J.M. VAN DER MEER
Hamilton, July 1985

Please send your contributions to this article as well as to any other relevant topic to:

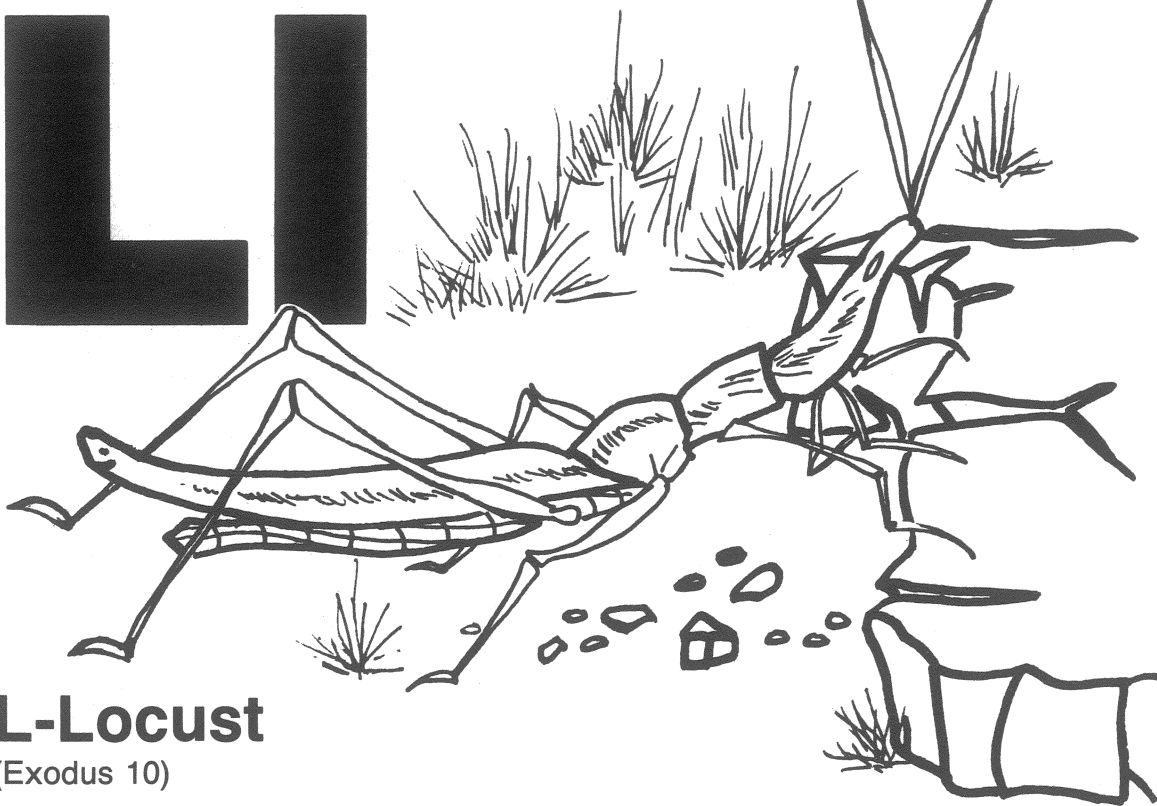
NICK VANDOOREN
John Calvin School
607 Dynes Road
Burlington, ON

¹Titus 1:1

ABC BIBLE COLLECTION

by Mrs. John Roza

L L



L-Locust

(Exodus 10)

Quiz Questions

Colour me!

1. Naaman, commander of the army of the kings of Syria, had a terrible disease. What was this disease?
_____ (II Kings 5:1-27)
2. Jacob worked seven years to take Rachel as his wife, instead he received Rachel's older sister. What was her name? _____ (Genesis 29)
3. A man was laid daily at the gate of the temple which was called "Beautiful." Peter and John, disciples of the Lord arrived at the gate and saw this man lying there in his illness. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth the disciples healed him. What kind of illness did this man have?
_____ (Acts 3)
4. This man was visited by two angels and was warned to leave Sodom and Gomorrah, because it was going to be destroyed. Who was this man? _____ (Genesis 19)

Answers for the letter "K"

1. Saul
2. David
3. Belshazzar
4. Jehoshaphat
5. Hezekiah



Dear Busy Beavers,

How many days are left of the summer holidays?
 Do you know?
 You don't?
 Oh, here's someone who does!
 Yes, I know why!
 Because after that . . . it's back to school!
 We've had weeks and weeks of summer holidays, weeks
 and weeks of doing different things.
 And now it's time for school again.
 How do YOU feel about that?
 Think about it for a minute.
 Maybe you're not so happy to be going back?
 There will be more Busy Beavers who feel that way.
 Can you think why you feel about school like that?
 Maybe you don't know your new teacher?
 Maybe there's someone at school you don't get along with
 very well?
 Maybe the new work worries you?
 Talk about it with your Dad and Mom, and your big brother
 or sister. And most important, Busy Beavers, talk about
 it with your Father in heaven.
 We don't need to worry if we ask Him for help. He never
 lets us down.
 Oh well, you say, I'm *glad* to go back to school!
 I know . . . you're happy to see your friends again. That's
 a good reason!
 But is there another reason, too?
 What do you think?
 Anyway, Busy Beavers, I hope you all had a great holiday!
 And now that it's back to school, let's be like Joseph.
 Remember him?
 A slave in a strange land, and in prison, too, he worked
 hard . . . to please the LORD.

Time for BIRTHDAY WISHES!

We all join in wishing the Busy Beavers celebrating a
 September birthday a very, very happy day and many happy
 returns, too!
 Have a good time with your family and friends.
 And may the Lord bless and keep you all in the coming
 year.

September

Jason Tenhage	4	Teresa Oosterhoff	18
Shelley Vander Horst	5	Walter Bartels	19
Helena Hopman	6	Margo Hofsink	20
Keith Lubbers	9	Joyce Broersma	21
Emily Barendregt	10	Rose Peters	21
Tammy Linde	11	Mary Jane Helder	24
Mary Vande Burgt	11	Jennifer Dykstra	26
Cindy Huttema	13	Anthony Vis	26
Angela Mans	13		

Some of the Busy Beavers enjoy trying the recipes the
 others have sent in.

Maybe you would like to try this one before you go back
 to school.

That way you have more time to practise at it!

It's from Busy Beaver *Mary-Lynn DeBoer*.

Lemon Squares

1 cup flour
 ½ cup butter or margarine
 ¼ cup icing sugar

Blend with fingertips until well mixed.
 Pat evenly into and 8" x 8" baking pan.
 Bake for 20 min. at 350°F.

Meanwhile beat together:

2 eggs
 1 cup granulated sugar
 ½ teaspoon baking powder
 2½ tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 dash of salt.

Pour over baked crust and return to oven for 20-25 min. at
 same temperature.

Cool on rack.

Cut in squares.

Sprinkle with sifted, powdered sugar.

FLOWERS

by Busy Beaver Carolien Wubs

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

pansy
 daffodil
 rose
 marigold
 petunia
 geranium

carnation
 dandelion
 sunflower
 daisy
 tulip
 forget-me-not



Riddles from the Bible

by Busy Beaver *Wendy Vanderveen*

- a. I made him weak after he told me to cut his hair. Who am I? _____
- b. I got boils. My children died. But I still kept on believing. Who am I? _____
- c. I worked at the temple. Samuel came and helped me. I fell off my chair backwards and died. Who am I? _____