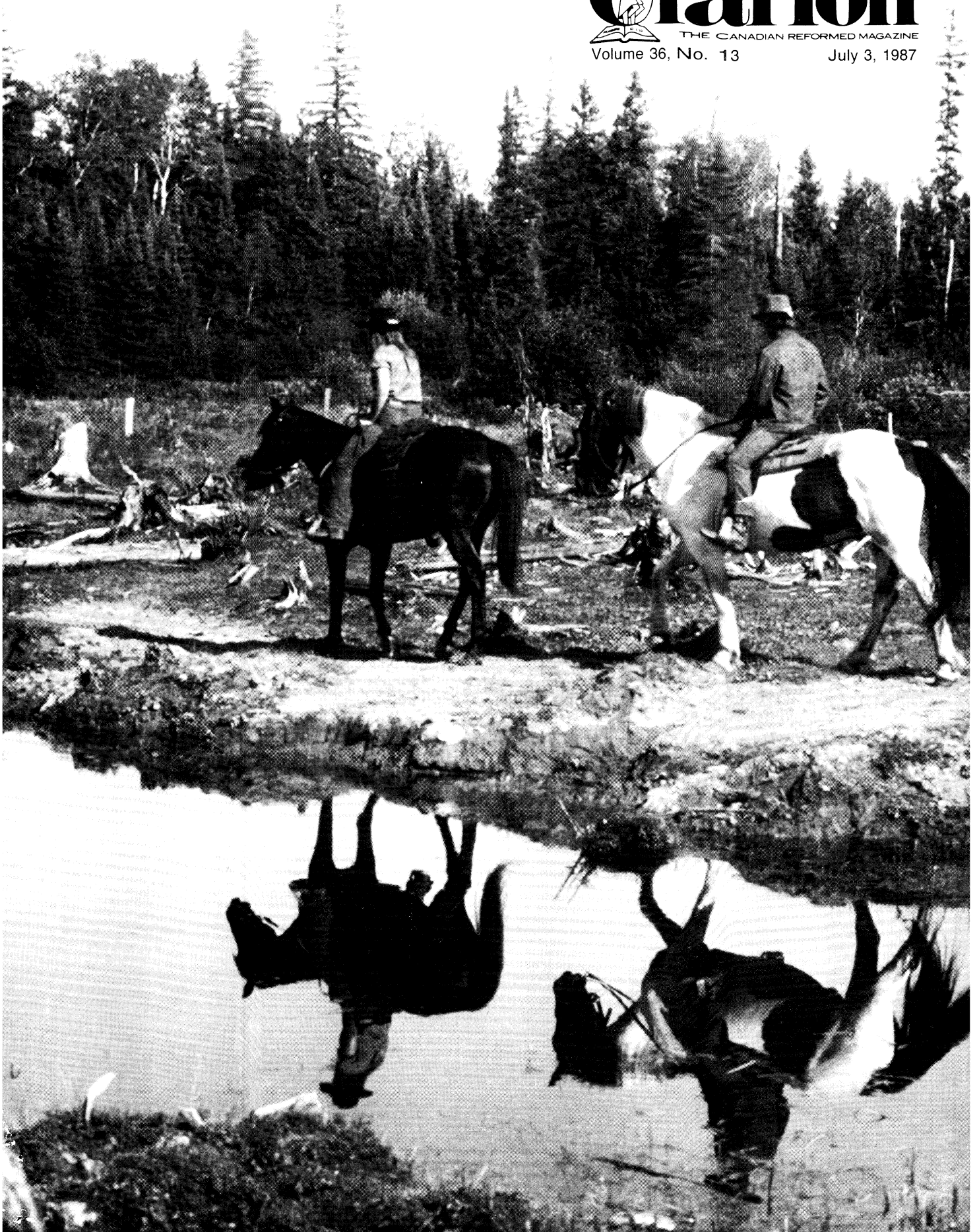
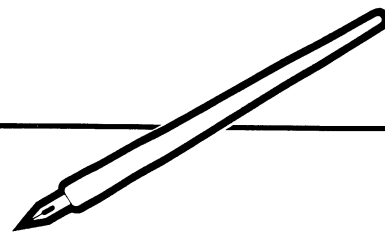


Clarion
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We pray for the mission among Jews . . . ’

In the March 20, 1987 issue of *Clarion*, the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene touched on the question of the origin of the prayer for mission among Jews, Moslems and heathen as found in the Prayer for the Needs of Christendom (*Book of Praise*, p. 643). This specific petition is a late addition (1930) to our present prayer, which dates from the sixteenth century. However the recentness of the incorporation of this supplication does not mean that the issue is a new one. It may be of interest to go back very briefly into the history of especially Reformed mission among the Jews so that we can place this petition within its proper historical framework.

The first converts to faith in Jesus the Christ were Jews and the first proclamation of the gospel had to be to this people (Acts 1:8). The first centuries after Christ's ascension saw much work by Christians to convince the physical seed of Abraham of the truth of the gospel. In the Clementine liturgy (third century) the congregational prayer for the needs of Christendom included also prayer for the Jews.

From the fifth century up to the time of the Reformation, there was very little desire to convince Jews that the Messiah promised in the Old Testament had come in Jesus Christ. Indeed, throughout this period, Jews were often bitterly persecuted, and chased from one country in Europe to another. Such persecutions were frequently justified by all types of outrageous accusations; for example, the Black Plague, which swept through Europe in 1348-49 and claimed millions of lives, was blamed on the Jews.

With the coming of the Reformation, there was generally speaking a change for the better. Luther in his early years of reformation work urged kindness to the Jews, suggesting they could be won through friendship and instruction in the Scriptures. He also hoped to use Jewish knowledge of Hebrew for the translation of the Old Testament into German. But, as the years passed and converts were not forthcoming as he had hoped, his attitude to this people changed drastically, to the detriment of the Jews.

As far as Calvin is concerned, in writing of the Jews' unbelief he also wrote: "Yet, despite the great obstinacy with which they continue to wage war against the gospel, we must not despise them, while we consider that, for the sake of the promise, God's blessing still rests among them. For the apostle indeed testifies that it will never be completely taken away: 'For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance' [Romans 11:29, vg.]" (*Institutes*, IV.xvi.14, Battles trans.). There is a letter by Calvin in which we find a remarkable debate between Calvin and a Jew. In this dialogue, he answers Jewish objections to seeing the Christ as the Saviour by arguments from the Old Testament. This letter thus shows Calvin's interest

in this subject. Calvin's liturgical prayers contain the petition that "those who are still estranged from knowing Him [that is, Christ], being in shadows and captivity of error and ignorance, by the illumination of Thy Holy Spirit, and the preaching of Thy gospel, may be led back to the straight road of salvation." (F.L. Battles, trans. and ed., *The Piety of John Calvin* [1978], p. 121.) Such a prayer would include the Jews. Beza, Calvin's associate and successor is said to have prayed daily for their conversion.

In subsequent years it was especially in Calvinist Holland that the question of the Jews and the gospel needed to be faced since many persecuted Jews sought refuge and freedom in that country. Noteworthy is that when the French government protested in 1619 that it was improper for a Christian power as the Netherlands to receive the persecuted Jews so liberally by giving them legal rights, the Dutch replied: "If God the Lord still keeps this people alive in spite of all that it has suffered, then it is evident that He desires that we Christians also exercise patience and since they have to have a place to live somewhere, there is nothing un-Christian in giving them shelter in Holland." (Cited by H.A. Wiersinga, *Geschiedenis van de zending* [1959], p. 196). Around this time there was considerable discussion about bringing the gospel to the Jews. Different provincial synods tried to stimulate this work. For instance, the Provincial Synod of Zeeland decided (on October 9, 1618) with respect to unbelieving Jews in their province that "from now on capable means to bring these Jews to the Christian faith according to the promise of the apostle, Romans 11, will be sought." According to Wiersinga (p. 196) Synods of South Holland decided that simply praying for the Jews was not enough. Jews had to be invited to debates and Hebrew had to be studied. At the University of Leiden, a chair was established specifically with a view to the work of mission among the Jews. Throughout the seventeenth century much attention was paid to this subject. The method of confronting the Jew with the gospel was generally polemic in which debates were the favoured format.

During the eighteenth century there was little interest in this whole matter and it was not until the nineteenth century that this type of mission work was discussed again. The Synod of 's Hertogenbosch (1875) of the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk decided to appoint a special committee for mission among Jews ("Commissie voor de Zending onder Israel") whose initial task was to see if there was support for propagating the gospel among this people, and how it could best be done, (Acts, Art. 93). Apparently the support was there. Especially influential in the work itself was the Rev. Eliezer Kropveld, himself a convert from Judaism. After the Union of 1892 this work continued and in 1914 the Synod of the Hague decided that a special minister

should be called for his work. In 1916 the first such minister (Rev. Jac. van Nes) could be installed. Others followed.

Within this general context, the General Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in 1923 (Utrecht) received a proposal (from the committee charged with matters of liturgy in their report to synod) to include in the Prayer for All the Needs of Christendom, the words: "Bless all the work of mission among Jews, Moslems and heathens, also the work among those who still bear the name Christian but have strayed far from Thy truth." No decision was made about this point then or at the 1927 Synod, but the General Synod of Arnhem (1930) adopted a revised proposal. It was decided to add: "We pray for the work of mission among Jews, Moslems and heathen and for all the work of the gospel among those who still bear the name

of Christian but have strayed far from Thy truth," (Acts, Art. 166, cf., Rapport, p.3). This is essentially what is found in our present *Book of Praise*. This addition to a prayer which dates from the sixteenth century is therefore quite recent. However, the matter involved is not new, as the above has shown.

After the Liberation in 1944, neither our sister churches in the Netherlands nor we in the "new world" have been involved in this mission work in a special way. It would be wonderful if sometime in the future, as the Lord provides the opportunities, this could change. It would make the praying of this petition all the more meaningful to us.

C. VAN DAM

The saving work of the Holy Spirit in Calvin₂

4. Spirit and faith

Word and faith, or promise and faith, are correlative. Faith is our link to Christ, as He is offered by the Father, namely, clothed with His gospel. There is a permanent relationship between faith and the Word. If faith turns away from the Word, it falls. Take away the Word and no faith will then remain (III.2.6). Therefore, it is good after we have spoken of Spirit and Word, to deal with Spirit and faith.

Faith is according to Calvin the principal work of the Holy Spirit. When the Ephesians are said to have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (1:13), Paul shows the Spirit to be the inner teacher by whose effort the promise of salvation penetrates into our minds, a promise that would otherwise only strike the air or beat upon our ears. The Thessalonians had been chosen by God in sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth; therefore, faith itself has no other source than the Spirit (III.1.4; cf. III.2.34).

The Heidelberg Catechism shows the influence of Calvin also in this point that the Holy Spirit works faith in my heart by the gospel (Lord's Day 7), that by true faith He makes me share in Christ and all His benefits (Lord's Day 20), and that faith comes from the Holy Spirit who works it in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and strengthens it by the use of the sacraments (Lord's Day 25). Calvin's famous definition of faith reads as follows: "Faith is a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise

in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (III.2.7). The operation of the Holy Spirit with respect to faith is therefore twofold: it is an illumination and a sealing; an illumination of our minds and a sealing upon our hearts. It reminds us of the knowledge and the confidence in the definition of faith in the Heidelberg Catechism, but Calvin's description is more clear, for he brings the two elements into the one term *cognitio*. Faith is recognition of God's benevolence toward us. Calvin does not make scholastic distinctions between the essence of faith and the well-being of faith, and he certainly does not relegate the assurance only to the well-being of faith and not to its essence. He also does not know of the later distinction between refuge-seeking confidence and assured confidence. His definition, therefore, is important not only over against Roman Catholicism, with its concept of faith as mere intellectual assent, or faith as unformed faith, but also over against a pietist mentality found in Reformed circles later. For Calvin faith implies certainty (III.2.15). There is no right faith except when we dare with tranquil hearts to stand in God's sight.

Important for the entire significance and place of faith in the application of salvation is the fact that Calvin generally speaking follows the order of faith and regeneration, instead of regeneration and faith. The Belgic Confession is typically Calvinian when it states in Article 22 that the Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts a true faith, and then resumes this thought in Article 24: This true faith, worked in man by

the hearing of God's Word and by the operation of the Holy Spirit, regenerates him and makes him a new man. Abraham Kuyper and Louis Berkhof charged Calvin's representation with being rather subjective since it first stresses the human activity rather than the divine.⁹ But Calvin, averse from speculation, rightly emphasized the relation of God's promise in Christ and our faith, and by speaking about faith as wrought by the Holy Spirit, he did not fall into the trap of subjectivism.

5. The Spirit and Christ's benefits

By the secret energy of the Spirit we come to enjoy Christ and all His benefits. Christ was given to us by God's generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of Him we principally receive a double grace: being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, sanctified by Christ's Spirit, we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life. The double grace, therefore, is justification and sanctification or regeneration. (Calvin uses the term "regeneration" in the broad sense of sanctification or renewal through the Holy Spirit.) In the expression "double grace," Calvin again wards off one-sidedness. Justification and sanctification are distinct but cannot be separated. Speaking of the double grace of justification and sanctification in this order, Calvin stays clear from nomism or legalism on the one hand, and anti-nomianism or libertinism on the other. Legalism or nomism means

that the gospel is transformed into new law; it forgets that justification is through Christ alone, by grace alone, and by faith alone. Anti-nomianism or libertinism transforms the gospel into a message of lawlessness; it forgets that faith alone justifies but that the faith that justifies is never alone or by itself. Where righteousness of faith is, there is Christ, and where Christ is, there too is the Spirit of holiness who regenerates the soul to newness of life. Faith cannot lay hold of Christ for righteousness without the Spirit of sanctification.¹⁰

The Holy Spirit is the Author of faith and repentance. Our regeneration is by faith, and Calvin defines repentance as follows: "It is the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of him; and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the spirit" (III.3.5). The term "mortification" indicates that we must be violently slain by the sword of the Spirit and brought to nought.

Mortification and vivification happen to us by participation in Christ; we may partake in His death and resurrection. We will not now elaborate on what this means for our Christian life in self-denial, bearing of our cross, and meditation on the future life. Suffice it to say that the sole end of regeneration is to restore in us the image of God that had been disfigured and all but obliterated through Adam's transgression. Calvin quotes II Corinthians 3:18: "Now we, with unveiled face, beholding (or reflecting) the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness from glory to glory even as from the Spirit of the Lord."

Although Calvin himself speaks of the benefits of Christ as a double grace (justification and sanctification), it is not in conflict with his exposition of the work of the Spirit in the Church of God if we add a third benefit, the glorification. When, at the end of Book III, in chapter 25, Calvin deals with the resurrection, he again speaks in a Christological and pneumatological manner. Whenever we consider the resurrection, let Christ's image come before us. And whenever Calvin speaks of Christ's resurrection, he mentions the Holy Spirit as God's agent. In his commentary on Psalm 16:10, he writes: "We know that the grave of Christ was filled, and as it were embalmed, with the life-giving perfume of His Spirit that it might be to him the gate to immortal glory." In the *Institutes*, he quotes time and again Romans 8:11: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to our mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in us." God raised His Son from the dead not to make known a single example of His power, but to show toward



"For Calvin faith implies certainty"

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More details will follow.

us believers the same working of the Spirit. Christ was raised by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Quickener of us in common with Him (III.25.3). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of hope, the guarantee of our inheritance. The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of life also in the glorification of God's children.

Conclusion

We could have dealt with several other aspects but these may suffice. Calvin deserves Warfield's grand name of "the theologian of the Holy Spirit." Over against Roman Catholicism and spiritualism, he developed from the *filioque* the relations of Christ and Spirit and Word and Spirit. I, for one, regard his teaching timely over against formalism, institutionalism, or automatism on the one hand and neo-pentecostalism on the other hand. Let me end with one more quotation of Calvin. He rebukes the schoolmen who do not want to know of assurance of faith and assert that men should always be in doubt and never claim an undoubted knowledge of God's will. But Calvin asks: When we simply say with Paul: We have received . . . the Spirit that is from God by whose teaching we know the gifts bestowed on us by God (I Corinthians 2:12), how can they yelp against us without abusively assaulting the Holy Spirit? But they cry aloud that it is also great temerity on our part that we thus dare to glory in the Spirit of Christ. Calvin then quotes text upon text of Scripture to show that by faith we may glory in Christ's Spirit. Paul declares that those very ones who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Romans 8:14). And these men — the scholastics — would have it that those who are the children of God are moved by their own spirit, but empty of God's Spirit. Paul teaches that God is called Father by us by the bidding of the Spirit, who alone can witness to our Spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:16). Even though these men do not keep us from calling upon God, they withdraw the Spirit, by whose leading He ought to be duly called upon. Paul denies that those who are not moved by the Spirit of Christ are servants of Christ (cf. Romans 8:9). These men devise a Christianity that does not require the Spirit of Christ. Paul holds out no hope of blessed resurrection unless we feel the Spirit dwelling in us (Romans 8:11). These men invent a hope devoid of such a feeling (III.2.39). Without glorying in the presence of the Holy Spirit, Christianity does not stand.

J. FABER

⁹A. Kuyper, *Locus De Salute*, pp. 17ff; L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), p. 417.

¹⁰"Reply to Sadolet" in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, ed. J.K.S. Reid (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), p. 236.

Reformation and mission₁

“Minus the apostles?”

More than once it has been said by historians (and not only be adversaries of the Reformation but also by some who belong to Reformation circles) that it would be possible to write a complete history of Reformation times without even using the word *mission*. The Reformers, they say, did lot of good things in all respects, but they did not do anything concerning mission. The whole matter of mission was something done in Reformation times by the Roman Catholics, and the churches of the Reformation discovered the importance of mission no earlier than about a century later.

It is also said that actually *Pietism* awakened the call for the great commission to go out and to bring the gospel to the gentiles.

In Germany they used for that so-called lack of mission the word “Mission-slauheit” (lukewarmness regarding mission) and they apply that word to Luther and to Calvin as well.

Many of those writing concerning this matter have stated that the Reformers (and they apply that especially to Luther and Calvin) wrongly believed that the missionary mandate of Matthew was limited to and fulfilled in the apostolic era. Dr. J. Verkuyl writes in his book *Contemporary Missiology* for instance, “It is incomprehensible that the Reformers and their contemporaries did not relate Jesus’ promise in Matthew 28 to be present even to the end of the age to the fulfillment of their missionary task, but it is undeniably true.” In the circles of the ecumenical movement is even said, “Calvin made the most amazing mistake for an able man when he tried to reform the church by reconstructing it after the pattern of the apostolic age *minus* the apostles. The Spirit that has directed the history of the primitive church was wiser than Calvin” (E.J. Palmer on the Conference on “Faith and Order,” at Lausanne, 1927).

The conclusion is that the Reformers themselves did not encourage the sending out of missionaries or contribute to the theological study of our missionary task. The missionary consciousness had to wait until a later time and was initiated only with the coming of the so-called further Reformation and Pietism. “Then actual Protestant participation in world mission

and the theoretical reflection upon this activity really began” (Verkuyl, *ibid.*). But as far as the Reformers themselves are concerned, there is not to be found even a *latent* missionary zeal: there is a complete *vacuum* in this respect.

Complete vacuum?

What to say about these reproaches?

In the first place, it is unfair as well as scientifically inadmissible to summon the Reformers before the tribunal of a modern missiological concept, which has itself its historical limitations and its theological defects. In his dissertation, *Constrained by Jesus’ Love*, J. van den Berg points to this answer of especially some Lutheran authors, and he adds, “Too often indeed, missions have been identified with the ‘business of missions,’ with the organizational aspect of modern missionary life,” (p. 5). In the second place, when the Reformers give sometimes the impression that it was the special task of the apostles to proclaim the gospel to the gentiles, we have to consider that they said

that over against the “apostolic succession,” as if the Pope of Rome were the direct successor of the Apostle Peter. I give two quotations of Calvin’s Commentary on *Matthew 28:19 and 20* in this respect: “So we learn that the Apostolate is not an empty title of honour, but a responsible office; and that there is nothing more absurd not more intolerable than that false men should usurp the honour to themselves, live at ease as kings, and do away with their responsibility to teach.” And concerning the last verse of the gospel according to Matthew, “We must note that this is said not only to the apostles, for the Lord promises His aid not to one age alone, but to the end of the world. It is precisely as if He said that, whenever the ministers of the gospel are weak, and labour under the lack of everything, He would be the Guardian, so that they may come out victorious over all the world’s conflicts. Thus today clear experience teaches that Christ works in a hidden way, marvellously, and the gospel prevails over numerous obstacles. All the more intoler-



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able is the sin of the papal clergy, who make this a pretext for their sacrilegious tyranny. They claim that the church cannot err, being ruled by Christ, as if Christ, like a common soldier, hired Himself as mercenary to different leaders, and did not keep His authority firmly to Himself and declared that He would defend His doctrine, so that His ministers might confidently expect to be victorious over the whole world."

So this is to be said in the first place: that the Reformers stressed the unique place and task of the apostles and that they denied the claim of the Pope to be the successor of the apostles.

But there is more. He who reasons that there was a complete lack, a vacuum in respect of the idea of mission in the mind of the Reformers, is absolutely wrong. Let us start with the main Reformers, Luther and Calvin.

Luther over against Turks and Jews

We start with Luther, the first in chronological order. It is an evident fact that Luther placed himself also in missionary respect over against the Roman Catholics of his days. When Luther discovered the accent on *human* activities in Roman Catholic mission work, he stressed that mission work is in the first place the work of God Himself. Christ is the Head of the church, He leads her, He saves her, He sanctifies her, He purifies her, but He also increases her. He edifies and preserves His church and He uses for that purpose each and every member of the church. Luther says, "Jeder einzelne Christ ist dazu bestellt, dem anderen ein Christus zu werden." That means that all Christians have to be involved in the spreading of the good news of the gospel. Actually Luther here said important things in respect of what is called later on *home mission*, but this also has to do with mission as such.

Speaking about Acts 8 where it is described that the eunuch, a minister of Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, was converted and being baptized, Luther said he could not imagine that the eunuch would not have *propagated* the gospel of Jesus Christ in his native land.

As far as the Turks are concerned, it is well-known that Luther was very sharp over against them. But it is also known that Luther reproached the Pope in Rome that he had undertaken crusades against the Turks (or the Moslems) but that he did not bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to them? That would be the first mandate for the Pope, according to Luther: to let the Moslems hear the Gospel of our only Saviour Jesus Christ! Another example concerning the Turks: In Luther's time there were Christians made captives by the Turks in Eastern Europe. Then Luther

said: these captive Christians have the important task to bring these Turks who are Moslems in contact with Luther's Catechism. I ask, what else would that be if not mission work?

As far as the Jews are concerned, Luther mentions them often in one breath with the Turks, not as alien races, but as peoples who consciously deny Jesus Christ, who trust in their own human power and



who expect everything from their own merits. In the first years after the Reformation of the church, Luther had a benevolent attitude over against the Jews. He had the firm expectation that they would be converted to Jesus Christ, now that the gospel had been brought to light again. He regarded it as an evident fact that the Jews had not found the glory of the New Dispensation during the dominion of the Pope: "The papists behaved themselves in such a way that, being a Christian, one should rather become a Jew than the other way around. If I had been a Jew, I would have preferred to become a *pig* rather than a *Christian!*"

Luther was the first one who understood that the gospel had to be brought to the Jews, because this people in the first place has rights to Christ. In this way came into existence what is called Luther's mission book *That Christ is a born Jew*. He cooperated with Jewish scholars and

used their knowledge of the Hebrew language in order to understand the Jewish background the better. Luther discovered also that the Jews had come to their trade in money, to their practice of usury especially as a result of the attitude of many Christians who did not leave to them any possibility of life. But that, he hoped, would be changed: "All Israel will be saved." It was a bitter experience for Luther when he saw that things developed in a totally different way. He took offence at the Jewish mockery of the Messiah of the Christians, and when he heard that in Bohemia a number of Christians had become Jews, he wrote some very extreme statements against the Jews. "Ultimately," the Lutheran Dr. W.J. Kooiman says, "it was a kind of 'harsh mercy' and it was an attempt to save those who would be willing to be converted." These severe statements were regrettable and they caused much evil. But let us bear in mind that Luther was absolutely not an anti-semite. From Luther is also the prayer: "Oh God, heavenly Father, please turn aside and let Thy wrath be satisfied over them for the sake of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ. Amen." (cf. *Luther, Zijn weg en werk*, p. 171.)

Eschatology

More than once it has been said that Luther was so strongly convinced that Christ would come back very soon that there was no room in his theology for misology. It has also been said that Luther had the idea that it was not worthwhile any more to go out with the Gospel because of his eschatological ideas.

Indeed, Luther had the conviction that Christ's return on the clouds of heaven was not very far off. But it is absolutely wrong to derive from that fact that Luther had objections against mission work. Precisely in the tension of Christ's coming back, we have to fulfil our task. Luther often called the day of Christ's return the "sweet last day." But he said at the same time, "If I knew that Christ would come back tomorrow, I would still plant a tree today."

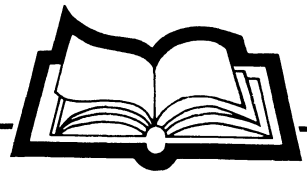
Conclusion concerning Luther

When we take account of the circumstances of Luther's times, of the struggle over against the papal clergy, also of the fact that there was a close connection between church and state and that it was almost impossible to go abroad with the Gospel, our conclusion must be that it is totally wrong to say that Luther did not see anything of the mission task of the church.

OUR COVER

Horseback riding on the Prairies
Photo courtesy of Travel Manitoba

K. DEDDENS



"Is the Spirit of the LORD impatient?" Micah 2:7b

"... for the LORD will execute His sentence upon the earth with rigour and dispatch." Romans 9:28

Divine Impatience

We might question what is really wrong with the judgment concerning the Spirit of God made by the critics of Micah's preaching. These critics maintained that the Spirit of the LORD is absolutely patient, and therefore would never act rashly. Consequently, Micah's announcement of coming ruin and bitter lamentation had to be taken with a grain of salt. Judgment would not come that quickly from the LORD's presence. And wouldn't we easily say the same thing? Who dares attribute impatience to the LORD and His Spirit?

Like many false prophecies, this view also had a ring of truth to it; but it was no more than a half-truth. Certainly the Spirit of the LORD is never impatient, and never acts rashly with a reactionary and defensive spirit. The Lord is always in full control of His actions, is never affected in such a way that He is forced to act impulsively, and always remains in full control of the situation.

However, this does not mean that within the context of His covenant with man, the LORD does not deal with us honestly and fairly, according to previously established terms. And in the covenant, the LORD is more often pictured in Scripture as one who became impatient and indignant with the suffering of His people. That divine indignation is found when, after having punished His people by means of a foreign power as His instrument, the LORD becomes indignant concerning the oppression of the remnant that repent in suffering, and return to Him. For example, Judges 10:16 says that the LORD became indignant over the misery of His people. Literally it says that He became impatient with their lot, and sought out to deliver them.

We find the same in Isaiah 10:22, 23, a passage later quoted by Paul in Romans 9:28. Assyria is the rod of the LORD's indignation upon Israel, but He also becomes indignant because of their cruelty to Israel. Therefore, He announces an imminent judgment upon Assyria, so that the remnant of Israel may be saved, as He says, "Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness!" Isaiah 10:22. And Paul applies this to the church of the latter days. In the work of Christ, unbelieving Israel, Israel according to the flesh, is cut off, and only a remnant is saved — later blossoming to the large tree of the new Israel, composed of Jews and Gentiles alike.

This shows that the LORD is not a distant and disinterested God in heaven, a God who does not act on the basis of His covenant. He makes haste to save His own! To be sure, the Spirit of the LORD is not impatient in a human

sense. Yet the Spirit came and comes in haste, in answer to the cry of the church! And with all the saints and angels in heaven He longs for the final revelation of glory and the final vindication of God's elect. He comes with rigour and dispatch to answer the cry of those who in their persecution and distress turn to God in repentance and faith. When the LORD sees repentance in the covenant, He also repents of the evil that He lays upon His children, and softens it in order to bring the repentant to salvation.

So there is a sense in which we may say that the Spirit of the LORD is impatient! He longed to come upon the church at Pentecost. And just as the Lord Jesus prayed for the coming of the Holy Spirit, Luke 3:21, so we also find the church praying for the coming of the Spirit, Acts 1:14. And as the church prayed for His first coming, so we still are called to pray unceasingly for the final completion of the Spirit's work.

This brings a divinely appointed "tension" in all true Christian prayer. Without this "tension" prayer would become a cold and detached exercise of duty. On the one we pray for the revelation of perfect patience, and that the LORD might so delay His judgment that all will not be destroyed, cf. Amos 7:2ff. For who can stand before the terrible wrath of God? On the other hand, we pray for the vindication of the church, so that the chosen people of God may not fall into the hands of wicked and lawless men, and so all right and truth vanish from the earth. And we pray in the sure knowledge of the "impatient" Spirit! As Jesus says: "And will not God vindicate His elect who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? I tell you, He will vindicate them speedily," Luke 18:7, 8.

So we ask for what is impossible among men. We ask for a perfectly patient impatience to be revealed, all in its appointed time. And this prayer will be answered, if only we are faithful! For God will fulfill the terms of His covenant. His word cannot be broken! And then His perfect justice and mercy will be revealed. His perfect patience with the weak and erring will be revealed, as well as His swift and sure defense of those who suffer under the yoke of obstinate hatred and rebellion against Him. The whole creation groans and languishes in tremors of impatience! It longs for the glorious revelation of the sons of God! He comes to judge the peoples in truth and equity! Then what we now share in firstfruits will be given to us in fullness, and with the Father and the Son, the Spirit will also be all and in all!

J. DE JONG

Dutch Synod makes important decisions regarding Theological College

The Synod of *De Gereformeerde Kerken* (Vrijgemaakt), the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands has recently met in the picturesque Dutch fishing town of Spakenburg. On its agenda were various items regarding the "Theologische Hogeschool," the Theological Seminary of these churches, located at Kampen.

It was clear from the start that this particular Synod would have to make important decisions regarding the Seminary which has played such a prominent role in the life of the Reformed Churches. Four new professors and lecturers had to be appointed to replace those who had passed away or were retiring.

The Synod could finalize three appointments already in the first week of meetings. In the vacancy of Professor J. Kamphuis, the Synod appointed his son, Drs. B. Kamphuis, who has been in the ministry since 1980. Drs. Kamphuis will be professor of dogmatics and symbolics (church doctrine and creeds). He passed his doctoral examination *cum laude* in 1986.



Drs. G. Kwakkel

His father, professor J. Kamphuis, was appointed in 1958, by the Synod of Spakenburg-Bunschoten, and first taught General and Dutch Church History. In 1979



Drs. B. Kamphuis

he took over the department of dogmatics and symbolics which has now been given to his son.

Semitic languages

It is never easy to find an accomplished teacher in the Semitic languages. By these languages we mean the languages of the Old Testament (Hebrew and Aramaic) as well as related languages (Babylonian, Syrian, Arabic, etc.). For many years this department was taken in by the very learned and talented Prof. Drs. J.P. Lettinga, who was known as a respected scholar far beyond the borders of the Netherlands. Prof. Lettinga has taught many generations of students who will never forget his enthusiastic style.

In his place the Synod appointed Drs. G. Kwakkel, minister of the Church at Beverwijk, the Netherlands, since 1985. Kwakkel will not receive the title of "professor"

but will be called *universitair docent*.

A third appointment was made in connection with the department of missiology. These subjects were taught by Drs. M.K. Drost, an ex-missionary, who passed away in 1986. His place will be taken in by Drs. C.J. Haak, who has been a missionary since 1975 in Indonesia (Irian Jaya) and is presently director of the Intermediate Theological School of Bomakia, Indonesia. Drs. Haak will be teaching missiology, science of religions and evangelistics. This part-time function has now become a full-time task.

The Synod also appointed some part-time lecturers in department of diaconology to assist in the teaching of homiletics (preaching) and poimenics (pastoral work).

Name change

The *Theologische Hogeschool* (which literally means so much as "theological high school" but should be translated as "college" or "seminary") has been renamed as "*Theological University*." This decision was taken because the Dutch government had changed the name of all publicly funded colleges also to "universities," and the Synod did not wish the scientific reputation of the College to fall under any suspicion.

There was much discussion on this point. The Board of Governors wanted to wait with a name change until 1990, after having first investigated the "legal consequences" of such a change. Would it affect the status of the college in any way? The Governors felt that "Kampen's reputation" was excellent in Holland and elsewhere.

Students from all over the world come to study at the Theological College, now University, of the Reformed Churches Liberated in the Netherlands.

CL. STAM



Recently we received a visit from a brother whom we had not seen for quite a while. We came to talk about the news medley. He said, with a glint in his eye, "A bunch of mischief." We had a good laugh about that.

Then there came a letter from another brother, who wrote, among other things, "Someone asked me, "Does Rev. VanOene take the Church Order with him into heaven?" "

To mention a third case: A brother thought that I had made a wrong statement in a letter, and in his reply he wrote, "You like to criticize."

Do I like to criticize?

Not at all. I would love to pass on to you all sorts of pieces of information about which we all could be very happy and for which we could be thankful. It certainly is not so that I scan the bulletins in the hope of finding something wrong about which I can say something.

What about the Church Order? Is that something like a pet-project or a concealed idol which I worship? We certainly won't take it with us into heaven, but as long as I am on this earth, I will have to point out how it should be observed and kept and I will continue to point out when the agreement is violated or when I see wrong things and wrong trends in the Churches. Hereby I stick mostly to my own "field."

It is for the sake of the Churches that I point it out. If I am wrong, tell me and prove it, and I'll correct it. But whenever I see danger for the Churches, I shall continue to warn against it.

When the Churches appointed me to teach also Church Polity at the College, I saw this more as a proof of trust than as an acknowledgment of vast knowledge. This trust I still should not put to shame. The fact that I have retired from this position does not make one grain of difference.

I could cry when seeing that all the work sometimes bears or seems to bear so little fruit. When I still read, "Classis continued to meet," I am wondering whether the essence of the teaching has been grasped.

The same is the case when I read that a minister was going to deliver a speech on "The Canadian Reformed Church — Her Basis, History, and Perspective." What kind of an oddity is that, "The Canadian Reformed Church"? I have never heard of it. I do happen to know that the name has been, right from the very beginning, "Canadian Reformed ChurchES."

What I am so afraid of is not the terms as such. A wrong term could slip in any time in the work of all of us. What I am more scared of is the theory which hides behind the terms.

Mind you, in the *Orange Courier*, I read that the project for 1987 was to be "The History of the Canadian Reformed Church in Western Canada." An explanation was added: "This may appear to be a very broad subject to cover and the title is rather lofty sounding. In reality the title means that we will contrast then — 35 years ago — and now in regard to church, school and home life in the Fraser Valley with all the grades of children; while there will be more actual history of the formation of the Canadian Reformed Church taught in the higher grades."

Poor children who are taught a too "lofty-sounding" subject such as the history of the Canadian Reformed "Church," whatever that may be.

Speaking about schools anyway, I would love to pass on what Mr. J.G. Van Dooren wrote in the periodical of the Fergus/Guelph Schools.

"The number of ads for teacher seems again to outstrip the supply available. What causes this yearly crisis? One

reason is that teachers are always leaving the system due to marriage, retirement and selection of another career. Secondly, it is difficult to attract new teachers into the system. Our Teachers' College is able to prepare on average about 6 new teachers per year. However, most of them are female who may leave the system after a few years. The greatest need is for high school teachers. Yet it appears that not many young people are willing to put in four or five years of university to enter a profession of high stress and lower wages. Other alternatives seem more attractive for most of our university graduates."

In this connection it is good to quote from the Watford bulletin. From the schoolboard report we quote, "A special ad hoc committee was set up to study why some career teachers leave the profession. There is an ongoing problem with teachers leaving the profession after a number of years."

Personally I have great respect for our teachers. I don't think I could do it: standing in front of the classroom and teaching so many subjects, keeping order and then, after having come home, having to correct so many papers, exams, essays, and having to prepare for next day's lessons. It requires special gifts and special dedication to do this work.

I wonder, however, whether the qualification "lower wages" still applies. One can always find positions which "pay more," but when I divide the total amount which the budgets show for wages and benefits by the total number of teachers at that particular school, I am convinced that our people reward their teachers amply for their work and that our teachers certainly are not to be counted among the category of people who are grossly underpaid.

The above paragraph does not necessarily apply to what we read in Mr. VanDooren's little piece. He most likely means "lower" when compared to what they could make in another profession.

It has to be borne in mind that the moneys have to be brought together by the members who, generally speaking, belong to those meant in I Corinthians: not many noble, not many rich, not many mighty.

I also think that the ministers with their seven or eight years of university study also could find positions which yield more in financial respect, but I am equally convinced that our people, generally speaking, take very good care of their ministers of the Word.

Continuing about schools for a moment, we mentioned the Watford bulletin already. One more item from it.

"The secretary then reads a short report of the meeting held between the Watford School Board and the London School Board. The London Board initiated this meeting in order to propose a merging of the two schools. A proposal was discussed and some ideas brought forth. Both Boards will do some more homework on it and find out the pros and cons of the proposal."

We are not away from the school-topic altogether yet.

Chatham's Consistory report gives the following information.

"The consistory received a request from a brother of the congregation that the consistory only nominate for the office of elders and deacons brothers who are a member of the Canadian Reformed School Society of Chatham. With regards to this matter the consistory decided to maintain the decision taken in April 1983, contained in a letter of reply to the same brother on April 23, 1983. According to this decision the consistory may nominate brothers who, although wholeheartedly supporting

the cause of Canadian Reformed education, yet are not members although ideally this membership should be a 100% in the congregation.”

I am very happy that the consistory did not let itself be pushed into a corner which, basically, is sectarian, and would add another requirement for office to those which are given in the Word of our God. Once you start adding all sorts of requirements, there is no end to it. The one time it is school-membership, the other time it is television, a third time there comes membership in a Canadian Reformed political party, and so on.

Personally, when voting, I shall let all aspects count and determine my vote in accordance with one's stand towards an education which is in full harmony with what I have subscribed to in the Church. All things being equal, I shall give my support to the brother who is a member of the School Society. But why push things to the limit and why try to evoke a statement from a consistory? Would that help the cause for which we stand in any way? It tends to push brothers away and to bring alienation.

Besides, we have seen it that brothers who were so extreme in their statements, who called everything else false, who travelled far and near to promote their — indeed, *their* — cause, left the Reformed track, broke with the Church, and landed on the shores of sectarianism and anabaptist errors.

Everyone who knows a little of Church history can bring examples galore to the fore. The older ones among us will know the names of those who were fanatic in the days of the Liberation, and who left, forsaking the course which was in accordance with the will of the Lord.

It is for the same reason also that I deplore the fact that in our Netherlands sister Churches that miserable thing called an “Open Brief” is being sort of revived and becomes again the focus of attention after more than twenty years.

I deplore this also for this reason, that hereby that miscreation receives a negative-confessional status, something which it deserves least of all things. The very best thing you can do with a rambling document as the above one is, that you leave it in limbo, for it will never be so purified in the purgatory that it becomes usable, neither positively — “this is how it should be” — nor negatively — “this is how it should not be.”

Let's go to good old Fergus.

The Grand River has again broken its icy shackles and is flowing peaceably and happily down the narrow road between the rocks.

Was this one of the reasons why the Home Mission Committee decided: “We thought of having a barbecue in appreciation for all volunteers, hostesses, speakers and coordinators of the Old Age Homes”? Anyway, it looks like a nice gesture, and this is done then by people who don't get paid either for what they have been doing!

That the work is appreciated becomes evident from the following as well.

“A Certificate of Appreciation was presented to the Maranatha Home Mission Group from the Caressant Care Home, which will be displayed in the church lobby.”

As is the case with more Churches, so the one in Fergus is struggling with an increasingly urgent need for expansion in one way or another.

“The consistory looked into acceptable measures to correct the crowded conditions in the church building. The consistory encourages institution in the Elora, Salem, area, rather than splitting the congregation into two wards.”

As for this Elora and surroundings development, in the same bulletin there was a convocation for a meeting in Elora. A meeting was held. “The gathering of about 40 people from the Elora, Salem, Alma and Fergus area in the basement of the St. John's Anglican Church was unanimous in agreeing on the principle of establishing a Canadian Reformed Church in Elora.”

A committee was appointed to investigate all the aspects and to come with more definite particulars.

For the information of our readers who are unfamiliar with the conditions there we may mention that Elora is approximately five kilometers from Fergus, that Salem and Elora are practically one village, and that Alma is about five kilometers from Elora. Doesn't tell you much, but something anyway.

A last item from the Fergus bulletin: “It might be of interest to note that the consistory of the church at Orangeville has in principle agreed with the request to institute a church in the Grand Valley area.”

The bulletin of Burlington West speaks of this as well.

“Orangeville will approach Classis with regard to the institution of a new congregation in Grand Valley. It is expected to be a Church of about 130 members.”

Burlington West's Consistory also received word that the Church at Laurel MD had been received into the federation.

“Council is thankful that this Church wished to join the federation of Churches and could be received, but it objects to the procedure followed by Classis South, because it was deliberately done without asking the concurring advice of Deputies of Regional Synod contrary to the decision of General Synod 1986.”

Our readers know that Burlington West is mistaken here when speaking of a decision of General Synod 1986. Our readers also know that the sweeping statement of Synod 1986 appears to have no basis. Our readers also know that my criticism of the relevant procedure in Ontario South is far more serious and comprehensive than the objection of Burlington West.

Apparently the deputies ad Art.48 C.O. had no input; otherwise they could have shown the correct way and saved the brothers in South great embarrassment.

I wonder what kind of church polity they are introducing in South. When reading the press release of the classis of March 25 and following, I had to rub my eyes a few times to make sure that I read correctly.

Let me repeat the relevant sentence.

“Classis decides to add to the decision to ask for advice rather than concurring advice the following grounds. . .”

What kind of nonsense is that, deciding to ask for advice but not for concurring advice?

We never ask for “concurring advice,” but we always ask for advice, in the hope that the ones whom we ask will concur with our own judgment.

In our Church Order we do not say that we shall “ask for concurring advice.” We only state that in specific cases we shall not proceed with the action without the advice of either Classis or regional-synodical deputies.

In a previous issue I did mention the asking for advice. Is it not clear that, when providing that certain things shall not be done “without the advice of Classis,” the obvious meaning is: without the concurring advice of Classis?

Perhaps it is superfluous, but let me repeat it: we ask for advice; if the advice is favourable and concurring, we may proceed; if the advice is negative and is contrary to what we were intending to do, we are not allowed to proceed.

Simple like that.

What is not so simple is the solution which Burlington West sees for the “problem” of the large size of the congregation.

The brethren decided unanimously:

“a. to aim at calling a second minister for the Church at ‘West’ by May 1988, if the membership continues to grow.

“b. to have the two ministers share the work in the one congregation as equally as possible, without setting definite borderlines but if there are six wards, each minister will be responsible for three wards, one service per Sunday, and half of the catechism classes, etc.

"c. to alleviate in the meantime the work of the minister by having him preach in one service every Sunday from now on and allowing an exchange or inviting 'guestpreachers' for the other service."

"West" appears to be going in the same line which was followed in the Burlington Church before the split between East and West. Then, too, it started with the calling of a second minister, and the result was two autonomous Churches. Hopefully it goes in the same direction now.

It will be a very welcome gesture that the minister is relieved of having to prepare two sermons every week. When there are close to seven hundred members, it is well-nigh impossible to attend to all things that need the attention besides the work required for two sermons every Sunday. The work itself is not the most difficult aspect; that is the tension which it brings because of the responsibility which is felt by every one who takes the work seriously.

There are still members who (seem to) think that preparing a sermon becomes a matter of routine and that it doesn't take all that much study and effort any more as one gets older. I am very happy to see that the brothers in Burlington West think differently.

In the sister-Church in East, the Ebenezer Church, "The matter of the collection at the table (the Lord's table, VO) is discussed. Council considers that it cannot be proven from the Scriptures that a collection must be taken at the table. Also, a collection for the needy is taken later in the service, which means a duplication of the collection for the needy taken at the table. With the above considerations, council decides to discontinue the collection at the table."

Burlington South received a report from the "Boundary Committee." O those boundaries and the problems they cause!

"This committee has met with representatives from the other two churches in Burlington. The future location of our church building was of some concern if any concrete proposals regarding boundary changes are to be considered in the future. Consequently the building and property committee has been asked to look more closely at possible sites and report back to the consistory in the near future."

I almost forgot to mention that in Burlington West "The Committee of Administration reports that our organ needs repairs and renovations (console) which are costly" The result was that an Organ Fund has been established. Donations welcome.

A last item from Ontario.

Rev. Wieske informs us in the bulletin that "In order to prevent us from meeting yet another day, some agenda items were not dealt with. (at Classis, VO) The various churches which submitted them were asked to re-submit them at the following Classis."

Frankly, I do not understand how the servants (classis) have the nerve to tell the masters (Churches): "We don't feel like meeting another day, so you had better come with your submissions to the next Classis."

It is my sincere wish that I may be mistaken, but here and there I see symptoms which make me fear that some hierarchical trend is creeping in and that sometimes a Classis acts as if it were a super-consistory. Perhaps we'll pay some more attention to this point in the near future.

Up to the Bulkley Valley.

In Houston "The Ladies' Aid has made an offer to contribute \$ 500.00 towards the purchase of a photocopier to be used for Church business and Church-related activities. A suitable photocopier would cost about \$ 1,250.00. Though the offer is greatly appreciated, the consistory was hesitant to simply take the difference out of the general funds at this point."

From Smithers comes the news that "Council is notified that br. D. Boersema has accepted the post of Mission Aid

worker from April 1st - August 31st."

We are thankful that the work of the Indian Ministry is continued in some form. Many asked how things would go now that the Rev. Van Spronsen has left the area. We would hate to see the work discontinued for lack of workers. Although August 31 will be there almost before we are aware of it, there is some time to look for someone who can take over.

We had a long journey through Canada, didn't we!
Let's travel on a little and visit Australia.

By now it will be common knowledge that Dr. S.G. Hur of Kelmscott is going to Korea to take up the post of professor of Church History at the Seminary in Busan. He will leave Australia by the end of August, to start lecturing in September. This time it is practically certain that he will receive permission to move to Korea.

In the meantime, the decision has been made to split the Kelmscott Church into two autonomous Churches by January 1, 1988. "The Consistory proposes that the new congregation be called 'Armada-North'."

The splitting of the Kelmscott Church has consequences for the Dutch services as well. It may be known that every Sunday afternoon, simultaneously with the regular English service, there is a Dutch service in the Gong building.

Armada received "from the Church of Kelmscott: proposal to reduce the number of Dutch services to two per month, as of June 30. It is decided not to agree with this proposal. Before any decision is made the views of the congregation will be heard at the next congregational meeting."

"The background to this proposal," we learn, "is the intended splitting of the Kelmscott congregation. One of the new congregations will not be involved with the Dutch services from Jan. 1, 1988 on, and the other, the 'new ward,' foresees difficulties, with a small number of office-bearers, in being able to continue with the present arrangement."

The Armada consistory decided in principle to a reduction to two services per month, starting January 1988. First, however, the input of the congregation will be asked.

The minister whom the Albany Church called for the work in Papua New Guinea declined the call. An Armada couple, brother and sister Buist, worked there for some months, and now the Rev. and Mrs. Bruning have again left for that field for as long as they can get permission.

Retired ministers sometimes come in handy, don't they?

We wish our brother and sister much strength, wisdom, and perseverance, as well as much fruit upon their work there. We heard them talk about it when we were "down under," and saw and heard their enthusiasm. May soon someone be found to take over on a more permanent basis.

Byford is still waiting for the final approval for Rev. Bouwman and family to immigrate into Australia. It will have no connection to this at all that it was decided that there shall be "no smoking in the building." "The committee of management will be asked to advise users of the building. A few discrete non-smoking signs should be placed to remind users of the rules."

Alas, sometimes these signs have to be not-so-discrete!

The Adults Association mentions that "the printing of a regular 'Youth Magazine' is advancing slowly but surely. The booklet form is to contain 3 or 4 different topics and perhaps also a story and puzzle. It is proposed to have 10 or 11 copies per year which may be kept in a folder for more lasting benefit."

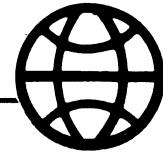
For today we are at the end of the news.

We should not monopolize the space available in *Clarion*, should we?

With kindest regards and greetings we leave you till next time.

Affectionately yours

VO



WASHINGTON (RNS)

In a new papal encyclical, Pope John Paul II has called on all Christians to look to "our common Mother," the Virgin Mary, as a way of bringing about unity between the divided churches of the world.

The encyclical and the style in which it was presented, was described by an ecumenical leader as a major attempt to forge common ground with Protestants and Orthodox Christians on a divisive question.

Titled "Redemptoris Mater" (Mother of the Redeemer), the encyclical describes Mary as the primary model of faith in and obedience to God and as central to the mystery of Christ and salvation. (CN)

There is no common ground with anyone who deprives Christ of His honour as the only and all-sufficient Redeemer, who is jealous of His honour and place. Lord's Day 11 of our Heidelberg Catechism is still very much up-to-date.

GERMISTON, SOUTH AFRICA

Unanimously elected by the church council, Mr. Joseph Oudshoring (76) has become the first coloured (mixed blood) elder in the predominantly white Dutch Reformed Church (NGK) here. He is the first coloured elder to serve in a white NGK congregation since the synod opened the church's door to all races in October 1986. (RES NE)

ATHENS

Despite strong opposition by the church, including pressure from Emilio Castro, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, the Greek parliament passed a bill under which the government will acquire 130,000 hectares of land from the Greek Orthodox Church and transfer them to farmers' cooperatives. Premier Papandreu maintains that he wishes to distribute the land among poor farmers, but the church's leadership accuses him of favouring his own followers. As a concession the government withdrew the proposed legislation that would have allowed it to have a voice in appointing members of local church councils. Since 1850 the Greek Orthodox Church has been an independent body. (RES NE)

BLOOMINGTON, ILL.-MNS

The first registered Christian bookstore in Eastern Europe will open soon in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, a breakthrough credited to the efforts of Branko Lovrec, a medical doctor and Christian publisher. Ethel Arter, executive assistant of Media Associates International/Evangelical Literature Overseas, says the store fulfils one of Dr. Lovrec's dreams.

Zagreb, the second largest city in Yugoslavia, will host the university games this summer. Lovrec hopes to open the bookstore in time for the thousands of students expected to attend the event. (RES NE)

GENEVA

In his December 1986 newsletter, Raymond Fung, evangelism secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), openly ponders the lack of interest in evangelism in the WCC. Defining evangelism as "communication of the Christian faith so that others may move from no faith or nominal faith or other faiths to faith in Jesus Christ," he finds it puzzling that evangelism does not appear high on the WCC agenda. In his work as evangelism secretary he receives tremendous support from WCC colleagues and churches, but this, he says, is not reflected in the overall agenda of the WCC. He suggests that a major factor is the WCC churches' low evangelism expectation from the WCC. The churches themselves are interested in evangelism, but they do not see that as part of the ongoing business of the WCC as an organization. (RES NE)

Perhaps the following will give Mr. Fung a clue.

AMERSFOORT

Evangelism used to be considered witnessing to unbelievers about Jesus Christ in an effort to bring them to faith in Him. Thus evangelism was perceived to be forty years ago.

In the forty years that have passed the focus has greatly changed. Today the vertical emphasis on conversion has been replaced by the horizontal accent on talking with others about crucial social needs: the elusive goal for peace, the effort to erase discrimination and to prevent poisoning the environment and thus to promote the kingdom of the resurrected and ascended Lord.

A questionnaire about the goal of evangelism sent out last year revealed that many no longer believe that evangelism is primarily the winning of souls for the church or "converting people." Instead the emphasis has shifted to listening to people and helping them. The answers also revealed that, despite the emphasis of the Center for Evangelism on the social and political implications of the gospel, many congregations still hold traditional notions about evangelism. (RES NE)

Evangelism is neither "winning souls for the church," nor "converting people" but the proclamation of the kingship of Christ and the call to all and everyone to submit to Him, thus to flee from the coming wrath.

COLUMBUS, OHIO (RNS)

Pouring wine from three glass beakers into a common silver chalice, heads of three Lutheran bodies dramatized the mingling of their traditions to form the 5.3 million member Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The symbolic act came at a festive eucharist May 3 that climaxed the new church's four-day constituting convention.

The merger, which follows four years of formal negotiations, brings together congregations of the Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. The new body, which officially begins operations January 1, will have its main offices in Chicago.

It will be the nation's fourth-largest Protestant denomination, after Southern Baptists (14.3 million), United Methodist (9.2 million), and the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc. (5.5 million). (CN)

SPAKENBURG

The General Synod in Spakenburg decided to change the name of the Theologische Hogeschool into "Theological University of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands."

The change of name will become effective at a date which will be determined later on. The Board of Governors has been charged with the task of providing the necessary information to Synod. (ND)

VO

By Rev. W.W.J. VanOene

4. Reitsum

Although we are to take the main lines in view and should not lose ourselves into all sorts of details, it has a special reason why we deal with one more local situation. It is the situation in the village of Reitsum in the Province of Friesland.

The reason why we do pay attention to the development there is that this was the third Church to break with the synodical organization and to throw off the yoke imposed in 1816. It was also one of the three Churches whose delegates met on June 16, 1886 to discuss their basis, their relationship, and their calling towards the rest of the Netherlands Reformed Church as well as towards the Christian Reformed Church.

The village of Reitsum can be found in the north west corner of the Province of Friesland, far from the capital city of Amsterdam, far even — by those days' standards — from the happenings on the southern Veluwe.

As far as the situation in Classis Dokkum was concerned, there were fewer reasons for complaint than in many other regions. In Reitsum itself life was Reformed. Its minister, the Rev. J.J.A. Ploos van Amstel, preached the Word of God and not human theories. "Even before he knew that there was a Dr.A.Kuyper" he realized that the ecclesiastical situation could not be continued.

What happened to Hendrik de Cock in Ulrum happened to Rev. Ploos van Amstel, too: parents from other places came to him requesting him to baptize their little ones. He did not accede to their requests in order not to make the already existing difficulties even worse.

Another dilemma which "Father Ploos" encountered was, when he had to administer the Lord's Supper in a modernistic congregation where not the least discipline was being maintained. On the Sunday before such celebration he then delivered a sermon full of warnings to those whose doctrine and conduct were not as the Lord wanted to see it.

Rev. Ploos van Amstel did not feel at ease either when he had to install a modernistic minister in a vacant Church. He could, of course, ask someone else to officiate for him, but was the outcome not the same?

The matter of admitting modernistic young members to the Lord's table was another point which caused difficulties. The young people simply went to a neighbouring minister and then, triumphantly, came in by the back door.

There was more, but these above-mentioned difficulties are sufficient to show that the logical result was that also the Rev. Ploos broke with the synodical organization.

Already in 1883 he wholeheartedly supported the resolutions of the Conference of April 11 in Amsterdam. The next year the consistory decided to allow on the pulpit only those who were standing on the foundation of the confession.

When the Amsterdam office-bearers were suspended, the Rev. Ploos, together with almost all Reformed

ministers and consistory members in Classis Dokkum signed a declaration that they considered this suspension to be done to them as well, and that, if deposition followed, they would break with the synodical hierarchy.

On February 9, 1886, Reitsum did break.

The "procedure" was different from the course followed in other places.

In other places it was the consistory which took the decision; in Reitsum the minister decided to break with the organization and urged the others to follow his example. Thus, in Reitsum it was an individual choice first of all, whereas in other places it was an "official" decision to which the members usually pledged their support.

Whatever course was followed, it did not make any difference as far as the buildings and other temporal possessions of the Church were concerned: the Reformed people lost all that anyway, whether a whole consistory made the decision or the members did so on an individual basis.

5. A Federation

As could be expected, the Churches which had cast off the yoke sought closer contact, realizing that they should not follow each their own independent way.

Already on February 11, 1886, the consistory of Kootwijk received a letter from the one at Voorthuizen expressing the desire to have close relationship with all Churches that were standing on the same basis.

On June 16, 1886 there was the first meeting of delegates from three Churches: Kootwijk, Voorthuizen, and Reitsum. This meeting may be considered the occasion at which a federation was formed, or rather, where the federation was re constituted.

The discussions centered around the questions what the basis was, what was their relation towards the Netherlands Reformed congregations which had not yet adopted the Church Order of Dort, as well as towards the Christian Reformed Church.

The next day a conference was held in Putten, convened by these three Churches, to which all consistories in Classis Harderwijk had been invited. This conference was preceded by a prayer service.

On June 18, the meeting of delegates of the three Churches was continued. It was the Church Order of Dort and its application which constituted the bulk of the discussions.

Following up the work done in Voorthuizen, the Churches sent again delegates to a meeting on Tuesday, August 17, this time in Reitsum. Brothers from Kollum were present, too, and from the consistory of Leiderdorp, in the Province of South Holland, a letter had been received expressing the wish to have ecclesiastical fellowship.

August 18 saw approximately one thousand people gathered together in Leeuwarden, and on August 25 a Conference was held of delegates from the Churches in the Province of Gelderland.

Let us see what resolutions were adopted at the Gelderland conference.

The Provincial Conference of Reformed persons, in the Netherlands Reformed congregations in Gelderland, etc.

- I. Acknowledging first of all that they, too, who desire to be Reformed in doctrine and church government have contributed directly or indirectly to the present deformation of our Netherlands Reformed Churches — and consequently confessing our guilt before the Lord because of so much disobedience and neglect of duty which they, too, committed for many years towards the King of the Church.
- II. Feel further urged to declare that, for the so greatly desired Reformation of our Churches, to which we are to come in obedience to God's Holy Word, the following will be necessary:
 1. Maintaining the Reformed confession as the formulation of the doctrine which is according to the Word of God;
 2. Setting aside or rejecting the present unBiblical Organization of our Churches;
 3. Provisional return to the previous Church Order; and
 4. Convocation of a General or National Synod according to Art.50 and 86 of the above-mentioned previous Church Order, to the end that in the first place this Church Order be revised as required by our present situation;
- III. Further the Conference registers, with deep sympathy, its protest against the abuse of power by the police — led astray by the ecclesiastical boards — in the case of the Ecclesiastical Conflict at Leiderdorp, whereby so clearly the right of our Churches to manage their temporal possessions has been violated. The Conference also expresses its profound wish that Synod restore without delay to their honour and office the Amsterdam Consistory members who neither juridically nor morally did anything worthy of suspension.

The "abuse of police power" to which this resolution refers concerned the closing of the church building for the liberated Church there, with the help of police and army without any decision by any court.

Another conference was held on October 29 in Utrecht, while on November 9 and 10 delegates from six Churches met in Leiderdorp.

The three Friesian Churches formed from then on Classis Dokkum.

Rev. Ploos van Amstel urged the brothers to merge with the Christian Reformed Church, which was considered most desirable, but it was felt that this should be done very gradually.

6. The Amsterdam Congress of January 11, 1887

In accordance with the decision of the Conference of April 11, 1883, an Ecclesiastical Congress was convened by the Amsterdam consistory for January 11, 1887.

The convocation letter stressed that all the Churches were to follow the example of the Church at Voorthuizen, and stated that it should be investigated how the honour "of King Jesus could be everywhere restored and by what means the genuine Church Federation according to the requirements of God's Word could again flourish among us."

Calling such a conference together in the middle of winter, and then for four days, with the necessary admission fee of Dfl.1.00 to cover the substantial cost, added to the fare to be paid by participants, was quite an undertaking.

Yet, no fewer than twelve hundred persons came to Amsterdam, while three hundred from Amsterdam itself attended.

At 11 a.m. on Tuesday, January 11, 1887 the Congress was opened by Dr. A. Kuyper.

The Congress lasted for four days, and came to various conclusions.

What this Congress meant for the progress of the Reformation was not only found in the rousing and inspiring speeches delivered each day before and after the sessions, but especially in the addresses by Rutgers, De Savornin Lohman and Kuyper.

Conclusions were reached and advice given. These conclusions and advice regarded the points of casting off the yoke, the position and function of various organizations which tried to fill the need for spiritual food; the relation towards those who remained under the yoke of hierarchy; the position towards the Christian Reformed Church, the followers of Ledebouer, and others; regulation of provisional counsellorships; a general fund for the stipend of ministers and the Synodical Convention, to be held in Rotterdam.

Great was the gratitude of those attending.

One minister wrote: "Whatsoever slander may have been spread during and after those days, slander which many may have believed in their naivete, regarding carnal intentions with the leaders and a blind following by the masses — the aim was truly to promote the honour of God and His Christ in the house of the Lord, the issue was obedience to the Word, the spiritual edification of the Church of God."

From various quarters the accusation was brought in that everything had been "cooked, cut, and dried" by the leaders, so that the Congress basically was used to endorse what the leaders had drawn up beforehand.

No one will know for certain whether, and, if so, how much calculation was involved and how many impurities there were in the thoughts and hearts, in the words and proposals of the brothers, and no one will ever be able or even entitled to pass judgment on what is known only to the Lord. Only when there is definite proof may something in this vein be pointed out.

We enclose here a sample of such judging.

One of the persons who had urged consistories left and right to cast off the yoke of hierarchy, Dr. Ph.J. Hoedemaker, was not at the Congress, although he tried to enter the building where it was held. This episode is described by one who certainly was no friend of the Doleantie.

"While in the large hall those present were to be kept occupied in an instructive and pleasant manner by lectures on ecclesiastical topics, the delegates from the congregations were to meet, province by province, in the smaller rooms of the same building, in order there, under the leadership of a prominent figure from their area, to contrive what they were to do especially in their region."

— *To be continued*

Search & Find

- by Mrs. J. Roza



THIS MONTHS CATEGORY: *The World Outdoors*

Many of us like to stargaze. God made us a very beautiful heaven to look into, didn't He? God made the heaven with stars, planets and moons. Did you know that the sun was also a star and did you get a chance to see Halley's comet last year?

In Biblical times people liked looking at the stars too. There was also a certain man who had a special dream as he slept under the stars. In his dream he saw a stairway, with angels ascending and descending on it. Do you know who this man was?



TEXT: Isaiah 40:26, *Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and because He is strong in power not one is missing.*



Dear Busy Beavers,

Summer holidays are here!
Weeks and weeks of holidays!

I hope you have a great summer learning and doing things — playing sports, swimming, crafts, reading, helping in the yard and in the house — you name it.

So many fun ways to keep busy!

Here's wishing you ALL a great SAFE and learning summer!

Here's a good summer story from Busy Beaver
Debbie Jagt.

Summer

"Hello! I sure had fun in the summer! We go camping every summer. (Last) year my family and I went to Grundy Lake Provincial Park. It is near Perry Sound. My family usually goes with a family who are our friends. They have four kids. We are just "blooming" with fun when they come with us. Both our families have a canoe. Janice and I sometimes go for a canoe ride with my sister Aimee. The boys take the other canoe. At Grundy there are two bridges close together. The first one is slightly easy to get under but the second one is so shallow that one of the people in the boat has to get under and push the boat through. Once you get through that one you're doing O.K.

A few days before our friends left to go home the two dads and some of the kids went for a huge canoe trip. We had to take along our bathing suits, lunch and extra clothing. We had to portage over about six or seven beaver dams. Other friends went with us, too, and since they had fewer people they could portage easier. We had more people, therefore when we had to portage, we had more luggage. Later on in the trip, we had to portage from one lake to the other, we found out, about halfway through, that there was no real path to the next lake. We had decided that we would struggle our way through. It wasn't as easy as we thought, especially for the canoes. But fortunately we made it through. BOY! DID WE EVER HAVE A BALL! We had to zigzag through old stumps, through marshy areas, and finally we made it through. The wind was against us now, for it was later on in the day. We stopped at a high rock, which was high enough for diving off. We had little time to spare, for we had promised to be home at least by four o'clock. When we came to the bridge where you have to walk the boat across, the kids got out while the men went through. Now we were urging the paddlers to hurry up. We all grabbed an extra paddle, or used our hands. We yelled "STROKE, STROKE." We got home at last!"

Busy Beavers, we need a pen pal from a *different* province, here, for:

Joyce Wiegiers
7375 182 Street
Surrey, BC V3S 4P1

July

Now let's all join in wishing all the Busy Beavers celebrating a July birthday a very happy and thankful day with your family and friends. May the Lord, our heavenly Father bless and keep you all in the year ahead.

Ray Buitenbos	1	Yolanda Van Egmond	16
Ingrid Veenendaal	2	Elaine Bosscher	18
Debbie Jagt	3	Jessica Linde	18
Brenda Oosterveld	3	Lloyd Lubbers	19
Jeanette Barendregt	4	Marsha Stieva	26
Katrina De Jong	4	Colin Meerstra	27
Monica Haveman	4	Julie Van Sydenborgh	27
Natalie Veenman	5	Chad Pieterman	29
Wendy Beijes	9	Esther Bouwman	30
Shona Meerstra	9	Erica Moesker	31
Rosalin Swaving	9	Michelle Peters	31
Andrea Van Vliet	10		



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Erin Siebenga*.

I see you are a real Busy Beaver already! Thank you for the picture and the puzzle. Keep up the good work!

And welcome to you too, *Yvonne Van Egmond*, another real Busy Beaver! Thank you for your pretty letter and picture. I think the Busy Beavers will enjoy colouring it!

Welcome to the Club, *Karissa Veldman*. Thank you for the poems! I know the Busy Beavers will enjoy them. Will you write again and tell us about yourself?

How did Lisa enjoy staying at your house, *Alice Van Woudenberg*? Sounds to me as if you had lots of fun with your friend over! Bye for now. Write again soon.

Thank you very much for your nice letter and colourful picture *Kerri-Ann Spoelstra*. I'm curious to hear what the teachers thought of your story! Would you write a story for us sometime?

Hello, *Heidi Siebenga*. It's nice to hear from you again. And thank you for a very pretty picture. Are you happy to be going back to BC again?

Thanks for the puzzle, *Jennifer Siebenga*, and the picture, too. How do you feel about leaving Ontario? But you're glad it's time for holidays, right?

You've been busy again, *Alisha Stroop*! Thank you for the poem and the wordsearch. Keep up the good work! And write again soon, Alisha.

How did your teacher's surprise party go, *Kerry Roodzant*? Thanks very much for your puzzles. And if your sister wants to join our Club she can write and let me know her birthday and so on, alright, Kerry? And yes we will soon be having our BIG SUMMER CONTEST!

I believe your Mom really liked your coupon book *Vicki Roodzant*. That was very thoughtful of you! Will you write about how you're enjoying the holidays, Vicki?

You are one lucky girl to get such nice books, *Joyce Wiegiers*, and to have so much fun earning them! It will keep you busy all summer! Tell me when you get a pen pal, all right, Joyce?