

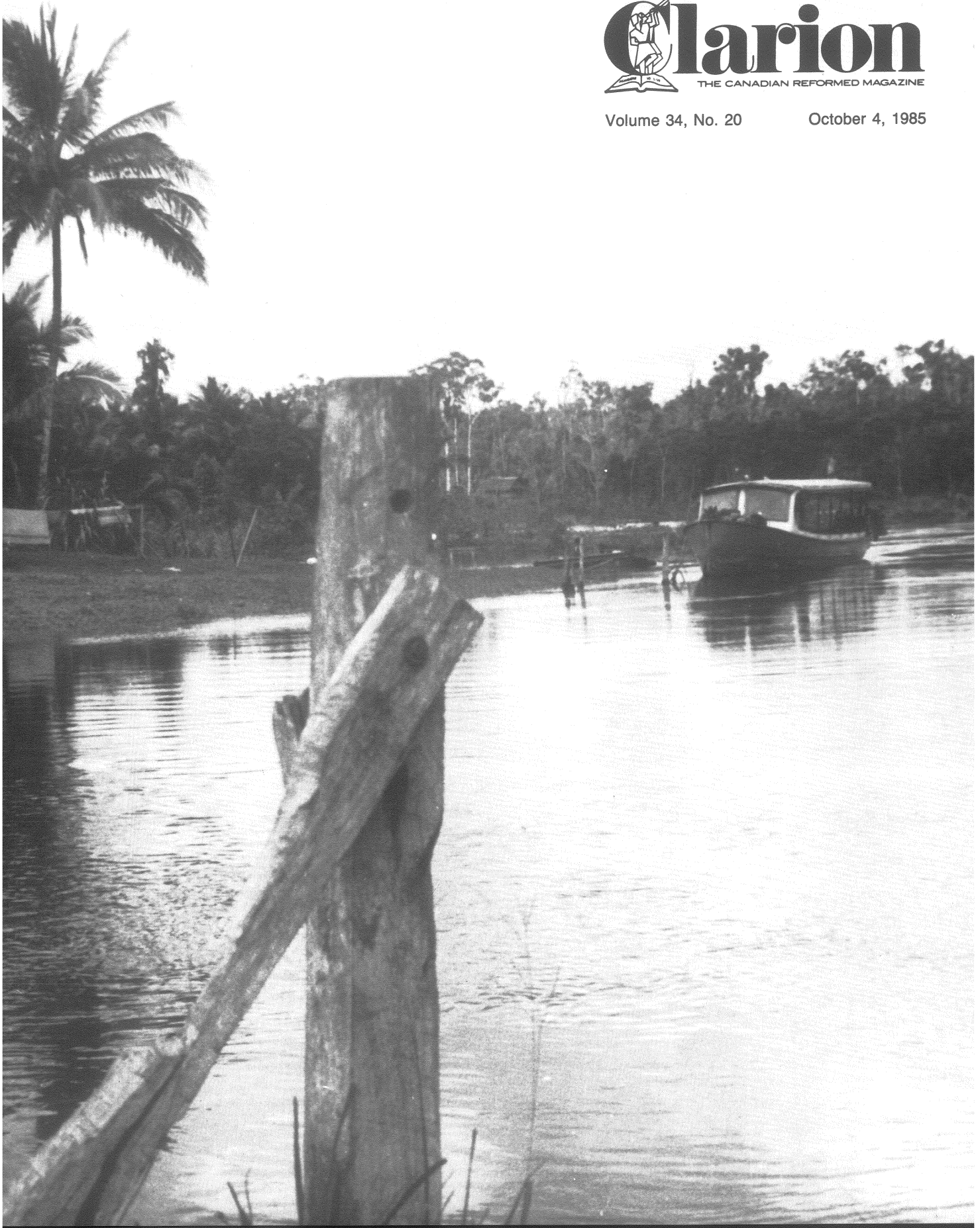


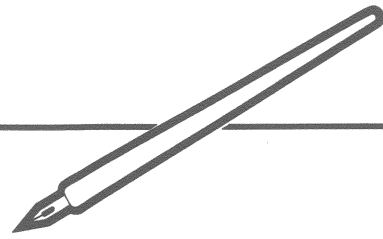
Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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O, give thanks unto the LORD

The earth again yielded its produce during the past growing season. It is true, there were drought and other poorly producing areas. We are all aware of the situation in Africa, and as for our own country, the news media informed us about the dry weather in parts of Southern Alberta and Saskatchewan. In contrast to the lack of growth and harvest in some specific areas, many parts of our country and of the world brought forth food for man and animal in abundance. Our conclusion can be that also for this year the earth again produced enough to feed its population. Whether all will be fed, is a matter of the distribution of all this food. And this raises the question both for our government and for us individually: do those who have plenty, care enough for those who are in need?

In this world scale abundance of food we can see the undeserved faithfulness of the LORD. The first world was destroyed by the flood. God was very angry with this world. "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," Gen. 6:5.

That must have been quite a situation. One could say that it is hard to imagine. A whole world population was constantly thinking, conceiving, devising, planning and executing evil. Verse 11 of the same chapter says that "the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence." And the next verse adds: "And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth."

Is this really so hard to imagine? Is not this what we see more and more in our modern societies? Terrorists kill left and right. Revolutionary movements cause civil war. Abortion murders millions. City streets are no longer safe at night. Drugs are sold, killing those who become addicted. Is it really so much different today? The answer must be "no."

That the situation of our days is not so much different from that before the flood does not have to amaze us. The flood did not change man's sinful and evil heart. That is what the LORD Himself acknowledged after the flood. When Noah brought His sacrifice, God promised that there would not be an all destroying flood again "even though the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth," Gen. 8:21.

The promise that no flood would destroy the whole earth anymore does not mean, however, that the curse because of sin is taken away from the earth. The earth is still subject to vanity on account of the sins of man. That curse becomes visible and is experienced in a special way in the drought, in floods and other calamities that cause a poor harvest or no harvest at all.

Reading the Scriptures, we learn that a poor harvest can be proof of the anger of the LORD. It is one of the ways in which He comes with His punishment. This is not only so in the Old Testament (Ruth 1, I Kings 17), but also in the New Testament, for instance Revelation 6:5, 6, 8. Famine calls for repentance.

When we consider these things and, at the same time, remember the promise to Noah after the flood, that "while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease," great thankfulness fills our hearts. The fact that there was again a harvest and that the LORD still gave food for man and animal, is only because of His patient goodness.

It is on purpose that I use the words "patient goodness" and not the word "grace." Grace makes us think of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ for those whom He has chosen in Christ. However, when an ungodly world experiences poor harvests but refuses to listen to God's call for repentance, God's patience will not have a saving effect. Such a refusal and hardening in ungodliness will increase judgment.

Nevertheless, God's patient endurance with this world that still provides good harvests, has everything to do with His grace in Christ. Not only is there a world that must ripen in unrighteousness for the day of judgment, there is also a church that must be gathered from the ends of the earth. To reach that goal, the gospel of salvation must be preached accompanied by mission aid work. Churches must be preserved and new ones planted to fulfil this task of proclaiming Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Thus we give thanks to our God, that He provided another winter and summer, another seedtime and harvest, food for man and animal, in order that His work in Christ might continue; in order that His glorious kingdom may come closer. We thank Him that in His goodness and patient endurance, He lets His sun shine and His rain come down on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust, Matthew 5:45. And it is our prayer that all those who call themselves His children and followers of Christ may continue the way of true repentance instead of following the ways of the world. Furthermore, it is our prayer that through the faithfulness of God's children many who belong to the world may also repent and turn away from wickedness and corruption to give glory to the LORD, the God of heaven and earth, who provides food just to this end that we may serve Him and honour His Name.

J. GEERTSEMA

The unmarried state₃

7. Influence of the environment

Before we answer the question about two girls or women, sharing one apartment, we first have to pay attention to another aspect of this matter.

It is impossible to divide people into two groups according to what has been mentioned before. It is not such a clear-cut case that we can say about the one that he is a homophile and about the other that he is not. There are many cases in which a certain tendency or inclination might be present, without ever becoming manifest. Many people are not even aware of such a potential hazard or inclination. Sometimes the circumstances can suppress such a feeling completely, and it never shows up. In other circumstances it may be stimulated and developed. As we have seen before, it even happens that people who have hardly any innate tendency in this direction are made homosexuals because they have wrong friends or are living in a bad environment.

Another aspect is that core-homophilia can become manifest in two different ways. We can call it a positive and a negative way. It can manifest itself in a positive way in being attracted by and having special affection for people of the *same* sex. It can become manifest in a negative way in an aversion to every relationship with the *other* sex. We can also call it the *absence of normal* feelings on the one hand and the *presence of abnormal* feelings on the other hand.

In this respect child-abuse is a very important factor in the sexual development and predisposition of a person. As we have mentioned in a previous article, sexual abuse of children happens more frequently than we are aware of. In the majority of cases the perpetrator is not a stranger but the father, an older brother, a good friend of the family, or a teacher. If such sexual abuse takes place between the age of eight and twelve, or even younger, it always has consequences for the sexual development of the child. From pastoral experience as well as from literature we know that the consequences are often felt by the victims many years later, during their own marriage. Lots of



ministers and other counselors have been confronted with such cases. The result is often that a woman has a strong aversion to every sexual contact or even considers it disgusting. One might wonder why then such people get married in the first place. The reason is that they are not aware of the fact that their feelings are "abnormal." They think it is something they have to get over. They don't dare to discuss these matters with others, and if they do they are surprised to hear what the magnitude of their problem is and how much and lasting impact the past still has in their present life and in the way they feel, react, and live together.

There are also cases in which a homophile is aware of his or her different feelings but still gets married to avoid being labelled and hoping that in a marriage he or she will get over it. There are cases in which a genuine effort is made to handle the problem in this way. Provided that the matters have been discussed openly before the marriage, it is sometimes possible to live in a Christian way and to be a help to each other in living according to the commandments of the Lord. In cases in which the matters have not been discussed before, either because of naive ignorance or deliberately, it leads most of the time to problems in the marriage, which can only be solved by proper counseling by someone who accepts the commandments of the Lord and at the same time has certain knowledge and experience in handling such delicate matters. Of course, in all these cases a precondition is that the couple is prepared to work together to solve their problems.

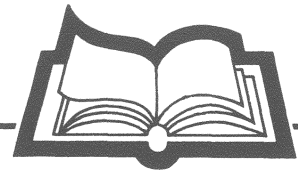
8. Roommates

We are coming back to the question of two single persons, living together as roommates. Is that right, is it wise or is it perhaps wrong when two girls or women are sharing the same apartment for an extended period of time?

We have to be careful that we do not generalize. We should not, in a merciless way, treat all cases the same and condemn the one group of people for the sins committed by others. It is clear that there is a great loneliness in the lives of those who never come to a marriage, for whatever reason it may be. This loneliness is often felt stronger when people are getting older. Such people like to have social contact, friendship and communication. We should try to help such people wherever we can.

Some people are very well aware of their homophilia. For such people we consider it very dangerous to live together as roommates. Homophiles are allowed to ask the Lord for help in their struggle. They might fall and rise time and again in their fight against sin. They have to fight against evil desires, no less than everyone else against his or her weaknesses and infirmities. Their struggle is not less or principally different than with other members of the congregation. They also have to live by mere grace. They can survive and persevere only through the help of the Holy Spirit in their life. However, if such people are going to live together with a roommate who might have the same feelings, they are exposing themselves to

— continued on page 417



“But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.” I Samuel 30:6b

Passing the Test

Anyone reading the book of Samuel cannot help but noticing the marked contrast between Saul and David, a contrast which develops as the book unfolds. Towards the end of the book, it meets its climax: Saul is cut off from all further revelation, while David, inquiring through the ephod, receives direct revelation from the LORD, instructing him to pursue the enemy, I Samuel 30:7ff.

It is the statement immediately preceding this action that catches our attention, and introduces an unusual twist in the ongoing contrast with Saul. I Samuel 28:15 finds Saul visiting the medium of Endor in great *distress*. David encounters the same sort of distress on his return to Ziklag. The whole community had been plundered, with wives and children taken captive. Grief soon turns to anger, and David is blamed for the disaster. A lynch-mob mentality takes over, and David's life hangs in the balance. But David finds access to the throne of grace! Saul is repulsed because of continued disobedience; David, as God's chosen servant, finds strength in the LORD his God. Yet, judging strictly from the actions involved, *both* men fall short, and their distress is born out of sinful actions.

Two factors contribute to the predicament in which David finds himself. First of all, he is confronted with his own sins. Had he not fled to the land of the Philistines in the first place, all this would not have happened. To be sure, he was a hunted man; but it appears that he took to the land of Israel's enemies on his own initiative, without an explicit command of the LORD. Overcome by fear and constant pursuit, he finally succumbed to the pressure and left his country for a good while. However, a second factor appears at Ziklag. David is confronted with events beyond his control. In the honest and well-meant performance of his duties to his lord, Achish, neighbouring Amalekites come and destroy the camp that Achish had given to him and his men. Here *God's* hand strikes him. These two factors, *sin* and *punishment*, *God's* hand and his own foolishness, push his life to the brink of death.

Behind these two interwoven factors, however, one element stands out. The whole situation arises out of David's *flight* from Saul and his determination not to strike out his hand against the anointed servant of the LORD. Thus, behind the realities of sin and punishment, we find the deeds of a *righteous* man in Israel, one who in fear and trembling and under heavy assault, sought to *obey* the LORD his God.

Precisely this unique element makes David's prayer one that is heard. Precisely this element also makes David's prayer point beyond itself to our Lord Jesus Christ. Also in his flight, David's life foreshadowed the work of the great Messiah who was to come! For although He was without sin, He, too, was afflicted by circumstances. Being human, He could not be everywhere at once. He remained where His Father had placed Him. But for His countrymen this was not enough! They accused Him, too, of not being strong enough to deal with disaster, Mark 4:38; 9:18; He, too, was accused of not being in the right place at the right time, John 11:21. It seemed the more He fled

from the rulers of the day — in order to avoid unnecessary violence — the more He was reviled and mocked, John 6:15; 7:4.

Yet David's action in distress mirrors the response of the Lord Jesus in His critical life and death situations that went with Him throughout all the time He was on earth. As Peter says, “He committed no sin; no guile was found on His lips. When reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered He did not threaten; but He trusted to Him who judges justly,” I Peter 2:22, 23.

The foreshadowing of all this is found in those simple words concerning David: “He strengthened himself in the LORD his God.” For besides his own sins, David saw *God's* righteous hand upon him. How much more did not the Son feel the righteous hand of God upon Him! For He carried the curse that lay upon us, and bore the punishment for our sins. Our sin became His, and He had to endure the consequences. David's life served as His instruction, so that, as it came upon Him more and more, “He strengthened Himself in the LORD His God.”

And this obedience is our salvation. He accepted the punishing hand of His Father upon Him, the punishing hand through which — by a “foreboding” providence, as it were — He was kept from preventing the disaster, kept from manifesting full control, and made to endure the rebuke and hostility of those who expected and wanted more from Him. In hardship and flight, “He learned obedience through what He suffered,” Hebrews 5:8.

In Him the style of David remains the only fitting style for the Church today. For we are also driven in the wilderness, and made to bear the cross of continued weakness and infirmity, the cross laid upon us by the righteous will of the Father, when He sends persecution, suffering and weakness upon His Church, I Corinthians 1:26, Revelation 12:14. In all things, “we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us,” II Corinthians 4:7. David did not boast of his own strength; he found help with his God, of mere *grace*. So, we too, may find grace to help in time of need — all because of the One who knew no sin, and still became sin; and in righteous prayer strengthened Himself in the LORD His God — Jesus, our Saviour.

NOTE

Having been granted a 10-month leave of absence for study purposes, we will not be taking care of the “From the Scriptures” column for this period. Rev. Cl. Stam has been found willing to fill in for us during our absence, and we express our thanks to him for this. Meanwhile, we wish our readers well, and we express the hope to meet again in these pages after our return.

J. DEJONG

The unmarried state — continued

an unbearable temptation and they are asking for trouble. It is a dangerous move which almost inevitable leads to homosexual practices. It is as foolish as when a boy and a girl, not being married and having normal sexual feelings, live together as roommates, telling everyone that their relationship is only platonic. Even if they would try to live that way, it causes an unacceptable temptation.

However, it is a completely different situation when two women, who always had hoped to get married but in spite of that remained unmarried, agree to share an apartment. There might be not the slightest trace of homophilia. They only are good friends and like to have social contact and company. In such a situation we cannot see any reason why they would not be allowed to live in the same house and manage one household.

However, one thing we have to be careful for. We mentioned already that a homophile inclination can be caused, stimulated or activated by environmental conditions. The circumstances can bring to the surface something that under different conditions never would have shown up. We have made reference to the situations among sailors in the past and among soldiers in a time of war. Everyone who has ever heard the language and tasted the atmosphere in a workplace where many girls are together, especially if they are working in a factory with a very boring job, knows how perverse the climate can be.

The circumstances are very important. A too close or intimate contact with someone of the same sex for an extended period of time can change someone's feelings. Something that always has been considered "unnatural" can seem to be an acceptable substitute for what is out of reach. This danger is real and has to be taken into consideration.

Therefore, the answer to the question whether two women can live together cannot simply be yes or no. The answer is no, if there is any awareness of homophilia. The answer is yes in cases in which there is not the slightest inkling in this direction. However, in all circumstances parties have to be on the alert. As soon as they feel that something in their relationship develops in a dangerous direction, they should not hesitate to part company. That can be done without destroying the friendship. Real friendship should be able to absorb such a shock and to recognize and protect each other against any danger. There are cases in which friends have taken some distance, in order to continue their friendship in a proper way.

What has been said so far with respect to women and girls, counts in prin-

cipal in the same way for men and boys. However, we have to face the reality that public opinion regarding male roommates is different than with respect to females. There are also practical reasons why the sharing of an apartment by two men is less likely. They often have a different attitude with respect to housekeeping and if they really want to be married it is easier for men to find a partner than for women. In our society the initiative for an engagement is still supposed to come largely from the male partner.

Still we should not underestimate the problems and the loneliness of many single persons, also in our churches.

It is impossible to give a clear-cut answer to all these kinds of questions. We hope that what we have said so far may be of some help, to cause a better understanding of the existing problems and that it may serve as an incentive to help each other in these matters as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ our Lord.


One final remark. In a discussion about the difference between homophiles and homosexuals someone made the remark that, if a homophile looks at a person of the same sex "lustfully," he has in his heart already committed this sin. Therefore every homophile is per definition a homosexual. This reasoning seems to make sense, at least it sounds logical. However, it can discourage brothers or sisters and put them down in their ongoing struggle to live according to the Word of God and to fight against sin. Of course, everyone who looks lustfully at his

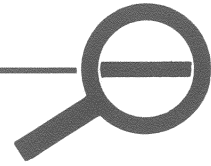
neighbour, has already committed sin. In Matthew 5:28 Jesus declares: "But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." However, it still makes quite a difference whether someone looks at his neighbour's wife or that he has intercourse with her. He who hates his brother sins against the sixth commandment, but it makes a great difference whether you are speaking evil of your brother or that you shoot and kill him.

Let us listen to the Word of God as the only and ultimate rule for human life. We have to call sin sin and we should not condone or defend any form of homosexuality. But at the same time we have to help and support those who happen to have very special problems in their life and who have to fight against certain weaknesses. A homophile who constantly fights against his evil desires, may know that the Lord is willing and able to give him the strength to persevere in the struggle and he may give thanks to the Lord who helps him time and again to stay away from a practice which is against the Word of God. His struggle might be with falling and getting up, praying for strength to finally overcome and reach perfection. (Cp. Answer 127 H.C.)

And all who feel lonely, forsaken, misunderstood, or misjudged by men are allowed to know that we have a High Priest in heaven who is able and willing to help us. He will never forsake those who in true faith take refuge in Him.

W. POWWELSE

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Impressions from The Netherlands and their message

Rev. Cecil Tuininga, retired Christian Reformed minister in Edmonton, brought a visit to The Netherlands. In an article in the September 1985 issue of *The Outlook* he gives his impressions of that visit, while adding a conclusion. These impressions deal especially with the synodical Reformed Churches. He writes, among other things:

What we saw and heard was alarming. Of the eight sermons we heard, only two met somewhat the requirements of preaching. Most were what one visitor aptly described as "essay type lectures" that dealt more with social issues than with the clear call of God's Word to repentance and holy living. And one got the impression that most of those attending did not much care what was brought from the pulpit. Church attendants were mostly older people, a few families with children, and very few young people. That young people attended so poorly has the attention of the Gereformeerde Synod, which is asked to make an in-depth study of why only two out of five young people still come to church. There are still people who are concerned about conditions in the churches, but there seems to be nothing that they can do to correct it. We were told that it was a commonly accepted practice in the congregations for young couples to live together in "common law" before marriage. Consistories are afraid to exercise any form of discipline for fear of losing members. In one of the churches which has a membership of 1200, attendance is considered good if 400 appear at a worship service. In such conditions the extremely weak sermons are the more tragic for the life of the congregations. This, we suspect, points to the heart of the churches' problem. God's Word has, for them, lost its power and its meaning. Then the question asked is no longer, "How must we serve God and keep His commandments?" but, "How can we please men in order to keep them on the church membership list?" Where the first consideration is missing, the second loses its meaning. This, we judge, is the heart of the Dutch churches' problem.

Rev. Tuininga, then, asks "How did this begin?" He answers:

It begins with the ignoring of God's Word. We were informed that one rarely heard a sermon on the epistles of Paul. That was understandable. If what the apostle wrote concerning the role of

women in the church and concerning the required qualifications of elders and deacons are not valid today because what he wrote was culturally conditioned to his time, everything else that he wrote becomes similarly suspect. Thus God's Word spoken through the apostle is annulled. One sees clearly where this tampering with God's Word has brought the churches in The Netherlands. And we will experience exactly the same results in the United States and Canada. The decisions of our last synods to open the office of deacon to qualified women are extremely serious, because those decisions are based on exactly the same kind of grounds as those that were used to justify the Dutch churches' course. In both cases, ignoring God's Word leads eventually to completely annulling it.

Rev. Tuininga continues with discussing the call of the synod for unity. There should be acceptance of each other, even though there are different opinions. For Christian Reformed readers this is a very important discussion. The CRC synod's executives sent a pastoral letter to the CRC churches calling for the same peace by accepting one another as brothers in Christ, even though the one is in favour and the other is opposed to women deacons. Rev. Tuininga calls this a false peace. He writes:

Although we must not judge one another's motives, we must have the courage to call that unbiblical which conflicts with the clear teachings of God's Word. When fellow members introduce and push erroneous teaching and practice, should we not say a word about it, lest we cast doubts and distrust on others' good intentions? We can and must judge and reject another's wrong views as wrong without judging motives.

Another impression deals with the word "polarizing."

Who's "polarizing?"

In discussions with our Dutch relatives a familiar word surfaced, the accusing word "polariseren" (polarizing). That prejudicial word points a finger straight at you and says, in effect, "You are a troublemaker! Shame on you!" How do you become such a troublemaker? By taking a stand. If you don't like the direction your denomination is going, you may indeed talk about it, but, please, don't take a stand, for then you polarize. Taking a stand is drawing a battle front and causing a division. And who wants to do that? We are called to peace, are we not? Don't take a positive stand!

That word "polarize" irritates me not a little at times. Who is doing the polarizing? Does the one who contends for the truth and upholds it at all costs? Or do they who are introducing teachings and practices that conflict with the clear teachings of Scripture? Just who is judging whom, and just who is driving a wedge between church members? The answer should be crystal-clear. When someone accuses us of polarizing, that amounts to saying, "Be a nobody! Just run with the crowd and trust your leaders." We may not be such characterless people in God's Kingdom. We must contend for His truth, cost what it will. We must do that if we would save the church from apostasy.

The last part of the article reads as follows:

Time for action!

To such contention we are being called today in the Christian Reformed Church. We must not only speak; we must also act. In The Netherlands the Concerned ("Verontrusten") have done much talking and writing, and they still do so today. But they have lost the battle. In the time when they tried to correct things by talking and writing, more members were slowly getting accustomed to inaction and to going along with what they knew was completely wrong. We must learn from that tragic Netherlands experience. We have done the necessary talking and writing and more. Now we must act, and that, immediately. Those who see the unbiblical actions and trends in our denomination must stand up and be counted. They must return to and uphold the historic Christian faith in teaching and practice. If that means a parting of the ways, which we think that it does, then we must be ready to pay that price. If we are not ready to do so, I submit that, like members of the Dutch churches, we will lose everything.

Our trip to The Netherlands further opened our eyes to see what is going on among us. We were previously in a measure aware of it, but now we see how we as a denomination are literally "running to catch up." Apostasy always runs fast. Do we panic in the face of this evidence of crisis? Up to a point, we do. That is because so many among us do not see the urgency of the present situation, and many of those who do are leaving to join other denominations, especially the Canadian Reformed Church. We are called to support all our other concerned members and to help lead them in the

way of Truth as we have always understood and confessed it. We have reached the time for vigorous action. For the sake of fellow members and for the Lord's kingdom on earth, let us not dilly-dally, but take action. It is urgent! Very urgent!

When I hear that those in the CRC who are warning and contending for the truth like Rev. Tuininga are called trouble-makers, and worse, that these men are compared with the heretic Judaists who pointed at the law as means for salvation and by doing so denied God's grace in Christ, I shudder. Here people of the LORD are misled.

Comparison of what is happening in the Christian Reformed Church with what is happening in the synodical Reformed Churches in The Netherlands is instructive. It is also frightening. Twice, in 1963 and in 1977 the Canadian Reformed Churches sent an "Appeal" to the Christian Reformed Churches, warning against their connection with Holland. It is my

hope and prayer that Rev. Tuininga's call for action will have results. It is urgent indeed.

There is one point with which I do not agree, if I understand Rev. Tuininga correctly. He writes, "Do we panic in the face of this evidence of crisis? Up to a point, we do. That is because so many among us do not see the urgency of the present situation, and many of those who do are leaving to join other denominations . . ." Do I understand it well? Does this mean that Rev. Tuininga panics "up to a point," both because many do not see what is going on AND because many are leaving the CRC? Does this mean that Rev. Tuininga disagrees also with the action of those who see and, therefore, leave? Does Rev. Tuininga mean to say that these members should not leave because they "are called to support all our concerned members and to help lead them in the way of Truth"? Is it the opinion of Rev. Tuininga that those who are con-

cerned must wait with leaving the CRC until all the other concerned brothers and sisters are ready to leave with them? I am afraid that Rev. Tuininga has to wait for a long time in that case. This could undermine the action that leads to "a parting of the ways."

Furthermore, I doubt that those who see and leave do so because they panic. A person who panics, acts in haste. He does not give himself the time to consider his actions carefully. When I speak with those who left the CRC and joined the Canadian Reformed Church^{ES} (not church; or it should be a Canadian Reformed Church), I do not meet with panic. I meet a well-considered decision of people who take their Reformed Confession serious and who seek, accordingly, to be obedient to the Lord of the Church also in their church membership. Waiting and waiting has so often turned into postponing and postponing.

J. GEERTSEMA

The Holy Spirit: spotlight on the exalted Christ₁

This is the text of a speech prepared for the Women's League Day in the Fraser Valley, held in Surrey, June 26, 1985.

Your representative requested me to address this Women's League Day on the subject "The Holy Spirit." That immediately raises in my mind a question: *Why? Why this topic?*

Somehow, it seems to me highly unlikely that there will ever be a Women's League Day with the topic "Jesus Christ." We all know that the work of the Lord Jesus Christ is far too extensive, too comprehensive, to be dealt with in one speech, let alone in one day. If someone should ask us to explain why the death of Christ is necessary for our salvation, each of us could undoubtedly give an answer to that without too much problem. We all know that a lot hinges on the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension of our Lord. Concerning the second Person of the Trinity, we do not harbour too much uncertainty.

But with regards to the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the situation appears to be somewhat different. The very fact that a topic as broad as "The Holy Spirit" was suggested to me for today may be considered evidence of a certain vagueness, even confusion around the Holy

Spirit. For I will tell you right away: if we were to do justice today to all that has been revealed in Scripture about the Holy Spirit, you would be sitting here far longer than anyone is able to.¹ Besides, I have neither the time nor the expertise to delve into everything that can be said about the Spirit. But that does not mean that we cannot highlight certain specific aspects of the Holy Spirit and His place in our salvation.

Where shall we begin? In our society today, there is greater attention devoted to the Holy Spirit than has been the case in previous decades. We hear and read more about the Spirit, and the result is that we become somewhat more curious about what the Bible actually does say with respect to the Holy Spirit. Yet it is not so that we only become more curious; we find ourselves also becoming somewhat confused. For we hear sounds to the effect that we are to "open ourselves up" to the Holy Spirit. Television preachers remind us of the necessity of "being filled" with the Holy Spirit; that wonderful reality of the early church as it is described in Acts 2 and 4 should be ours as well; we should

be altogether one, with one heart and soul. Books argue for something called "Spirit baptism," and we wonder what that is. We are even told that, if we have not experienced a specific baptism with the Holy Spirit, we are actually lacking something. What we have to do is pray for that baptism. And we end up feeling somewhat guilty, because that thought of a special baptism with the Spirit is a little bit foreign to us, at least to our experience. Where is the problem? Are we really missing something? Are we perchance second class Christians?

We hear reports, too, of people who claim to have received the Spirit, and they can testify to a gloriously joyful and happy feeling. We are made to believe that if only we "had" the Spirit, we too, would all be so full of joy and happiness. Our churches would know a shining enthusiasm for the Lord and His service; everybody would love each other dearly, all would put their collective shoulders under every church project, and the church would grow beyond all imagination. It all sounds a bit strong to us, but when we actually hear of churches for which this

enthusiasm is a reality, then we do not know what to think anymore. The hand clapping and embracing does not really agree with our preferences, but who dares to suggest that all this enthusiasm for the Lord is devil's work? We do not understand it all, but the indications are there that the Spirit must be working there. But if He works there, why does He not work in the same way in our midst? Do we not rate? And our confusion grows. Who is the Holy Spirit actually? What does He do? How does He do it? What are we to make of all those reports of the Spirit's activities in the world around us?

As was said earlier, we could spend hours on the many ins and outs of God's revelation concerning the Holy Spirit. We will be further ahead, however, if we attempt to come to grips with what may be considered the central task of the Spirit. In the light of what we learn from that central task, we can also evaluate, somewhat, the things which we hear about Spirit experiences.

What is the central task of the Holy Spirit? Why has He been given to us? The matter can, I think, best be circumscribed by stating the Holy Spirit has, as mandate, the task to *cause sinners to see the exalted Christ in heaven*. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from the doctrine of Jesus Christ. To do so is to create confusion. In order to come to grips with this central task of the Holy Spirit, we shall first have to come to a proper understanding of Who — or what — is the Holy Spirit. Once we understand His *identity*, we can go on to explaining the Spirit's central, distinctive *work*; His work flows out of His identity. I should like to conclude with some remarks concerning the *implications* of what we find concerning the Spirit's identity and activity.

Identity of the Holy Spirit

First then, Who — or what — is the Holy Spirit? That question is the question: is the Spirit a Person or a power? Bluntly: a "He" or an "It"? Or in grammatical parlance: masculine or neuter?

We might wonder why we should bother with this exercise in determining the Spirit's identity. Does it make any difference whether the Spirit be understood as a Person or as a power?

The matter really comes down to the question of whether the Holy Spirit is true God or just a power from God. Is He some special force that the Lord God uses, just as He uses other forces in creation, namely, the winds, magnetic fields, pressure systems, etc., a power that cannot act independently of the God Who activates it? Or does the Holy Spirit work as a distinct Person, with a distinct task, having a mandate to perform within the Trinity, and actually performing it in a divine way? Is

He God or is He a power which God uses?

One's initial inclination is to assume that the Holy Spirit is a power instead of a Person; an "it," and not a "He." The term "spirit" conjures up in our minds the concept of a thing, something that floats around in the air, like goblins and witches. Besides, we all know that in the Bible the words for "spirit" and "wind" and "breath" are all the same. One need only refer to John 8 to see how Jesus interchanges the words. And nobody would suggest that "wind" is a person instead of a thing.

Moreover, the Bible does not give to the Spirit that same clear personal form as the other partners of the trinity receive. "Father," "Son": the terms themselves suggest personhood. The things which the Father and the Son are portrayed as doing also leave little doubt; these are both Persons. But with the Spirit it is not so clear.

Yet the Bible leaves no doubt that the Holy Spirit is not a power but a Person. It is true that the gender of the Greek word "pneuma" is neuter. But that fact does not in itself mean that the Holy Spirit is to be referred to with the pronoun "it." When Jesus uses a pronoun to refer to the Spirit, He does not use the neutral "it"; Jesus Himself uses the masculine pronoun "He" (cf. Jn. 16:13). In itself, that would suggest already that the Spirit is to be understood to be a Person and not a power.

But a more compelling argument in favour of the Spirit being a Person is the fact that Scripture presents the Holy Spirit as *doing* things. He searches, speaks, testifies, commands, reveals, strives, creates, makes intercession, raises the dead, etc. (Gen. 1:2; 6:3; Lk. 12:12; Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:8; Acts 8:29; 13:2; Rom. 8:11; I Cor. 2:10ff.). Powers do not do these things, only persons do. Nor do powers have intelligence or affections. Yet Scripture presents the Spirit as having both (cf. I Cor. 2:10ff.; Is. 63:10). We do well, then, to refer to the Holy Spirit with the pronoun "He," and not with the word "it." He is a Person and not a power.

That does not mean, however, that the Holy Spirit does not *have* power. He most certainly does, as we shall see shortly. But to *have* power and to *be* a power are still two different things.

He is then a Person. What sort? Created or uncreated? Finite or infinite?

Some have believed the Holy Spirit to be a Person, but considered Him to be a created personality, and not God Himself. The Bible, however, presents the Spirit not simply as a Person, but specifically as a *divine* Person. I draw your attention to four proofs. He is first of all called God. Acts 5:3ff.; "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit . . . You have not lied to men but to God." Divine attributes are also ascribed to Him. So we read in Psalm 139 that He is everywhere present: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?" He does works that only God can do. He was active in creation (Gen. 1:2); He is active today in keeping the world green and alive (Ps. 104:30). And finally, divine honour is bestowed upon the Holy Spirit, for He is placed on a level with the Father and the Son (cf. II Cor. 13:14; Mt. 28:19).

Of what significance is the fact that the Spirit is a *divine* Person? It comes down to this, that He is part of the Trinity. As such He is the one true God. That means also that whatever the Holy Spirit does must be in strict harmony with the will and activities of the Father and the Son. There can be no disparity between what the Father intends and what the Spirit desires.

What is it that the Father and the Son are after? They pursue the redemption of men through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, and so God seeks the glory and honour due to His great Name. The Holy Spirit, as true God, pursues that same goal. He is not restricted in His efforts to achieve that goal, for as true God He is almighty and able to do what He wills.

It means for us also that we are not to be surprised at either the kind of work He does or how He does His work. As true God — very God of very God — He remains for us incomprehensible. He is as the Belgic Confession states it, "the third Person of the Holy Trinity, of one and the same essence, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, true and eternal God, as the Holy Scriptures teach us" (Art. 11). There is but one thing for us to do and that is to listen to what is revealed about Him in Scripture, and believe it; understand it we cannot.


Work of the Holy Spirit

Given that the Holy Spirit is true God with the Father and the Son, what is His task? What work does the Spirit do?

It has struck the attention of all attentive readers of the Bible that the Holy Spirit

C

HURCH NEWS



New address:

Rev. J. DeJong
Akelei 2
8265 KD Kampen
The Netherlands

it is seldom mentioned in the Old Testament.² That observation, however, does not at all warrant the conclusion that the Holy Spirit was not active in the Old Testament. Rather, He was most active. So we read of the Spirit being involved in creating and recreating (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30). He also equipped people to do specific tasks (Ex. 31:3; Judg. 6:34; I Sam. 16:13, etc.). Faith was worked in the Old Testament, and that too was a working of the Holy Spirit. He was, then, very active in the Old Testament. The fact that there are only a few references in the Old Testament to the Holy Spirit does not tell us that the Spirit did not have a fundamental role to play. These few references tell us only that it pleased the Lord not to fully reveal the Holy Spirit at that time.

But that raises an interesting question. Why is it that a full revelation concerning the third Person of the Trinity is delayed until the New Testament? I offer the following explanation.

The Holy Spirit was not fully revealed in the Old Testament because His work did not specifically involve, was not to focus on, creating or recreating. His task revolved around Jesus Christ. Note when it was that the Spirit was fully revealed. That was *after* the Lord Jesus had left the earth. The Spirit is poured out, is revealed, not before Christ's sufferings on the cross, nor in those forty days that He sojourned on earth after His resurrection. No, Pentecost occurs *after* Christ has left the earth.

That fact, in itself, already tells us that the task of the Spirit has something to do with the second Person of the Trinity. Thus Jesus can say to His disciples in that address in the night of His betrayal that He would leave them, but would at the same time not leave them desolate. For "another Counselor" would come (Jn. 14:18, 16).

Yet it is not so that the Holy Spirit simply takes Jesus' place. Because Christ atoned for sin, defeated the evil one, God has received Him in heaven, and given to Him a place at His right hand as King of kings and Lord of lords (cf. Acts 2:33ff; Phil. 2:9ff.). Christ has left the earth so that in heaven He might rule over all. The Holy Spirit cannot replace Jesus on earth, because the Lord's new task in heaven affects the earth directly. In fact, the Spirit's task is to be understood in the light of Christ's exalted position in heaven.

How so? The Son of God is worthy of all praise. This is implied in His position at God's right hand. Men everywhere should acknowledge this King of all the earth, and should recognize what He has done in delivering sinners from the power of the evil one, obtaining salvation for fallen man.

Yet the sad reality is that there is not a single person on earth who looks to this

King in the heavens and acknowledges Him to be Lord of lords. Nor does anyone see that in Him alone there is salvation. No one sees that, no one would look to Him for the simple reason that fallen man is thoroughly depraved. We are blinded by sin so that we are not able to see the Redeemer.

What task does the Spirit have now? Because of the extent of man's depravity it is His task on earth to *cause men to look to Jesus Christ*. The Spirit is not concerned about Himself; He is concerned only about Jesus Christ. One might compare His role to that of a floodlight. An artistically designed building loses its beauty in the dark; it cannot be seen. In order to draw attention to this building, one can place a floodlight before it. The task of that floodlight is not to draw the attention of all passersby to itself; its role is specifically to draw attention away from itself and to that particular building.³

What is the Biblical proof for this position on the central task of the Holy Spirit? In His farewell discourse, Jesus Christ speaks about the Holy Spirit, instructing His disciples about Who the Holy Spirit is and what His task is. The Lord tells His disciples in this discourse that the Spirit would come in His place. But the Spirit would not do or say what was right in His own eyes. "He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak." The Spirit does not draw attention to Himself; rather, "He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you" (Jn. 16:13ff.). It is the task of the Spirit to draw attention to Jesus Christ; "He will glorify Me." The work of the Holy Spirit is Christocentric.⁴ He takes that which is Christ's and declares that to the disciples. He says to fallen, blinded men: "behold, the Christ. Look to Him, for He has many riches. He is greatly to be praised, for in Him there is much salvation."

The apostle Paul repeats the thought. The Holy Spirit causes us to direct our eyes to heaven, to where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (Col. 3:1ff; cf. Lord's Day 18, 49).

A further indication that the central task of the Spirit is to cause men to look to Jesus Christ is given to us in Acts 2. If ever there would have been an opportunity for the Spirit to reveal precisely what His task was, that would surely have been Pentecost Day. Yet in that sermon which Peter preached after the Holy Spirit was poured out, Peter does not ask attention for the Spirit. Inspired by the very Spirit Who was moments before poured out, Peter asks the crowd to consider Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Certainly, he uses as text a passage from the prophecies of Joel that speak about pouring out the Spirit. But as soon as Peter gets to

the sermon proper, what does he say? "Men of Israel, hear these words: 'Jesus of Nazareth . . .'" (Acts 2:22). And he goes on to explain how Jesus suffered, was crucified, died and was buried, but was raised by the Father on the third day and taken up into heaven and given a seat at God's right hand. And it is from His throne at God's right hand that Jesus "has poured out this which you see and hear" (verse 33). And why has the Lord done this? That "all the house of Israel [might] know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (verse 36). From what the Holy Spirit does on Pentecost Day, it becomes apparent that this is the basic thrust of His work; He causes men to see Jesus Christ. He does not cause people to look to Himself. No, He works with the Father and the Son to cause men to marvel at the redeeming work of God Almighty, and so to praise this great God, three in one. For that reason, even on the day of His outpouring, He acts as a floodlight; He does not draw attention to Himself, but He encourages people to look to the exalted King of kings and Lord of lords. To separate the Holy Spirit from Jesus Christ is to do a gross injustice to the revelation of God. There is a reason why the Scriptures repeatedly refer to the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of Christ." It is His task to highlight the Saviour. What God has joined together, let not man cast asunder.

C. BOUWMAN

¹ One could, eg., go through the Catechism, find all the references to the Holy Spirit, and from that draw up a list of activities in which the Spirit is active. We would find that the Holy Spirit works the assurance of faith (Lord's Day 1, 29), regenerates or renews sinners (Lord's Day 3, 26, 27, 32, 38, 44), works faith itself (Lord's Day 7, 25, 27), is the agent through whom Christ governs us (Lord's Day 12, 28, 48), caused Jesus to be conceived in the virgin Mary (Lord's Day 14), is the counter-pledge Who encourages us to look to Christ in heaven (Lord's Day 18), gives us heavenly gifts (Lord's Day 19), makes us partakers of Christ, comforts us and abides with us (Lord's Day 20), is the agent through whom Christ gathers and defends His church (Lord's Day 21), teaches us through the gospel and the sacraments (Lord's Day 25), washes away the pollution of my soul (Lord's Day 26), unites us to Christ (Lord's Day 28), ingrafts us into Christ (Lord's Day 30), dwells in us (Lord's Day 41), preserves and strengthens us (Lord's Day 52).

² There are direct references to Him as the Holy Spirit only in Ps. 51:11 and Is. 63:10.

³ I owe the illustration to Dr. J.I. Packer in his book *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, pp. 65ff.

⁴ Morris, *John*, p. 701.

Are You?

Are you an active member, the kind that would be missed?
Or are you just content that your name is on the list?
Do you attend the meetings and mingle with the flock?
Or do you stay away and criticize and knock?
Do you take an active part to help the work along?
Or are you satisfied to be the kind that "just belong?"
Do you ever go to visit or call a member who is sick?
Or leave that work to just a few, and then call them
"the clique?"

There is quite a program schedule I'm sure you heard about, and we'll appreciate it if you too will come and help us out.

Do come to services and meetings, and help with hand and heart.

Don't be just a member, but take an active part.

Think it over members, you do know right from wrong, Be an active member, and not a "just belong!"

Anonymous



A thought to ponder:

*"No matter what your lot in life,
build something on it."*

From our mailbox:

Mrs. Breukelman, Coaldale, AB sent a thank you note for the attention Beverly received for her birthday. She has been working in a summer programme which she really enjoyed. She also kept herself busy doing housecleaning, cutting lawns and doing some sewing jobs. Thanks for the cards, brothers and sisters!



Hank Orsel sent us a change of address. Please change it on your Calender. It is as follows:

H. ORSEL
705 Surrey Lane
Apt. 1201
Burlington, ON L7T 3S7

On our birthday calender for October we have:

ALAN BREUKELMAN
Box 666
Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0

Alan will celebrate his 19th birthday on October 17, the Lord willing. He is working at the Rehabilitation Centre. He takes the bus to and from work and is quite proud of his independence and his pay cheque.



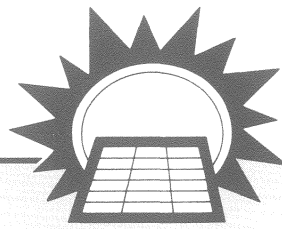
NELENA HOFKINK
6705 Satchel Road
Box 40, "Bethesda"

Mount Lehman, BC V0X 1V0

Nelena has been in the "Bethesda" home for over six years. She leads a busy and satisfying life. For a few mornings each week she helps a mother with her small children; she also works in a workshop. Her hobbies are swimming, bowling, jogging, biking, and learning how to read and write. Brothers and sisters of Cloverdale often pick her up from Bethesda and entertain her. She has an impressive collection of classical music tapes and records. Nelena's 25th birthday will be celebrated on October 22.

JOHN FEENSTRA
RR 1
Wainfleet, Ontario
L0S 1V0

John hopes to celebrate his 27th birthday on October 25. During the summer months I was talking to his mother, who told me that John is doing very well. He seems to really improve lately. He enjoys "Camp Boo" very much.



MARY ANN DE WIT

6705 Satchel Road
Box 40, "Bethesda"
Mount Lehman, BC V0X 1V0

Mary Ann is blind and therefore it might be a very good idea to send her cards that she can feel. Please, brothers and sisters put a bit of extra effort into buying a card for Mary.

She hopes to celebrate her 29th birthday on October 28. In order to show you, readers, how Mary Ann spends her day I will include a picture of all the work she does. On the left it shows Mary

and Arlene knitting. On the other picture we can see Arlene's handiwork on the right. The carpet is 6' x 10', and is presently decorating the De Wit's family living room floor.

Have a happy birthday, and may the Lord be with you in the year that lies ahead!

Send your requests to:

MRS. J.K. RIEMERSMA
380 St. Andrew Street East
Fergus, ON N1M 1R1



From left to right: Mary, Mrs. De Wit, Arlene

Reformed Evangelism Taskforce — News Update

Evangel

The time has come to give you an update on the work of the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce. From the regular appearance of *Evangel* you can tell that we are still in business. The list of subscribers continues to grow with the result that at the moment over two-thirds of the Canadian Reformed Churches are on our subscription list. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia have also shown themselves to be very supportive of this work. In addition to Australia and Canada, copies are also being sent regularly to a number of subscribers in other lands. The feedback that we have received indicates that the magazine is being well received and fills a definite need.

Still, we do not intend to rest on our laurels. Sample packets have been made up of past issues of *Evangel* and are being sent to a number of leading Reformed magazines in different parts of the English-speaking world. The editors of these magazines will be asked to give us some free coverage, along with an endorsement. In addition, on the home front we continue to send a few free copies of *Evangel* to those churches in our federation which do not subscribe to it in one way or another. We hope that in this way their appreciation for it will grow and that soon they too will see fit to make use of it. If you never see a copy in the foyer of your local church, you might ask a member of your Home Mission Committee or else a member of the Consistory why it is not being made available for distribution.

At this point a word of appreciation is in order to the Editor, Dick Moes, to the Copy Editor, Pim Schon, and to the Production Editor, Tony Van Hengel, who freely give of their time to see to the planning, preparation and production of the magazine. Thanks should also go out to all of the contributors across the country who have been so cooperative. It has been the policy to try to develop as wide a number of contributors as possible and so spread the work around. The results indicate that this has met with success.

If you do not receive a copy of *Evangel* on a regular basis you can always

become a subscriber. The cost remains minimal and we will give you a price break on bulk. By all means read it, and pass it on to a friend or to a neighbour. Currently, it is also being placed in hospitals, nursing homes, laundromats, stores, malls, schools, libraries, homes and a host of other places. We have even received requests to use some of the material for pamphlets and radio broadcasts. Needless to say, we give our permission gladly.

A questionnaire is being sent to all subscribers asking them to inform the Editor about their distribution methods. The results of this questionnaire will be compiled and made available to all interested parties. It is hoped that in this way *Evangel* will be used even more effectively in the future.

The Bible Course

Right off the bat we must apologize for the fact that the Bible Course is behind schedule. We had hoped to have part of it in print at the beginning of the year; however, it appears that we were too optimistic. Translating an extensive work such as this with twenty-five chapters to it is quite an undertaking. To speed things up we assigned parts of it to different translators but that in turn produced more work for the Editor who had to go through it and harmonize the translation styles. In the process of doing that it also became evident that here and there a number of revisions would be required. As things now stand we are hopeful that the Bible Course will be ready for the presses at the beginning of 1986.

Nevertheless, there is a word of caution which must be tied to this. At the moment we do not have the financial re-

sources to have it published. A letter has been drafted and is being sent to all American Reformed Churches, Canadian Reformed Churches, and Free Reformed Churches in Australia with an appeal for monetary support. It is hoped that either via a collection or a direct donation, the needed funds will be amassed. Needless to say, you need not wait for the collection or whatever, we will be most happy to receive any and all donations which you may send. Make your cheque out to the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce and send it to the address at the bottom of this News Update. Thanks!

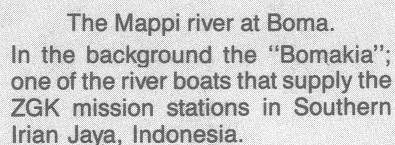
Other projects

The magazine *Evangel* and the Bible Course are not the only frying pans which we have in the fire. The development of a training manual for the work of evangelism continues. A number of capable people are being approached to write brochures on topics which are not adequately covered in material currently available. As you may know there is a super abundance of pamphlets and brochures available in the English-speaking, evangelical world. Some of them are very good, and some of them are awful. We are trying to weed them out and hope to come with a recommended list. At the same time topics which need better treatment from a distinctly Reformed perspective are being suggested to various writers.

In connection with this we have also commissioned someone to write a brochure which will function as an introduction to the Canadian Reformed Churches. It will include sections on history, growth and development, basis, worship, home mission, foreign mission, theological education, ecumenical relations and a number of other pertinent subjects. This kind of a brochure should nicely compliment the brief introduction which most local churches have had printed up already. If there are any Australians reading this, as surely there are, they might consider approaching someone to do the same for them down under.

Some time ago we sent to all the local churches a sample Constitution for

OUR COVER



The Mappi river at Boma.
In the background the "Bomakia";
one of the river boats that supply the
ZGK mission stations in Southern
Irian Jaya, Indonesia.

a Home Mission Committee. This sample is a translation and revision of the standard Constitution used by our sister-churches in The Netherlands. If you are interested in a copy, let us know and we will send you one - *gratis*.

Finally, for your further growth in this area may we recommend to you two books. The first is called *Life-Style Evangelism* by J.C. Aldrich (Multnomah Press, Portland). It is probably one of the most suggestive books on how to relate the gospel to your unbelieving neighbour. Mind you, not everything in it is kosher,

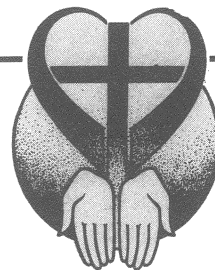
but then again not many books are. Read it critically and when you do so it is sure to stimulate your thinking and your acting in this area. The other book is called *Tell the Truth* by W. Metzger (Inter-Varsity Press, Chicago). The author, who is an elder in the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA), rightly complains about all of the froth in North American approaches to evangelism. There is little depth to many gospel presentations and often a lot of man-centered teaching. He shows you how to get the message across in a Reformed manner and not, as is so often

the case, in an Arminian manner. Happy reading!

Well, we have to wind this News Update down. If you have any suggestions, contributions, or criticisms (constructive ones, that is), we would really like to hear from you. If you have an extra dollar, we could use that too. But more than anything else, we would like your prayers.

THE REFORMED EVANGELISM
TASKFORCE
PO Box, Station A
Surrey, BC V3S 4P5

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund



What follows here are excerpts from an extensive and interesting report by Dr. Diny van Bruggen, who is medical director in South East Asia for ZOA, an organization set up by people of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, our sister churches, with which CRWRF cooperates.

More information can be found in the previous issue of Clarion.

Previous history

The population of Laos can be divided into two major groups, namely the Laotians, living mostly in the lowland areas, and several mountain tribes, of which the Hmong tribe is the largest.

In the early 1970s heavy warfare engulfed much of Southeast Asia. Many American military bases were situated high in the mountains of Laos and from these bases the bombings on Vietnam were prepared and executed. This could only be possible with the participation, in many ways, of the Hmong people. Already during this period then, the Hmong often had to flee. Thus, their lives as refugees started long before 1975.

When the communists took over Laos and Vietnam in 1975, the Hmong especially, had to flee for their lives. Thousands of Hmong people crossed the border into Thailand and were kept in refugee camps. In 1983 the total population of Hmong and lowland Laotian refugees were respectively 116,000 and 150,000 persons. Of these 53,000 Hmong and 22,000 Laotian refugees remained in Thailand in 1983. During the past few years, the Thai government has been trying, more and more, to close down these camps. Ban

Nam Yao camp (consisting of Yao mountain tribes) was closed at the beginning of 1984.

The Hmong people have a very strong culture. Clanship and hierarchy are very important; unfortunately many are illiterate. The Thai government has provided refuge for these people but does not allow them to stay permanently in Thailand. The only possibilities that remain, therefore, are: eventual resettlement in third countries, or, voluntary repatriation to Laos, an option many are naturally afraid to consider. In 1983 the number of Laotians resettled in the USA and France were 65,000 Hmong and 63,000 lowland Laotians. Numerous communication problems result from the vast cross-cultural differences. For this reason, others stayed in the camps with the hope of sometime returning to Laos. The UN is supervising the return to Laos. Unfortunately only very small numbers of people could repatriate to Laos (540 Hmong and 1,600 Laotians). Resettlement in South American countries was tried, but without much success. A very small group of people resettled in French Guyana.

Ban Vinai consists of 43,000 persons, mostly Hmong refugees, but after the closing of Ban Nam Yao, also Yao refugees. The people in Ban Vinai have been fully dependent on outside help for more than nine years. Thus, the well-known and much feared "dependency syndrome" has developed. The programs in the camp, therefore, are more and more being focused on self-help. Much attention is paid to training, education, and cross-cultural communication.

There are still many bottle-necks in the current program. In the past few years the Ban Vinai people have become accustomed to highly developed Western medical care. They have lost elements of their own culture and yet are not prepared for another one. Their future is still uncertain although many originally thought that resettlement to third countries would be the easy solution. Ban Vinai is too small to house 40-50,000 people; freedom and space for some agricultural projects are not available and economic improvement is not permitted. The Thai government only allows the Lao/Hmong to survive *inside* the refugee camps in Thailand.

Medical care in Ban Vinai

Until 1982, World Vision was responsible for the entire medical program in the camp. From then on they gradually turned over their responsibilities to the Christian Medical Team (CMT). The CMT is a consortium of six Christian organizations of which the Dutch ZOA Refugee Care is a member. More responsibilities were taken over by the CMT in 1983. Ongoing programs were continued with much emphasis on medical training, education and cross-cultural communication. More and more the medical work was handed over to the Hmong nurses and medics ("bare-foot doctors"). In 1984 the CMT requested ZOA to take over the program. Therefore on June 1, 1984 ZOA accepted the responsibility for a major part of the medical program. (World Vision is considering total withdrawal by the end of 1984.)

The hospital in Ban Vinai consists of 90 beds, divided into three wards, with an



This view of Ban Vinai shows the hospital buildings in the foreground: Out-patient building, pediatric ward, adult ward, lab and pharmacy — all funded by ZOA

obstetric ward. An X-ray room, laboratory and pharmacy are also on the hospital grounds. The Out-Patient Department (OPD) checks about 300 persons every day, as well as smaller OPD units (TB clinic, pediatrics, etc.). The OPD work will more and more be divided among the six Public Health Centers in the camp. The aim is to hand over the responsibilities gradually to these centers in order to decentralize the work throughout the camp.

Hopefully in 1985 the most basic medical care and preventive health care will be provided by Hmong medics and nurses in these six centers. Expatriate medical staff will then supervise the work.

Problems in medical health care

According to Hmong thinking, evil and bad spirits play the most important role in the cause of sickness and disease. For this reason the shaman or witch doctor is first consulted when a person be-

comes sick. When no improvement is observed after the shaman's work, they turn to the Western medical science. Very often these cases are by then hopeless. More and more emphasis is being put on finding a suitable integration of Western and traditional medical care.

The vaccination programs have not had very much success up till now mainly due to fears, for example, if injections are administered during pregnancy, the people fear that their babies are being killed.

Through various methods, the workers try to take away these fears, but vaccinations are not yet accepted. For this reason many babies have been hospitalized for tetanus, several of whom have died and two years ago a severe outbreak of measles which resulted in deaths occurred. In November 1983, the Hmong leaders agreed to a mass vaccination campaign because of a diphtheria outbreak. Although they themselves set the example by being vaccinated, only twenty-

five percent of the refugee population in Ban Vinai followed their example.

The number of suicides is on the rise at this time. Suicides are easily performed because of the availability of medicines on the black market. This is clearly a sign of increased despair among the refugees in their hopeless situation. Gastroenteritis and pneumonia are frequent. Only a few have to be hospitalized for this.

The acceptance of antenatal and obstetric care is still minimal. Through the Public Health Centers, the workers are trying to establish a better relationship of trust. Also the midwife seeks more contact with traditional birth attendants.

Future plans

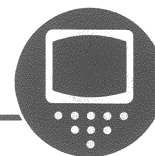
In a refugee situation it is difficult to know exactly how and where to direct your work and medical care. If the Hmong have to return to Laos, they will have to survive in very primitive circumstances. Basic medical care is needed in this case. On the other hand if they eventually do resettle in a third (Western) country, then the time has come for preparation for Western medical care and customs in order to reduce further cross-cultural problems. In consultation with the Hmong leaders, the following course is being followed: education and training programs are the highest priority. The goal of the major part of the health program is basic health care. The teaching is given in such a way that it is still acceptable for those that already have experience in Western medical care, and also for those that are going to resettle in a third country.

Gifts for the work of CRWRF may be directed to:

CRWRF
PO Box 793
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y3

All gifts are gladly received. Donations of \$10.00 or more will be issued a receipt for tax deductions.

PRESS RELEASE



Executive committee meeting of the Canadian Reformed Teachers' College Association, September 6, 1985.

After opening with prayer and Scripture reading the chairman, A.J. Hordijk, welcomes everyone present.

The treasurer's report is discussed. Our year ended with a deficit of \$6,093.81.

The Principal reports that there are

no problems, having just started the new season. He presents the meeting with the Course Allocations, Time Table as well as the overall School Calendar for the coming school year. The present student body consists of twenty-one students. The Diploma of Teaching (3 year) has seventeen students, while the Diploma of Education (1 year) has four students. He also notes that there are now fourteen graduates from the College and all are teaching in

Canadian Reformed Schools in various parts of the country.

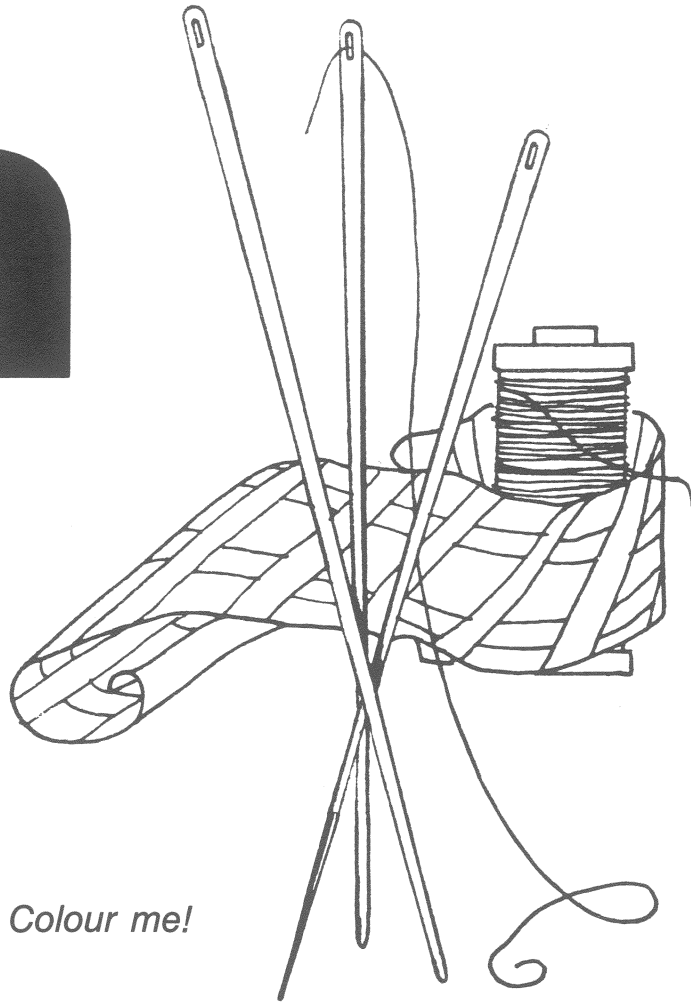
Mr. K. Brouwer is appointed as secretary since Mr. H. Nobel retired from this position. A word of appreciation for a job well done was addressed to Mr. Nobel.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 4, 1985 D.V. This meeting is adjourned after prayer.

For the executive,
C.J. NOBELS

ABC BIBLE COLLECTION - by Mrs. John Roza

Nn



N-Needles

(Luke 18:25)

Colour me!

Quiz Questions

1. Who was commanded by God to make an ark? _____ (Genesis 6)
2. Who was Ruth's mother-in-law? _____ (Ruth 1)
3. Jonah was commanded to go up and preach in this city. But instead fled to Tarshish. What is the name of this land? _____ (Jonah 3)
4. King Ahab of Samaria demanded this man's vineyard. But the man did not want to give it up, because it was his inheritance. Who is this man? _____ (I Kings 21)
5. Which town was home of Joseph and Mary of Jesus? _____ (Mark 1)

Answers for the letter "M"

1. Moses 2. Mary 3. Midian 4. Manna 5. Malta



Hello Busy Beavers,

What do you think of when you hear "THANKSGIVING DAY"?

Oh, it's a holiday!

And maybe you think of a horn of plenty, with lots of fruits and vegetables tumbling out.

Oh yes, and that makes us think of the Pilgrims!

Remember the feast they shared with the Indians?

Did you know the Israelites had a very special thanksgiving feast, too?

I think the children must have loved it!

They got to camp out!

Yes, it was the Feast of Booths.

After the harvest was gathered in, the fathers would make huts of sticks and leafy branches.

Families would live in these booths for the week of the feast.

What fun!

They would remember how the Israelites lived in booths in the desert for 40 years.

It was sure to make them feel thankful to the Lord for the harvest, for their homes and fields and for God's care for His children.

And that's why we celebrate Thanksgiving, too, right?

Quiz Time!

PUT AN END TO IT!

Can you finish these groups?

1. Shem, Ham and _____.
2. the Pharisees and the _____.
3. Matthew, Mark, Luke and _____.
4. Jonah and the _____.
5. gold, frankincense and _____.
6. David and _____.
7. Sodom and _____.
8. "he (John) did eat locusts and _____."
9. Ananias and _____.
10. "from Dan to _____."
11. "I am the Way, the Truth and _____."
12. "the excellency of Carmel and _____."

(Answers next time!)

Thank the Lord and come with praise;
Songs of jubilation raise
When the crop is gathered in
Ere the winter storms begin.

God, our Maker, will provide
For our wants to be supplied.
Let His people all confess
His unchanging faithfulness.

Picture by Busy Beaver Pearl Vandeburgt

