

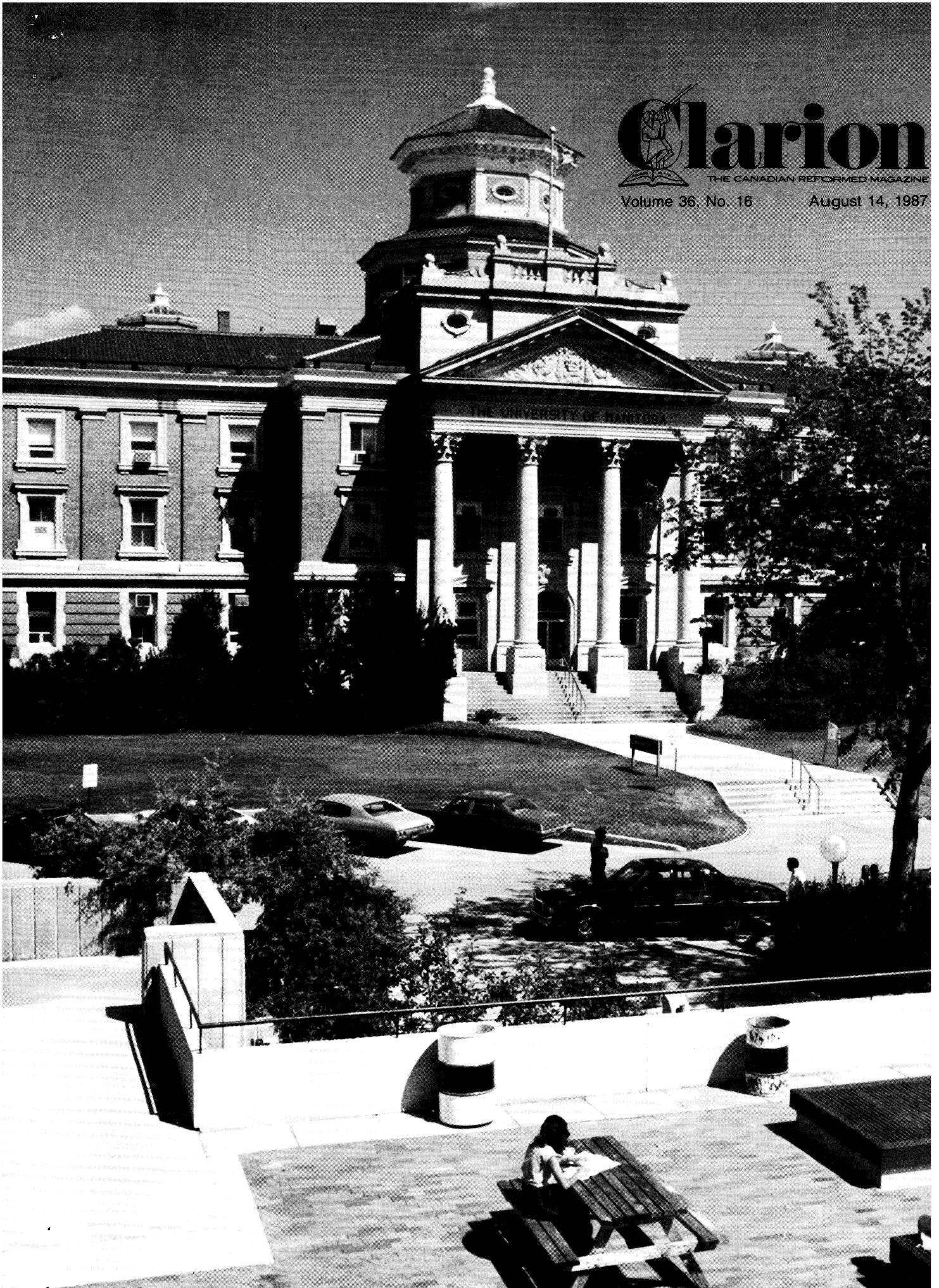


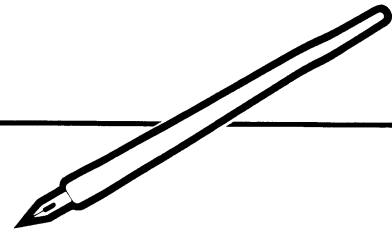
Clarion

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Ministers and students

Students for the ministry

Four students finished their studies at the Theological College in Hamilton. All four have passed their first classical exam, the preparatory examination. Four new, young ministers of the Word hope to be instrumental, under the blessing of the LORD, in the continuing preservation and further gathering of His church either in a congregation or at a mission post. This work of a minister of God's Word, the gospel of salvation, is the greatest task on earth in which one can be busy. Being a minister of the Word of the Lord, and gathering and building His church for Him, as a tool in His hands, bringing in, and leading, His elect, the people for whom Christ died, that is and remains the most beautiful, the most desirable task. Being an ambassador of Christ is a great privilege.

A minister of God's Word works with the gospel of salvation. As ambassador of Christ, he calls people to believe; he guides and leads in the green pastures of that Word the sheep of the Lord. He comforts and helps those bowed down. He strengthens the weak. He also has to admonish those who go astray and call them back to the flock and the ways of the flock. In this respect, like the parents at home and the elders beside him in the congregation, a minister in the church and a missionary on the mission field fight against the powers of sin, the powers of Satan. This is a struggle of life and death that can only be fought in faith, with dedication and commitment through the Holy Spirit.

However, it is fighting the war of Christ Jesus, Who overcame all the powers of Satan and sin. Of course, every believer who lives in faith fights that war. Nevertheless, the minister of God's Word does this in a special office. Therefore, the ministry is, in a special way, a taking part in the conquering holy war of Jesus Christ. That is what makes this task the greatest one there is.

Does this also mean self-denial and hardship? Certainly. A minister has to be an example in dedication, in service, in being a slave of Christ. This self-denial and total dedication is even more directly evident with respect to the missionary and his wife. It means giving up all the good and enjoyable and convenient things at home; and, what is worse, it means going away from relatives and friends for the sake of the Lord. It means offering your life as a sacrifice for the Lord and His cause. That is not an easy thing to do in a modern selfish world, where people very much seek their own convenience.

However, what counts much more are the promises of the Lord. He said that "every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for My name's sake, will receive a hundred-fold, and inherit eternal life" (Matt. 19:29). Many a missionary and his wife have the experience that those whom they bring to Christ become their beloved family. And in the end there is eternal life within the great and glorious Family of God in the new Jerusalem, on the new earth, among whom the minister will find those whom he guided and

the missionary those whom he gathered into that flock of the Lord.

Why do I say this?

The present need

It is in the first place, because I wish our churches would "produce" many, many more students for the ministry, young men from good Reformed God-fearing homes who are eager to serve the Lord in this office; eager through the Holy Spirit working it in their heart, in love for the Lord and His church.

In the second place, there is in our churches, and in our sister churches in Australia, a great need for ministers and missionaries. At this very moment the Church at Hamilton needs two missionaries and extended a call to two of the four students. The Church at Smithers extended a call to a third one to fill the vacancy in its Home mission ministry. The Church at Surrey also needs a missionary and called one of the present candidates to replace one of its missionaries. And the Church at Albany, in Australia seeks a missionary for its mission work in Port Moresby, in New Guinea. All this shows the present need of five missionaries. And I hope that more will be needed in the future. But this is not all yet.

At this moment, to begin with "down under," there are at least two, and soon possibly four vacant churches in Australia. I still count the Rev. C. Bouwman among the Canadian ministers, and the Church at Byford as vacant. In our own vast country, from Sackville to Surrey, there are at present six vacant churches: from east to west, Sackville, Ottawa, Hamilton, Edmonton-Immanuel, Calgary, and Cloverdale. The recent Classis Ontario North has approved the institution of a church at Elora and at Grand Valley, each starting with, approximately twenty families. This will bring the total number of vacancies here in Canada to eight. Besides, I know that within the next year or two there will be, at least, two more open places, but I shall not count these. Thus, there are twelve places to be filled by a minister and five by a missionary. This brings the total number, at this moment, to seventeen.

This time I shall not look ahead approximately ten years and take into account the age of a number of ministers who will be 65 and older before 1997. Some time ago, the Rev. G. van Rongen wrote in *Una Sancta*, the magazine of the Australian sister churches, in connection with my previous talk about the need for ministers, and therefore for theological students, that we should not speculate. But every one who is no stranger in our federations can make a simple calculation and realize that stating the need for at least twenty new ministers and missionaries in the first ten years is surely not exaggerating things.

We need theological students.

The need at the background

Above I expressed the wish that our churches would "pro-

duce" more students for the ministry; although not only for the ministry, but that is a different matter. Why are there not more theological students from our Reformed families? Is that because, at a certain moment, it seemed as if soon there would be no vacancies to be filled, and students would not be able to find a congregation or a mission post? Or is it more so that the ministry is not so attractive?

I only ask questions, and I hope that the reader will ask with me, and that this self-examination may make us think about this matter.

Even though all our churches, as far as I know, take good care of their ministers and missionaries and their families, which is appreciated, so that they can live off the gospel without financial worries, the ministry is not a money-making business. And I hope and expect that it never will be. Nevertheless, the question has come up in my mind: is there a connection between the matter of money-making and the lack of theological and other students, especially in the field of education?

In general, we are a money-making community. In itself there is nothing wrong with that. We are immigrants. Most immigrants came here to build up a living for themselves and their family. In most cases that was a building up from scratch. Hard work was necessary to make ends meet and to make some money, some profits.

Besides, after jobs were obtained in factories and other businesses, more and more the secular trade unions were voted in. Since it was seen as a denial of Christ as Redeemer of labour and labour relations to join the brotherhoods of such unions, many of our members started their own business and built it up through hard labour. Of course, this was not only caused by the increasing influence of the unions. Many had the wish, anyway, to have an own farm or an own business, and to be free, to be "your own boss." Nevertheless, the unions did hasten the process. Building up one's life in the new country and even one's own business or farm meant that our lives were very much geared to the need for making money.

There was another aspect. Coming from the Netherlands as Reformed people, we sought to set up our church life. Churches had to be built. Later there was the need for larger buildings because the congregations grew. Looking at church budgets, one can discover that not only the own congregation and its functioning with an own minister requires quite an amount of money. The federation with classical and synodical meetings, with mission work, with a Theological College, needy churches and so on, demands not a small number of dollars. When we add the elementary and the high schools, we talk about a few millions of dollars that we together have to put on the table every year again. And so we can conclude: we must be a community of money-making people. How else could we afford all the things we do and have as Reformed people? Indeed, the LORD has richly blessed us.

However, that stress on, and attention for, making money holds a danger. It is this danger that making money receives too important a place; that it becomes the dominant feature of our existence, and that our life-style becomes more and more characterized by it, while the spiritual aspect of life slowly, and often without our realizing it, goes to the background of our thinking and acting. What comes first? Is it making money? Or is it our own spiritual health and that of the family? If seeking first the kingdom of God slowly makes place for seeking first our own good life here and now, we have lost our spiritual strength.

Is there a connection between the emphasis on making money and the fact that our churches appear not to produce enough young people who want to give themselves to the Lord and His church as ministers of His Word, or who would like to teach the children of the covenant a certain subject or subjects in the light of that same Word and the confession of the church? Do we not have enough attention for the spiritual things

anymore? Do we prefer to go and get a job and make money?

How is it that with our young people? What do they live for? Do they drop out of high school? I mean, not only those who have troubles with learning, but also those who could do well in school, if they would give themselves to their studies, because they have talents in this respect. Is it for many the wish to be free and independent, to make money, to get a (fancy) car, and so on? Are many of our young people getting in the grip of the material things of life? Do the spiritual things not have their interest: to know the Lord and His Word; His service; being fruitful for Him? What do our young people live for, talk about, seek in life?

But if, for many, it is so that they just live for themselves, their own material well-being and fun, for making money so that they can do their own things, why is that so? Is the cause, perhaps, that making money to build our churches and our schools and then also to build up our own lives for our own prosperity, characterize the life-style of us, their parents, more and more? What do we as parents, always talk about? What has, in the practice of our daily life, priority in our attention? What occupies our thinking and speaking mostly? Is that material things? Or is it the spiritual aspects of life?

Is it the spiritual things? Are we still dominated by the calling from the Lord as churches of our Lord Jesus Christ to be faithful in our own church life and to be a city on a mountain top, a light on a stand? Are we still enthused that God does His church gathering and preserving work through His Spirit and Word, and that He uses His church as His instrument, that is, people who carry His Word and work with it, teach it, proclaim it? The church receives salvation in order to bear fruits for the LORD in royal, priestly, and prophetic service. Does this service rule our thinking, our lives, our families, our congregations?

Encouragement

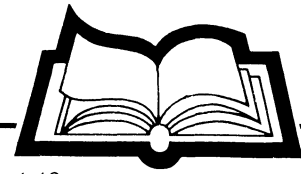
We need ministers and missionaries. We need young men and women, among them (future) wives for those ministers and missionaries who will stand behind their husbands with encouraging support, faithful and enthusiastic, dedicated to the cause of the Lord; we need Christian mothers of future ministers and missionaries, elders and deacons.

Certainly, not every one can become a minister or missionary or a teacher. For this profession talents are needed. But I am sure that in our community such talents are present. And let us not forget, that the whole community must be a community that is Spiritually alive and dedicated to her Lord, His church, and its calling; a community that carries its ministers and missionaries, and teachers (but that is a different subject) on their hands and in their prayers because of their office, their work.

Am I negative? That is not my intention. I am very thankful for all the faithful commitment and dedication that is still there. Without it we could not maintain a church life and schools as we enjoy them. However, we must not slacken off in Spiritual zeal and faithfulness. Let us not forget our first love, but, instead, hold on to what we have and rather grow in faith and dedication to our Lord and His cause. Let us not forget that making money has to be dominated by faith, by our personal commitment to the Lord and His service. Giving money for the church and so many other things is not enough. The Lord wants ourselves, our hearts.

Reformed father and mothers, Reformed young people, we need students for the ministry. Our Lord needs ministers and missionaries to tend and to bring in His chosen flock! In Matthew 9:37ff. the Lord said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest."

J. GEERTSEMA



“Now this man bought a field with the reward of his wickedness . . .” Acts 1:18

“Thus Joseph who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas . . . sold a field which belong to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.” Acts 4:36a, 37.

Two Fields

On first reading, it seems an odd and interesting detail when Luke also tells us that Joseph, who was surnamed Barnabas by the apostles, sold a field and brought the money to the apostles for their use in the church. After all, the general point had already been made, and one hardly expects him to go into details on each case. But the Holy Spirit had Luke include this event for a reason. Barnabas’ action forms a sharp contrast between that of Judas, as well as that of Ananias and Sapphira.

This contrast comes into clearer focus when we consider that Joseph was one of the “possessors of lands” mentioned in the context. These landowners were made up for the most part of wealthy Jewish families that since the time of the dispersion had bought property in and around Jerusalem in order to be near to the Messiah on the day of His glorious appearance. Many had bought these fields for a family burial ground, so that departed family members could be among the first to witness the Messiah in His glory on the day of the resurrection. Barnabas, obviously a man of means, promptly decides to sell his field after he joined the Christian Church. He no longer needed a special burial place! He found the Messiah!

As Peter puts it, Judas bought a field with the reward of his evil schemes. Presumably, the field purchased by the chief priests after Judas’ death was put in his family name. At any rate, his name became associated with the field, as did the idea of perpetual curse. The field was known as Akeldama, the Field of Blood.

Here we are faced with contrasting responses to the call and work of Christ, and that by two figures of similar background. Judas buys a field; Barnabas sells a field. Judas rejects Christ as the Messiah, and considers the salvation offered by Him to be worth less than thirty pieces of silver. Barnabas, a Levite, sacrifices his special privileges and distinction in the house of Aaron to serve the Highpriest after the order of Melchisedek.

In the pathways of exchange these two fields pass each other. One is bought, the other sold. But they stand as marked monuments to two conflicting principles! Judas’ field was named “a field to bury strangers in,” Matthew 27:7. Having been purchased with ‘blood money,’ the plot could not be a burial ground for Jews. Only Gentiles, the lower and rejected peoples, could be buried there. In other words, the Field of

Blood testifies not only to the working of the curse upon the apostate Judaism that had rejected Christ as the Messiah; it also testifies to the perpetuation of the false distinction between Jews and Gentiles. It remains the monument to the sect.

Joseph’s field, on the other hand, is sold, with the proceeds being used for the upbuilding of the young Church in Jerusalem. And this church was later to be the pillar of the mission to the Gentiles. Judas’ money is used against the Gentiles; Joseph’s money is used to call them in. Judas’ field testifies to the building of an artificial wall; Judas’ field testifies to the breaking down of “the dividing wall of hostility” (Ephesians 2:14) that stood between Jews and Gentiles.

Two fields stand here at the crossroads of the dispensations. And we find them working at crosspurposes. One is the Field of Blood, symbolizing curse and death. Indeed, Jerusalem became a “field of blood” because of its continual impenitence, just as Christ had foretold, Matthew 23:37ff. But the other field is an instrument for the gospel of life! It is a field placed in the service of the Messiah and His coming reign!

And the contrast between the fields accentuates the contrast between the persons involved. Judas, like Esau, sold his birthright for a trifle. It simply did not mean anything to him. His growing unbelief, and growing submission to the law of the flesh finally ensnared him. He allowed greed to overcome him, and so died in his greed. But Barnabas was motivated by a sincere love of the Lord and a sincere thanksgiving for the riches of the salvation given in Him! So we find him joining Paul in his journey to the Gentiles! What a son of encouragement he was!

These two fields still stand before us today: the field of death and the field of life. And the actions of the owners serve to remind us that there is nothing neutral in the Kingdom of the Messiah! The choices of the heart will become evident in words and deeds. Judas and Joseph, a field against the LORD and a field given to Him.

With such a contrast He says: Choose this day who you will serve! And let us lay all at His feet, for He has bought us not with silver or gold, “but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a Lamb without blemish or spot,” I Peter 1:19. So let us all live in obedience and thankfulness to Him!

J. DE JONG

Reformation and mission₃

The mission venture in Brazil

In my last article I already mentioned that there was a very important attempt at mission work in Calvin's time, namely in *Brazil*. This attempt was strongly promoted by the Reformer himself.

The French nobleman Gaspard de Coligny, who would become later on, in 1572, a martyr in the terrible massacre of Bartholomew's day, conceived the project of planning to send ministers to a French colony in Brazil. The goal was not only to support the colonists in spiritual respect, but also to bring the gospel to the Indians in order to convert them to faith in Jesus Christ. De Coligny was in contact with a certain De Villegaignon and he influenced the French King to allow De Villegaignon to sail out with two vessels to the new world. It was principally Protestants who accompanied him. De Villegaignon was also in contact with Calvin. In November, 1555, the expedition arrived at Rio de Janeiro. In the beginning they had a very hard time. There were dangers from two sides. The Portuguese, who claimed to have authority over that area, were very hostile, and the natives were also very dangerous. Disappointed and discouraged, some of the colonists returned to France. With those who remained, De Villegaignon took up his residence close to the coast on a small island which he gave the name "Coligny."

Request for ministers

Already after a short time, De Villegaignon sent letters to De Coligny and to Calvin in which he asked them to send some preachers and also more colonists "in order to come to a firmer establishment of the colony and to a further expansion of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ." Then two preachers were delegated from Geneva, the first one was Peter Richer, a doctor of theology, and the second one was William Chartier. These ministers departed from Geneva on September 8, 1556. Several people accompanied them. Altogether there were thirteen who were willing "to bring the Kingdom of Christ to the new world." In France they find many Huguenots who dared to undertake the venture with them. In this way a group of three hundred people was gathered at

Honfleur and they departed with three ships on November 19, 1556. On the tenth of March 1557 they arrived in the colony.

Great expectations

There is a double report concerning

work. It appeared that they were very closely connected with the Reformer. They wrote to Calvin, "Our fellowship in which we are connected by the Holy Spirit to the body of Christ, unites us together so strongly that the enormous distance which separates us, cannot hinder that

" . . . there was a very important attempt at mission work in Calvin's time, namely in Brazil. This attempt was strongly promoted by the Reformer himself."

the first three weeks after their arrival: letter of Richer to an unknown person and also a letter of Richer and Chartier together to Calvin. Especially the last letter gives us an insight into the relation in which Calvin stood to these men and their

we are with you in the Spirit, in the certainty that you also bear us in your heart."

In order to strengthen this fellowship, they want to let Calvin participate in their sorrows and joys. They are very happy with the way they were received by De



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Villegaignon. They call him their father and brother and they expect much from him and from his work. They have hope that rather soon a big congregation can be instituted to proclaim God's praise and extend Christ's Kingdom. At the end of their letter they ask Calvin's intercession for their work of mission, "in order that God may complete this building of Christ at this end of the earth." The church of Geneva gave thanks to God on these favourable messages from Brazil, "for the extension of Christ's Kingdom in a country so far away, on a piece of the earth so strange and among a nation which seems to be totally ignorant of the true God."

In Richer's letter we find more data about the religious life of the natives in and around the colony. He portrays the life of the natives in very dark colours. The summing up of the sins and misdeeds reminds us of what the apostle Paul writes in Romans 1. How can the preachers of God's Word get access to such people? Besides, they stand before an almost insuperable language barrier. Yet they do not despair. "Because the highest God Himself entrusted this office to us, we hope that one day this country of Edomites will become Christ's dominion."

Treason

But the great expectations of these missionaries proved false. It appeared that De Villegaignon was not the man he was supposed to be. After the first celebration of the Lord's Supper, quarrels broke out in circles of the colonists. Some of them were in favour of bringing more Roman Catholic elements into the celebration. Their spokesman was a certain Cointa, who had studied at the Sorbonne University at Paris. De Villegaignon sided with him, after having first sent Chartier to Geneva in order to ask Calvin for advice. Especially a letter from the cardinal of Lorraine caused him to conduct himself harshly over against the Protestants. Finally, their worship services had to be held in secret, just as in their fatherland. In this way the original attempt to build a Protestant colony as a centre of mission work among the heathen originals was frustrated. In this situation a group of them wanted to go back to France. De Villegaignon expelled them from the island. They fled to the continent of Brazil, where they tried to contact the aborigines. They also attempted to bring the Gospel to them. One of them had already penetrated so far in their language that he could give them a small dictionary of the language of the "Topinambu," as they called them.

Return

But the refugees could not hold out

for a long time. All kinds of hardships finally caused their return to France. Some of them preferred to go back to the colony. But De Villegaignon condemned them as heretics. One of them escaped, four others testified to their faith in a courageous way. The result was that De Villegaignon had them thrown from a rock into the ocean. The names of these first martyrs of Reformed mission deserve to be mentioned: Pierre du Bordel, Matthieu Vermiel, and Pierre Bourdon. It is a bitter

thought that these martyrs did not fall as a consequence of the resistance of the Gentiles, but by the perfidious treason of a fellow Christian. De Villegaignon spared the life of the fourth one, because he could serve the colony with his handicraft, according to his opinion. Those who stayed on the ship safely reached the French coast. Richer became a minister of the church at La Rochelle.

The colony was deprived of its best men, so it could not hold out either. De Villegaignon returned to France and remained an enemy of the Reformation for the rest of his life. He died just before the year of the martyrdom of Gaspard de Coligny. However, he did not die as a martyr, but in the greatest misery

One of the fellow travellers, Jean de Lery, described the whole journey extensively and when later on his book was reprinted, he dedicated it to Louise de Coligny, the daughter of Gaspard de Coligny.

Louise de Coligny was the fourth wife of William of Orange, who survived her husband. De Lery mentioned in this dedication "the reverent remembrance of the Prince of Orange." In 1569 he had met the Prince, being delegated to thank him for the defense of the French Reformed churches, which he had undertaken with great sacrifices. On that occasion Prince William had answered that he wished he could do more for the service of the Lord and of the churches on behalf of which the delegates had spoken. So also the name of Prince William I of Orange is mentioned in the report concerning the first Reformed mission venture!

Calvin to Farel

Calvin was closely connected with this attempt at mission work. In his letter to his friend Farel, he wrote on Feb. 24, 1558, about De Villegaignon as someone "who was sent by us to America ('a nobis missus fuerat'), where he has treated the good matter in a bad way because of his immeasurable hot-headedness." Calvin wrote this letter about six years before his death. He deplored it very much that this first attempt at Reformed mission work in Brazil was not a success. But the failure was definitely not due to the Reformer himself. He encouraged the planning of De Coligny. He sent missionaries to the colony. He functioned as their spiritual father and gave his advice. They brought before him all their troubles and sorrows, and Calvin's encouragement gave guidance to their work.

Our conclusion is that also in practical respects Calvin very much promoted mission work, although prospects were not favourable.

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CANDIDATE R.A. SCHOUTEN
of Hamilton, ON

* * *

CALLED and ACCEPTED TO Ottawa, ON

CANDIDATE G.P. VAN POPTA
of Hamilton, ON

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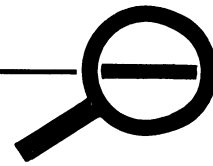
CALLED and ACCEPTED to Hamilton, ON for Mission Brazil

CANDIDATE P. AASMAN
of Hamilton, ON

* * *

ACCEPTED to Smithers, BC for Home Mission

CANDIDATE M.K. MARREN
of Hamilton, ON



Experimental Calvinism and discriminating preaching

There is a federation of Churches which is known in The Netherlands as "De Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk" and in Canada and the U.S. as "The Free Reformed Churches."

Some of you will remember that in 1892 a historic union was realized between the churches of the Secession (1834) and the Doleantie (1886). The "Free Reformed Churches," however, did not go along with this union and formed a separate federation, or (as some would say) continued on as separate churches.

One of the reasons why these churches felt they could not join in the union of 1892 was a strong dislike for the theories which were being expounded in the Doleantie churches on regeneration and baptism. There was a great fear for the philosophical constructions of Dr. Abraham Kuiper. This fear did not prove to be wholly unjustified. I think of, for example, how later the theory of *presumptive regeneration* was elevated to church doctrine, leading to the Liberation of 1944.

When the Reformed Churches were liberated in 1944 from the synodical bondage, one of the first concerns of these churches was to have contact with the Free Reformed Churches and to come to unity with these churches as soon as possible. The Synods of the liberated Reformed Churches made constant appeals to the Free Reformed no longer to see the existing differences as a hindrance to unity. The "differences" were regarded as being more a matter of individual opinions and not a matter of confessional divergence.

The Free Reformed, however, again showed hesitancy to come to union. The two main items which the Free Reformed continued to put forward as matters which first had to be solved were: the *application of salvation* and the manner in which the liberated Reformed used the confession concerning *the church* (Dutch: "de toe-eigening des heils en de hantering van het kerkbegrip").

We may leave the issue of the church for what it is, and may concentrate on the matter of the *application* of the Word.

In *The Messenger* (The Official Publication of the Free Reformed Churches)

of May 1987, the Rev. A. Baars writes an article explaining the close relationship between the "Word and Spirit." He defends the Reformed position that "the Holy Spirit works through the Word." He remarks that modern Scripture criticism is destructive for true preaching, and states that "all Scripture is divinely inspired and therefore the supreme rule for faith and life." The whole of Scripture must be upheld and proclaimed.

We pick it up under the section, "*The Proclamation of the Word.*"

The Proclamation of the Word

At this point the question may come up: If we reject these modern views and adhere to the truth that the Bible is the infallible, inspired Word of God, is this a guarantee that the Word is powerful among us? In other words: Is it true that when the Word is preached in its entirety and in its purity among us there must be spiritual blessings? We know that this is not necessarily and certainly not automatically true. In order to become effective the inspired Word needs to be read and to be proclaimed, and in order that the Word is proclaimed aright, it is necessary that the preacher is led and guided by the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts we read repeatedly that the apostles proclaimed the Word filled with the Holy Spirit (Cf. e.g. Acts 4:8). The Apostle Paul emphasized the same regarding his own preaching, when he stated:

"And my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstrations of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4). The same is expressed, in different words, in 1 Thess. 1:5, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost." The underlying thought of these verses clearly indicates that it is possible to preach the gospel in words only. The truths that are expounded may be orthodox, the delivery of the message may be eloquent, but one thing is lacking: The unction of the Holy Spirit!

This is really one of the greatest disasters for the church, when pastors proclaim the Word in their midst without the guidance and unction of the Spirit of the Lord. They may explain the Scriptures, but do not really comprehend its depths themselves. Consequently they do not understand the true needs of the

souls entrusted to their care. They do not know how to speak "a word in season to him that is weary" (Cf. Isa. 50:4), neither are they truly able to edify the church. How necessary is it that every minister of the Word constantly realizes this and wrestles much in prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in his ministry, especially when he proclaims the Word.

On the other hand, the congregation also should pray that the pastor may be exercised and led by the Spirit of God. The Apostle Paul urged the congregations "to pray also for him that God would open unto him a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ" (Col. 4:3, Cf. Eph. 6:19). If Paul coveted these prayers of the churches, how much more do the ministers need them in our day in which there is so much cold, stale and Spirit-less preaching! An age old Latin prayer beautifully puts into words the urgency of pleading that pastors may be taught and led by the Holy Spirit:

Come thou Holy Spirit,
Pastor to the pastor,
Instruct the instructor,
Explain to him who will explain,
Proclaim to him who will proclaim.

If pastors are so guided by the Spirit they will speak the Word with power and it will bear fruit.

The Application of the Word

However, the question may still occupy our minds: If the Word is proclaimed faithfully and with the unction of the Spirit, will there be blessings automatically? Will the hearts of all the hearers be broken? Sad to say, this is not the case, for the heart of man is so hard that it may resist the most powerful preaching of the Word. A special work of the Holy Spirit is needed to bring the message home, to apply the Word to heart. To quote John Calvin again: "Indeed the Word of God is like the sun, shining upon all those to whom it is proclaimed, but with no effect among the blind. Now all of us are blind by nature in this respect. Accordingly, it cannot penetrate into our minds unless the Spirit is the inner teacher, through His illumination makes entry for it" (Inst. III-2-34).

What does the Spirit do in thus applying the Word? To mention only a few things: The Spirit opens the heart unto

the Word, so that it is received and understood. A touching example of this is the great change that took place in the life of Lydia, of whom we read that the Lord opened her heart so that "she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts 16:14). Another aspect is that the Spirit enflames the heart for the Word. The words of the two men travelling to Emmaus are an eloquent testimony of this. When they recalled the instruction that the Lord had given to them, they said: "Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" Thus, the Holy Spirit leads sinners to embrace the Word. They confess from the heart: Thy Word is truth (Cf. John 17:17). That implies that they bow for the entire truth of Scripture, not only for the promises, but also for the searching and accusing words of the Bible. This is beautifully underscored in a statement of the Westminster Confession: "By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come" (XIV-2). Finally, to sum it all up, the Spirit extols Christ as He reveals Himself in Scripture and brings Him to the heart of God's people. The Lord Jesus Himself expresses this in the following words: "He (i.e. the Spirit) shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:14). The last words literally say: He will proclaim it unto you. This implies that the Holy Spirit will glorify the Lord Jesus Christ through the Word and He will become precious to the heart when His Word is applied by the Spirit.

In conclusion we should stress again that there is an unbreakable bond between Word and Spirit. The Holy Spirit has given the Word by inspiration. He will guide the preacher in its proclamation and He seeks to gladden the heart by its application. Yet the saving blessings of the Holy Spirit are not automatically conferred upon reading or hearing the Word. It pleases the Spirit to use the Word, but He is also sovereign (Cf. John 3:8). Hence we are urged to use the means of the Word, but we should use it prayerfully:

Come, O Holy Spirit, come!

Rev. Baars emphasizes the unction of the Holy Spirit. This "unction — anointing — of the Holy Spirit" is obviously a very important matter in the Free Reformed Churches. Both the preachers and the hearers must partake of this unction, or it will all be in vain. It is good that this be stressed, as long as it does not become a *separate* element in the process of faith.

When Rev. Baars writes that the "saving blessings of the Holy Spirit are not *automatically* conferred upon reading or hearing the Word," I can wholeheartedly agree with him. There is no automatism in the covenant. Faith and regeneration are required, and are received only through the working of the Holy Spirit through the Word.

Our difficulty with the Free Reformed position is that this strong emphasis on "the unction of the Holy Spirit" as the application of the Word tends in practice to *separate* Word and Spirit. People begin to base their certainties more on what they *feel* than on what is *heard*. Rev. Baars probably does not want this, for he insists on the "unbreakable bond" between Word and Spirit, but it is a sad reality in some churches of the Secession where emotional pietism has replaced true piety.

Many people in the Free Reformed and related churches feel that unless some special token of salvation has been received, one cannot be sure of one's salvation. Faith as a God-given acceptance of the promises of the Word of God and living accordingly is not seen as sufficient.

I once had a conversation with a Free Reformed person who claimed sincerely "to accept as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word." He accepted the whole Scripture as the infallible Word of God! Yet he could not say that he had "a firm confidence" that God had granted to him "forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation, out of mere grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits" (Heidelberg, Lord's Day 7). He was still "waiting" for a sign to this effect. He *separated* what the catechism sees as a unity: knowledge and confidence belong together in the essence of faith! True faith is a sure knowledge and "at the same time" a "firm confidence."

The same line is followed by Rev. C. Pronk in the same issue of *The Messenger* in an article on *Experimental Calvinism* (I). From his article we quote the following:

What is experimental preaching? "Experimental" here has nothing to do with scientific experiments, and therefore a better word perhaps is "experiential." Preaching thus characterized, stresses experience, or rather the need that the objective truth preached be experienced subjectively.

At one time this kind of preaching was common in Dutch Reformed circles. Especially in the churches of the Secession, but also in many congregations of the State Church, one could hear sermons that emphasized the necessity of experiencing the truths of God's Word in one's heart and life.

Churches where this kind of preaching is found are often called "pietistic."

The work pietistic or pietism comes from the Latin word "pietas" which simply means piety or godliness. Pietists are people who emphasize the need for conversion and a close walk with God. For many people in The Netherlands and also here in North America, the word pietism has acquired a bad connotation. Neo-Calvinists see it as something undesirable, a kind of sickness even, and they equate it with subjectivism, individualism and mysticism.

The churches of the Secession were definitely influenced by Pietism and even more by Puritanism. Both movements stressed experience, but they were different in that Pietism tended to be individualistic, whereas Puritanism was concerned also with the church as a whole. Puritanism arose in England and represents a movement to purify the Church of England or the Anglican Church. In The Netherlands there was a similar movement known as the Second Reformation. After the Synod of Dort had settled the Arminian controversy, the truth was preached again from all pulpits in the Reformed Church. But now there was a new danger, namely that of nominal membership. Many joined the state church without a commitment of the heart. They expressed agreement with the doctrines of the church, but their lifestyle was often worldly. Yet many came to the Lord's Supper and even served in various church offices.

This led serious-minded pastors to reflect on what the church should be according to the New Testament. They began to realize that preaching had to be more discriminating, and so they started to stress more and more the necessity of experiencing the truth that was preached and that almost everyone professed to believe. They also emphasized the need for consistent Christian living during the week. The goal of these Dutch Puritans was the reformation of church and state as well as society in general.

Both in England and The Netherlands, the mightiest weapon available to these Reformers was the preached Word. These Puritan ministers never wearied of urging upon their congregations the absolute need of true conversion, evidenced by Scriptural marks of grace. They were convinced that preaching involved more than a mere declaration of the facts of the Gospel, but that it should consist in the explication and application of God's Word to the consciences of men.

The mark of a good minister was (and, of course, still is) that he knows how to apply the Word, giving to each hearer his or her proper attention. As Rev. T. Atkinson wrote twenty-five years ago:

"When addressing believers and applying those truths of Holy Scripture that are revealed for their comfort, ministers must make clear that unbelievers have 'no lot or part in the matter.' On the

other hand, when declaring 'the terror of the Lord' and warning unbelievers of their fearful danger they must labour to show in their preaching who are those to whom the divine threatenings are addressed. The line of demarcation must be clearly drawn between the church and world, the true church and the professing church, and the different characters to be found amongst those who are members of the true church. (*The Banner of Truth*, Volume 2, February 1961, pp. 10-11)."

This kind of experimental and discriminating preaching characterized the Secession churches in The Netherlands for many years. Its people loved the old writers, both Dutch and English. When immigrants from The Netherlands arrived in the Holland-Zeeland area of Michigan, they brought with them many of these Puritan authors: Brakel, Comrie, Smytegeld as well as Bunyan, Owen and Baxter.

Today preaching in the Christian Reformed and many other Reformed churches is no longer what it was in the 1840's. Especially the Christian Reformed Church, though its roots were in the Secession, has largely moved away from Secession principles and adopted Doleantie ideas, mainly through the influence of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, the great leader and spokesman of the Doleantie of 1866.

Dr. Kuyper was converted from Modernism to the Reformed faith through the instrumentality of Pietje Baltus, a member of his first congregation at Beesd. Through contact with her and others like her, he came to respect these God-fearing Pietists, both in the state church and among the Seceders, but he also saw their shortcomings. In his view, they were too isolated from real life. These humble folk lived close to God, but showed little or no concern for society and its needs. They did not see the implications of God's Word for all of life, and therefore Kuyper resolved to correct this lack. Under his leadership a great Calvinistic revival took place in The Netherlands, affecting not only the church but also the state and all aspects of society.

While one cannot help admiring the tremendous zeal of Dr. Kuyper and his followers for the cause of Christ in the world, one should not be blind to some serious errors of what came to be known as Kuyperianism or Neo-Calvinism. One of the key errors of this movement was the doctrine of presumptive regeneration. Kuyper taught that all children of believing parents should be viewed as regenerate from birth and treated as such pastorally. Preachers should proceed from the assumption that the entire baptized congregation is in a saving relationship to God, except of course for hypocrites and those who by their ungodly walk showed to belong to the



reprobate, in which case they should be disciplined and removed from the church.

The result of this preaching and teaching was that whole generations grew up without ever being confronted with the need for the new birth. What Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:3, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," was hardly ever mentioned in Reformed churches of this persuasion.

Preaching became mostly a matter of nurturing the spiritual life already assumed to be present. The emphasis was put on living the Christian life, being active in God's kingdom and becoming involved in all sorts of cultural endeavors.

Needless to say this optimistic view of the congregation leaves little room for discriminating preaching. As one proponent of Neo-Calvinism puts it:

"The preacher who has accepted a confessional church which excommunicates all who demonstrate in their lives that they do not belong to the Lord's congregation, does not have the right to sift the people once more when addressing them The preacher who does that commits three wrongs: he insults the Church of Christ by addressing it as a mixed lot; he harms the Church of Christ because believers may begin to doubt, and hypocrites tend to close their ears at the familiar refrain; and finally, he retards the upbuilding of the church because his view of the hearers is bound to distort the goal and content of his sermon. (Quoted by Sidney Greidanus in *Sola Scriptura*, p. 97.)"

Defenders of the "discriminating" preaching, however, point out that such preaching is absolutely necessary, because Scriptural. Even Herman Bavinck, although he went along with Kuyper in many ways, still felt uneasy with the new approach to preaching in his day and issued this warning:

"Preaching which assumes all professing believers in a given congregation are saved proceeds from the ideal, and fails to appreciate reality and ignores the lesson from history. The result is that faith in the confession is confused with the confession of faith, and a dead or-

thodoxy which contends itself with an intellectual consent to doctrine is fostered. As Israel rested on its descent from Abraham and on the Temple which was in their midst, so many members of the New Testament Church are beginning to build their hopes for eternity on the external ecclesiastical privileges wherein they share, such as baptism, confession and the Lord's Supper, and thus fall into a false complacency. Although the church is a gathering of true believers in Christ, there must yet sound forth constantly in her midst the summons to faith and repentance. (*Roeping en Wedergeboorte*, pp. 179-80, translation mine, C.P.)"

One notices that there is not much love lost for the tradition of the Doleantie in Pronk's article. Kuyper and Doleantie should not be made identical. But, indeed, the teacher of presumptive regeneration should be rejected and *has been rejected* in the liberated Reformed Churches!

An important question is whether a preacher may divide the congregation into various groups, the saved and the unsaved, with a special word for each. We firmly believe that the congregation must be addressed as a covenant people, sharing in the same promises and under the same obligation. Certainly within that covenant is the need for regeneration and conversion, not only initially but on a daily basis. The covenant is never without its conditions. But the congregation must be addressed and treated in proper Scriptural terms as believers and saints, as did the apostles of the Lord. This is not an "optimistic" view on the congregation, as Pronk suggests, but a scriptural view. The congregation must be what it is in Christ: a holy nation. Otherwise we get an individualistic and subjectivistic approach to the church and not a covenantal perspective, and the joy and certainty of faith, worked by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel, is grossly undermined.

Sometimes I have hope that we are not so far apart here as it seems. The Synod of Amersfoort, 1967 of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in The Netherlands stated that the difference of opinion on the *application* "lies within the framework of the confession" (Acts Art. 254). At times I also fear that there are here two fundamentally different approaches to the matters of faith and the covenant, which cannot be reconciled.

These differences may vary perhaps from country to country and even from church to church. There is one ray of light: both the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches accept the full Word of God and subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity. On that basis further or renewed dialogue should be possible.

CL. STAM



Time and again we hear words of appreciation for our medley because it keeps the membership informed about what is going on in the midst of the Churches.

Unfortunately, we cannot always pass on news right after it happened.

In the first place, sometimes I get a whole stack of bulletins covering three or four months or an even longer period. It is obvious that what happened in April is no more "news" in September.

Secondly, the medleys have to be in Winnipeg at least two weeks before the official date of an issue, so as to make certain that it will be included in that issue.

Thirdly, our beloved postal system sometimes manages to have an issue at the subscribers two to three weeks after the official date of issue.

In the fourth place, at times there is too much copy for an issue so that a medley has to wait till the next issue. A few months ago it happened that there were two medleys waiting in Winnipeg to be published, while I was working already on the third one.

If, therefore, some items come to the attention of our readers at a somewhat belated moment, you know what may have been the reason for that.

Did you know, e.g., that Attercliffe has a new church-building? People in Ontario will have been aware of it, but we here in the West were blissfully ignorant of this happy fact until I received a stack of bulletins which gave me a good insight into the process. Thank you to the one who saw to it that I received them as yet. Years ago I was promised that the bulletins would be sent at regular intervals. This promise finally becomes a reality again.

The new cover of the Attercliffe/Smithville bulletin shows a drawing which has been honoured with the qualification "Satisfactory." After some delays, and when the greatest danger of importing mud was over, the building could be used.

"It was decided not to open it — the balcony, VO — for Sunday usage until such time that shortage of space would necessitate it."

It is beyond me why a balcony was put in at all, but there are a lot of things in this world — and in the Church — which I fail to grasp.

"The organ pipes were finally enroute to Canada." May I conclude from this that the brothers and sisters were so wise as to insist on installation of a real organ right from the start? Congratulations. This also explains to me why they were not prepared to spend more than \$250.00 on an electronic instrument.

A change in liturgy was effectuated as well. The first Psalm is to be sung with the congregation remaining standing after the votum and benediction. This becomes more and more customary among us and I am happy about it. I would love to see all songs being sung while the congregation is standing. I do not understand it why, e.g., some congregations rise when a Psalm or Hymn is sung after the baptism of a member, but why they remain seated with other songs.

"Another change is that this Psalm will not be announced any more by the minister."

It is a good custom to look up the text and the songs as soon as one has taken a seat in a pew after entering the auditorium. I, too, can see no need for announcing the first song. Announcement of the other songs may be necessary, as

the congregation does not know in each and every case precisely when the minister will request them to sing that particular Psalm or Hymn. Everyone knows when the first song is to be sung and the boards display the number.

A final item about that new building: "Brother A. reports that the mortgage for the church building is locked in at 11% for five years. The amount borrowed is \$200,000.00."

Neighbouring Smithville, too, has plans. The committee of administration was looking for a piece of property "with a view to present and future needs."

Apparently their looking was rewarded. Of a piece of approximately two acres it is said, "If everything goes according to plan and no difficulties arise in severance proceedings, the two properties will become our possession August 21, 1987, the Lord willing."

These two places are not the only ones where plans are being made or executed.

In Neerlandia, too, many meetings were held and numerous discussions took place in connection with the erection of a new churchbuilding. Neerlandia's Church — as may be known — sold their old building and at present are meeting in the auditorium of the school.

Then there is the Church at Lynden, Wash. where plans are being made for a churchbuilding of their own. They meet at present in the auditorium of a school and received "from the Society of Protestant Reformed Education a letter informing us of an increase in the cost of rent from \$25 to \$30 per service." Although this is not insurmountable, and although one cannot have a building of one's own for \$60 per week on the average, it is not nice when rent goes up.

The main reason for the fervent wish to have a building of their own, however, is the conviction that there should be a meeting-place worthy of the purpose to which we come together. It is beautiful when there are people who are willing to rent us facilities where we can have our worship services, but makeshift facilities should ultimately give way to a decent building, a building which has been designed for the purpose.

After the Liberation of 1944 it was oftentimes necessary, too, to gather in gymnasiums and barns. There is a well-known joke that one of the children, attending services in such facilities asked his friend at school whether in his church there were also swinging-rings, bars, and vaulting horses. When the friend had to admit that in his church there were no such instruments, the conclusion was that "then yours is not a true church!"

The magnificent buildings which have come to us from the Middle Ages may then partly have been "financed" by imposing fines for indulgences and atonement for pardonable sins, there was also love and dedication and true piety in the craftsmanship applied to them to make them as beautiful as they are.

We no longer have holy buildings, but this does not mean that our buildings should not be in accordance with and reflect the holiness and the majesty of our God.

Not only new buildings ask for our attention, there are also new Churches.

A previous time we could report on plans in that direction in the Grand Valley and Elora areas. This time we may tell that these plans will be realized.

The Fergus Consistory received a letter signed by eighteen families requesting permission to institute in Elora. "The consistory is unanimously in favour and will go to the next Classis to ask for advice according to Art. 40 C.O."

Now we read in the Burlington West bulletin: "The chairman reports on the meeting of Classis North — Ouch!! VO — classis advised favourably as to the institution of Churches in Elora and Grand Valley."

And Rev. Nederveen writes in the Brampton bulletin: "This means that on July 19, the Lord willing, Grand Valley hopes to institute and Elora hopes to do the same on September 6. This increases the number of churches in Classis North to 12 churches."

A very sympathetic note from the Fergus bulletin: "A discussion follows on the matter of possible financial assistance to the new churches."

Fergus reports further that "a counter and sink have been installed in the nursery." This most certainly will be an extremely welcome addition.

What appears to be a step back is the following from the same Church.

"A proposal to have a Dutch service once per month on a Sunday evening during the summer season is discussed. The consistory will ask the churches at Guelph and Orangeville if they are interested. If the response is positive, we plan to have a Dutch service this year in the months June - September."

In Burlington West there are plans to have a women's society meet on weekday mornings instead of in the evening, as is customary. The sisters report that in a neighbouring Church this works well, and they are willing to give it a try as well.

"When a suggestion is made to publish also a new local church directory, it is proposed to try to have *one* church directory for all three Burlington churches. The idea is favourably received and the brothers A. and B. are appointed to explore the possibilities and report to council in August."

I can recommend such an endeavour. The six Fraser Valley Churches have a combined directory, and people here wouldn't want it any different.

During the past months many younger brothers and sisters made public profession of their faith, and due attention was paid to this in the various bulletins. I cannot pass on all the worthwhile articles and remarks made in this connection. Yet I wish to quote a few lines from what Rev. Mulder wrote in the Burlington West bulletin.

We all know the emphasis put on "the acceptance of Jesus as the personal Saviour" which is found with so many around us.

It is good to listen to the following. "You will understand that you are not saved all 'on your own.' Jesus is not a 'personal Saviour'! Yes, it is true, you may know that you receive His forgiveness and enjoy His care very personally. He knows your name! You are also personally responsible to Him! But we do receive Christ's benefits in communion with all God's people, the holy catholic Church of all ages."

Bear it in mind.

Speaking of the "holy catholic Church of all ages," I would like to pass on what the Australian deputies on the Church Book write in their report regarding the Apostles' Creed. They propose to their forthcoming Synod to accept the text of the Apostles' Creed as we have it with the exception of the word "Christian" in Art. IX.

Their ground is, among other arguments:

"Correctly the Apostles' Creed is, in the new *Book of Praise*, printed under the heading 'Ecumenical Creeds.' Therefore the text should stand in the ecumenical tradition."

They propose, therefore, "adopt the text of the Ecumenical Creeds with the exception of the word "Christian" in Art. IX of the Apostles' Creed, in Lord's Day 7 of the Heidelberg Catechism, and wherever the text of the Creed is quoted in the Liturgical Forms and Prayers.

Australia is ahead of us here.

The Deputies for Training for the Ministry propose that \$30 per communicant member be requested in support of the Theological College in Hamilton.

This proposal does not originate from a sort of remorse that they have already two graduates from our College serving there once the Rev. Bouwman has been installed in Byford, and that they are trying right now to get two more, but is the fruit of a genuine interest in our College and of the awareness of the Church's task to provide for the ministry of the Gospel.

The Armadale Church is making progress, too, in their singing. The brothers and sisters there will know what I mean. "The congregation will be asked about the possibility of singing Hymn 1A during the celebration of the Lord's Supper (in the a.m.). This will be an open discussion, and the consistory will then discuss and decide on the matter."

In Byford the consistory made "an appeal to avoid excessive noise when depositing Bibles and *Books of Praise* in trays."

May I offer a simple solution? Ask a carpet layer for some remnants of carpet, cut strips, and put them into the trays. We like to sit comfortably; books don't resent having a soft basis either.

In the above I mentioned Rev. Bouwman. Perhaps, by the time you read these lines, the family will have arrived in Byford, WA. In light of his — then impending — departure, it does not seem to make much sense that "Rev. C. Bouwman and Rev. C. VanSpronsen will have a pulpit exchange once every three months." I'm sure Rev. VanSpronsen wouldn't mind! And I know more colleagues who would not think twice before accepting an invitation!

Let's return to Burlington West for a moment.

"Council was told that an anonymous member — are there anonymous members or are there only members who do not wish their name to become known? VO — has donated to the church a central airconditioning system for the manse, installation included. This is greatly appreciated and thankfully accepted, also by the chairman."

Congratulations, brother and family!

In Hamilton "Brother A. offers his services as church secretary to perform special tasks of maintaining computerized congregational information, including directory information and printing of classical credentials, baptism certificates, and several form letters for committees, etc." The clerk was to discuss these things with the brother. I am certain that the offer was gratefully accepted and will be made use of.

The Carman consistory received a "letter from the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad asking us to keep them informed of our contacts with the Reformed Church of the U.S.. Will be replied to. A committee is appointed by the consistory to help in the work to bring about these contacts."

A strange decision was recorded by the Surrey Church.

"Council grants Rev. Boersema's request to terminate his work in São José by the end of 1989 (with a year of study in 1989) thus making him able to take up a call elsewhere as of Jan. 1990."

I understand that Rev. Boersema receives a year off for study. There is nothing abnormal in this. It happened before and most likely will happen in the future in other cases as well. My problem is not with this provision.

My difficulty lies in that first part: must I understand it in this manner, that Rev. Boersema will no longer be Surrey's missionary after January 1, 1990, irrespective of whether he has received another call or not?

If that is the intention, I cannot but call this completely wrong and the only conclusion can be that, since as of January 1, 1990, Rev. Boersema is no longer subject to the call of Surrey, he ceases being a minister, for we do not know of ministers without them being subject to the call of a Church.

In the past I wrote more often about this point of missionaries going out for a certain period and then "signing up" for another term. This is contrary to the Reformed concept of a call and should be taboo in our Reformed Church life.

Until some more light is received in the present case, we'll confine ourselves to the present remarks.

In connection with what I wrote about the "colloquium" in the case of the Rev. B. Hofford, I received a letter from the Rev. VanRietschoten, who told me that advice had been asked both

from the Deputies ad art. 48 C.O. and from Prof. Deddens. I gladly pass this information on.

As for the point itself, at some time in the future I'll publish the letter and comment on it, for the matter is sufficiently important to get all misunderstandings out of the way and to determine what the correct course of action is. I am not alone in my conviction that a complete examination is mandatory in such cases. More about it later, the Lord willing.

VO

Analysis of an interpretation, (Synod 1986 on Art. 28 of the Confession)

A Discussion about Synod 1986 on the Church

Some time ago, the Rev. G. VanDooren gave me an article in which he voices his criticism and concern regarding the pronouncements of the Synod of Burlington, 1986, regarding the doctrine concerning the church, especially as confessed in Art. 28 B.C. Br. VanDooren hopes there will be a discussion among us on this matter. The reader will find the article and (part of) this discussion in this and the next two issues of our magazine. VanDooren's article was of such a length that it had to be cut into three parts. My response will also be in three parts. It took some time to prepare this response because of other urgent work, as the reader will understand.

J. GEERTSEMA

Introductory note

In the midst of our sister churches in the Netherlands there are also differences in the interpretation of Art. 28 of the Confession of Faith.

One sentence in *Gereformeerd Kerkblad*, Feb. 7, 1987 struck me. "Wat de Synode heeft uitgesproken aangaande Art. 28 N.G.B. gaat ons allen aan, maar hoe verder de zaak in elkaar zit en hoe zij gegaan is via de classis en de particuliere synode naar de generale synode, overzien alleen de betrokken partijen."

Freely translated: The matter of synodical statements about Art. 28 of the Confession of Faith concerns us all; but the way of appeal via the major assemblies is only a matter of the parties involved.

My analysis of Synod 1986 decisions regarding a doctrinal issue stays away from any meddling in the matters of ap-

peal and I do not want to be drawn into things that are none of my business.

N.B. Because all families have the Acts of Synod 1986, I refrain from quoting their full text.

The issue

It seems preferable to start with saying what this "Analysis" of Synod 1986's understanding of Art. 28 is *not*. It does not, in any way, interfere or meddle with any appeals about local problems that preceded Synod 1986 or issued from that ecclesiastical meeting. I even want to dissociate myself from any implication, at a certain locality, around a certain minister or ministers. I do not even mention names, although I must vent a public protest against the way *my* name has been used, misused, and as a result is rolling over the streets of a certain city. Those concerned know what I am talking about.

Thus the *only* issue in my remarks is what a General Synod or Synods, in dealing with certain appeals, has (have) said about Art. 28 of our undoubted Christian faith: a certain understanding and interpretation which, to me, is at least "one-sided," and possibly not in full agreement with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, nor with our only comfort in life and death.

For the love of the Churches one who is convinced of this should not keep silent but speak up, hopefully initiating a public discussion, that may — under God's blessing — result in the strengthening of the unity of faith among us, based on the undiluted glory of the Reformed Faith.

In recent weeks my thoughts often went back to the time and the teachings of *Dr. K. Schilder*, whose "spiritual" son I flatter myself to be. Apart from the main issue that will keep us busy, and of which "K.S." spoke so often and so prophetic-

ly, I should mention here two *warnings* that he often repeated in the forties.

a: let not the churches fall asleep, blindly trusting a synod

b: involve the people (kerkvolk) in the matters at hand by means of *public discussions*.

Because the warning sub *a* is again urgent today, we will follow the advice of *b*.

Not "UNTIL" but "UNLESS"

This is, of course, a reference to *Article 31 of the Church Order*: ". . . and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, *unless* it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order."

During the struggle for Liberation (Vrijmaking) the conflict could be caught in these two terms.

The synods of those years, and their followers, chose for "UNTIL." We are bound, local churches, preachers, congregations, by the synodical doctrine (called "divine truth") *until* (eventually) a next synod may decide to change the "doctrine." Those who liberated themselves, fought for the maintenance of "UNLESS." No one is bound who is convinced that synod's decision is not in full harmony with the Scriptures.

Some things should be stated at this moment.

1. The interpretation given by General Synod 1986 was the basis on which synod answered certain *appeals*. This synodical interpretation plus decision is meant for the appellants. It is for them to decide whether they can accept it, or at least live with it. It is, therefore, somewhat "remarkable" to hear that members, office-bearers, consistories prepare themselves

to "ratify," for example, Art. 184 of the Acts of '86. There is nothing for you, brethren, to "ratify" in this respect! Because synod dealt with Appeals!

2. The present situation around "Art. 28" cannot, should not be put on an equal footing with "1944". Although I do not dare to assume that everyone read my book . . . *and we escaped*, I refer to it.

There you can read how I one day got a letter in the mail, coming from the "headquarters" in Utrecht: "you are not allowed in your preaching and teaching to say anything that is not in full harmony with the doctrinal decision synod has made."

That was the "binding"! That demanded and unequivocal NO!

Synod 1986 did not send such a letter to all ministers, etc. Nor did this synod make up a "Fourth Form of Unity" as Synod '43/'44 did.

Synod 1986 reminded the consistories that they watch out that not anything be taught in the church, that "is not in harmony with the Scriptures and the Three Forms of Unity," Acts, p. 104. And even this was addressed only to "all the office-bearers of the Immanuel Church at Edmonton" (id.). Synod did not intend to write a (new) binding doctrine.

All this sounds good.

3. However, since that synod "passed away" certain remarkable (and very "on-Vrijgemaakte") things are being said and done.

First, several people seem to be "asleep." They don't know what has been going on, except then now that "drama" around a certain pastor. Second (and as a result?) one hears things like: "the synod talked so long about 'it', they must have known what they were doing."

Another (office-bearer) suggests putting the whole thing on a 'backburner' until a future synod might change or rescind the decision of '86.

One gets the impression that (I am vague for a good purpose . . .) consistories may plan to ask (demand?) from their ministers to agree with Art. 184, 185. One minister, in another meeting, wants to know whether the sister-churches, represented there, will "obey synod."

Rumours? No, this is a description of what is happening among us. With some the talk about a growing split is on the tip of their tongue.

And all this is nothing else but replacing the "unless" with an "until." It seems, that among "us" it is no longer unpopular to say "*Roma locuta — causa finita*," freely translated: "synod has spoken, and that is final." Then the "unless" would have disappeared . . .

Freedom of speech

No, in the church we do not have a

"freedom of speech" as is granted in the Bill of Rights.

The "old man" has no rights in the church, to begin with. Then: the Lord is our Master; He rules us by His Word and Spirit. Within His Church we have bound ourselves and each other to understand His Word as is expressed in the Reformed Creeds. No rejection of those Creeds as Form(-ulae) of Unity may be permitted.

Yet, the "unless" of Art. 31 C.O. grants everyone such a "freedom of speech" within whose limits we may, even must, for the love of Zion, speak up, publicly, audibly, if we are ever convinced deep inside that certain decisions or declarations of major assemblies are not in full agreement with the Word of God, and/or lead in a dangerous direction.

This precious Reformed freedom should without any further discussion be honoured, granted, and used in a Reformed Community.

Here I want to repeat the "words of the first hour" as Rev. J. O. Mulder addressed them to a classis that was about to send us out of the door, because they denied us that "freedom". These royal words bear repeating in the present "atmosphere" within the Canadian (American) Reformed Churches.

Rev. Mulder spoke thus (I quote essential parts, cf. for complete text, my book, pp. 171ff.):

... "According to you 'the ecclesiastical way' is to go with one's objections via classis and provincial synod to general synod, and in the meantime to conform de facto to the synodical decisions which we reject, and thus to consider them settled and binding, and give up our right to publicly oppose them.

... If you were right, then the door would be wide open for carrying through and executing decisions of major assemblies, also when these decisions conflict with the Word of God and the Church Order.

... the question is whether the decisions are always binding But . . . our major assemblies are not allowed to make decisions which go against the Word of God and the Church Order If they take such decisions, these are, then, worthless and lack any legitimacy.

... They do not become worthless when a next synod becomes convinced of that, but they are!

"For anyone who is convinced of that, and can prove it, they have no value whatsoever"

Is, then, Reformed doctrine involved?

Yes, indeed. The Arts. 184, 185 are synod's answers to appeals of appellants. I have no business with the "directives" given to those appellants.

But, as already suggested, such "directives" are based upon a synodical understanding and interpretation of Articles of the Confession of Faith.

Synod 1986 even used terms like "undermining" and "nullifying" a certain Reformed doctrine. Although I will do my utmost to "creep into the skin" of the brethren who used these terms, and will try to analyze the train of thought, that caused them to use such terms, I do from the heart disagree with this "train of thought" because I do not believe they are "Gospel-truth."

I say with Mulder: "I am convinced of that, and can prove it."

That's a big statement, yes, but not too big for one whose only comfort regarding the church is, "that the Son of God, out of the whole human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself, by His Spirit and Word, in the unity of the true faith, a church chosen to everlasting life, and I believe that I am and forever shall remain a living member of it," *Heid. Cat. Lord's Day 21, Q&A 54*.

And we are all, Canadian Reformed believers, united in this, are we not?

A spectacle?

Paul (1 Cor. 4:9) considered it a badge of honour when he became "a spectacle to the world," "fools for Christ's sake."

We should not be afraid of becoming such "fools" by insisting that true believers must, locally, join a true or faithful church as described in Art. 29 of the Confession. Then they would act "according to the ordinance of God," Art. 28, last words.

Such wounds as Paul had were, however, not self-inflicted. If they were, he, and we, would make ourselves a "spectacle."

Everyone among us can know, that now already three General Synods in a row have been wrestling with the "problem" (!) whether a true believer, ingrafted into Christ by the Holy Spirit and thus having become a member of Christ "shares in all His treasures and gifts." Thus also the gift of being able to say: "I believe a holy universal or catholic Christian church, of which I am and forever shall remain a living member." The "problem," then, being whether such a believer, who clings

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to the promise of Christ, "he who believes in the Son, has eternal life" (John 3) has received this gift of "forever a living member," even though he — for whatever reasons — is not, yet a member of a local assembly of believers that bears the marks of a true church.

Three synods wrestled with this "problem": *Smithville 1980, Cloverdale 1983 and Burlington-West 1986*.

No one should deny that for years now there has been not only confusion within the Canadian Reformed Churches (especially about the doctrine re: the Church; the term "invisible") but even outspoken disagreement about a number of issues.

It is time that we throw off the self-deception as though we are all so nicely united. There is suspicion, name-calling ("liberal" and "conservative"). There are no public debates about issues, that might result in a renewed unity on the basis of the Reformed Confession.

I remember the good years when at General Synods we talked together so long till we finally could agree on matters. There was, in the words of the late *Prof. P. Deddens* "geen overstemming maar overeenstemming" (no outvoting each other but agreeing together).

Is this now something of the past?

The last synod that I attended sticks in my memory as the "nine/seven synod." Most decisions were taken with a 9 for/7 against vote, whether a motion was adopted or rejected.

The "spectacle" had begun. Not nice to say that; much less nice that it is true.

One, with a feeling of responsibility, looks for a reason, reasons.

There should be no doubt in our minds, that the unity of Reformed believers is maintained and strengthened by their common agreement with the Reformed Creeds.

Disunity arises (thus the lesson of history) if and when these Creeds are interpreted in a manner that conflicts with the "spirit" of these Creeds, or rather: with the heart of the Gospel.

My deep conviction is that there are signs of this process among us. Could it be, so I asked myself, that the LORD sends confusion, to teach us a lesson? That the Holy Spirit cannot dwell where there is distrust, dissension?

I must confess that I myself am not blameless here. I also state my opinion (without going into details about names, etc.) that this confusion is not found at only "one side." Past synods cannot acknowledge such confusion anymore. They have "passed away." We, members, can, at whatever side of the (issue? conflict? disagreement?) we find ourselves.

At stake was the understanding of Art. 28 of the so-called "*Belgic Confession*." The reader might want to re-read this Article now. Towards the end I will call this Article an *Evangelical Manifesto*.

The "Spectacle," that was played in front of this Manifesto, started in *Smithville 1980*. This synod fell flat by two tie-votes. They left behind a bare bone of a "statement," which could not satisfy anyone. There was no head or tail to it.

Cloverdale 1983 produced certain "considerations" that were not too abundant in clarity. Yet, my sympathy went out to this synod that tried so hard to bring about a compromise, a reconciliation. Synod said that not all statements that had been made up to date, were 100% true, but that did not mean an "attack" on the Confession. Blessed are the peace-makers!

But it was not to be peace. The compromise did not last as long as the *Pacification Formula of 1905*. That lasted till the Forties when one of the "two sides" broke the compromise and kicked the "other side" out of their church-system. This time both accusers and accused went out to the battlefield to make their "understanding of Art. 28" the victor.

Burlington West 1986 differed from her predecessor. The 1983 pacification attempt was "rescinded." 1986 rejected 1983 as "inconsistent" and thus declared certain interpretations of the Reformed Confession in this matter to be rejected.

When I, upon return from Nova Scotia, read the Acts '86, especially Art. 184, I was quite upset.

I repeat: I am not defending anyone. I am not part in any appeal-situation. I am only a Reformed Confessor. I only followed my sniffing nose, which told me that in all those observations, considerations and recommendations of Synod 1986 something somewhere went wrong.

For the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and out of love for the Gospel that "something wrong" must be "sniffed out," and then on the basis of the "unless" of Art. 31 C.O. rejected out of hand. This sounds serious, but maintaining the truth of the Gospel, as summarized in Reformed Creeds, is always a serious matter.

G. VANDOOREN

Response₁

1. The matter of Art. 28 of the Belgic Confession, as dealt with at the General Synod of Heemse, 1984/5, is different. If I understand it correctly, the Rev. Hoorn reasons that all the believers belong to the church, as also colleague VanDooren does. But when two use the same expression, they do not necessarily mean the same

true believers are members of the true, that is the Liberated Reformed Churches. The Dutch sister churches rejected this point of view as doing "injustice in an unacceptable way to the broadness of the work of Christ and to God's compassion in the gathering of the church" (Acts, Vol. I., p. 130). I read this decision as follows: Hoorn said that all the believers belong to or are members of the church, which is the Liberated Churches. The Synod said that this view was in conflict with Art. 28 B.C., which calls all the believers to join the true church. Synod thus maintained that there are believers outside the church, who act against the "ordinance of God" when they do not join and, in that way, "are not maintaining the unity of the Church." As I see it, the Synod of Burlington, 1986, maintained the same, that there are believers outside the church who are gathered by Christ and will be brought to the church.

2. We have here a subjective evaluation of the situation in our churches, based on a personal view and feelings about the synodical pronouncements. Others have a different view. If a person says that the synod must be right because they discussed and thought about the matter for a long time, does that really suggest that the churches are falling asleep and blindly follow the synod? In my opinion the Rev. VanDooren, with such a generalizing suggestion, does injustice to many who follow what the synod pronounced because they agree with its pronouncements. There are many who have taken note of the synodical decisions with keen interest, and have accepted its pronouncements not as blind followers, but as involved church members who agree.

If there is such a great difference between the Synods in 1943/44, which made up a "Fourth Form of Unity," and our synods that stressed the binding to Scripture and Confession, is it then really necessary to suggest a similarity?

Besides, as far as I know, our churches have maintained the "unless" of Art. 31 C.O. I do not know of any suspension from office of any office bearer just because he disagreed with synodical pronouncements, while proving from Scripture and Confession that those statements were wrong.

Moreover, what I miss in all these pages of br. VanDooren is the indication that, in his concern, he will bring an appeal to the next synod, and that doing this is the proper way. If the pronouncements of the Synod of Burlington and its predecessors are so bad, so much in conflict with Scripture and Confession that they cannot be accepted but must first be

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By Rev. W.W.J. VanOene

Dr. A. Kuyper, as reporter, replied that the only definitive federation that was permitted was one in which "all believers who share the same pure confession with us, each in their own Church can cooperate with us."

Another point of discussion was the name by which the federation was to be known. How could confusion and misunderstanding be prevented?

The name chosen was "Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerken (Doleerende)."

At the provisional Synod of Utrecht 1888 the word "doleerende" was deleted. It should, Synod said, be used only when it was considered advisable to point to that temporary condition of the Churches.

The one at Utrecht was not the only provisional synod. The four synods which the Doleantie Churches held were all called "provisional." They were: Utrecht 1888, Leeuwarden 1890, The Hague 1891, and Amsterdam 1892.

Fruits

As a fruit of the Doleantie life flourished and the membership became more aware of their calling in the Church in the first place, but then also in various other areas of life.

Especially the calling to show Christian mercy and compassion was seen more clearly.

The office and task of the deacons received a new shine. In 1888 a Diaconal Congress was held in Utrecht on Feb. 2 and 3, and in May of the same year there appeared a long-awaited and eagerly received booklet on the diaconate, entitled *Oil and Wine into the Wounds*.

Another Congress was held in December of that same year: it was an elders' conference. This was necessary, for not only had the office of deacon deteriorated under the hierarchy, the elder was no longer what he should be either.

Mission received renewed attention, too. A congress dedicated especially to this work was held on January 29 and 30, 1890.

At the second provisional synod it was decided to continue negotiations with the Netherlands Reformed Mission Society to take over its work on Central Java. The Rev. F. Lion Cachet was delegated to visit Java and to report back on the whole situation. Upon his return he wrote *Travelling One Year in Service of the Mission*.

When the Secession Churches and the Doleantie Churches merged in 1892, the united Churches did take over the mission field mentioned above.

In all the above proceedings Dr. van den Bergh took a large part. Other names to be mentioned are those of Dr. A. Kuyper, Dr. F.L. Rutgers, Mr. A.F. de Savornin Lohman. Without wishing to do injustice to many others whose names would deserve honourable mention as well, we confine ourselves to these brothers.

7. On the Path towards Unity

The Churches of the Secession did not live in snug isolation. They followed with great interest the development in the Netherlands Reformed Church and rejoiced

when there came another Reformation.

As soon as it became known that the Church at Kootwijk had liberated itself, they received a letter of encouragement from the consistory of the Christian Reformed Church at Houwerzijl-Zoutkamp in the north of the country.

From Classis Amersfoort of the Christian Reformed Church a letter was received as well, expressing heartfelt joy and gratitude for what the Lord had given to His people in Kootwijk. We mentioned this before.

Also in the Christian Reformed press ample attention was paid to the progress of the Doleantie.

Warning voices were heard, too, reminding the Christian Reformed people of the fact that those who now were suspended by the classical boards had always theoretically condemned the act of Secession. The Christian Reformed were urged to adopt a wait-and-see attitude in order not to take any hasty steps which they might regret later on.

On the part of the Doleantie Churches attention was paid to their relation and position towards the Christian Reformed Church as well. This point was raised and discussed already at the meeting of delegates from the first three Churches mentioned above. There the conclusion was that they were not to enter into any federation "but that for the time being there will remain only a sisterly bond."

Rev. van den Bergh once summarized the difference between Secession and Doleantie in three points.

First, the Christian Reformed "left Babylon without the confession that they, too, were guilty because of their own sins and those of their fathers, and even now they give little evidence of an awareness of their being guilty with us of our present misery." Van den Bergh sees a difference here, as he is certain that with the Doleantie people such an awareness is found.

Secondly, "The goal of the Christian Reformed is to form the true Reformed Church in doctrine and church-government. The doleerende Church aims specifically at the reformation of the local church."

In the third point we see the Regulation of 1869 raise its head: The Christian Reformed have "a denomination" divided into congregations," while those of the Doleantie see "a manifestation of the body of Christ in each local church which shows itself doleerend." Such a "manifestation of the body of Christ, however, is not allowed to live outside the bond with the other churches." Here we see the theory of the "invisible church" raise its ugly head.

The Regulation of 1869 came into focus again at the Congress of January 1887.

There the question whether attestations given by the Christian Reformed should be accepted was answered in the affirmative, although it was said at the same time that no attestations could be given to them for as long as the 1869 Regulation was being maintained. Without removal of the Regulation no merger could be possible either, since otherwise it would mean returning under the system of a country-wide body.

Not all attention should be focused on the Regulation. Perhaps, when it comes to the point, this was secondary. It is quite well possible that the main objection to the Secession was its principle.

There was the Synodical Convent of 1887.

Dr. A. Kuyper, who took a large share of the reports and of their defense, stated, "We also have objections to the *principle of the secession*." The views of the men of the Secession especially concerning the Church happened to be different from those of Dr. A. Kuyper!

As an aftermath of the Synodical Convent, Dr. Kuyper drafted a letter which the various Doleantie Churches could send to the Christian Reformed congregation in the same place.

The letter was mostly received very favourably. However, the Christian Reformed did not gloss over the differences that existed.

The Christian Reformed Congregation in Middelburg, e.g., asked the doleerende consistory to make clear "in what respect the principles of the document which the Christian Reformed Church sent to the Government in 1869 differ from those of our Church Order." Further, the consistory sees it as an insurmountable obstacle that the doleerende consistory "regards the whole Netherlands Reformed (Hervormde) Congregation in this place to be Your congregation."

As for the feeling of guilt and humbling themselves because of it before the Lord, the consistory replied that the sin of hierarchy had been confessed already at and by the Secession of 1834, that they had sought and found atonement for it in the blood of Christ, and that therefore they no longer had such a deep feeling of guilt in this respect.

Concerning the last point: the general complaint of the people of the Secession was that the men of the Doleantie oftentimes spoke and acted as if the Secession had not been a return to the obedience to the King of the Church and as if only with the Doleantie the light finally had arisen.

Time and again it was stressed that the Secession was still being considered to have been an act of obedience.

The Amsterdam consistory, upon receipt of the letter from the doleerende consistory, remarked, among other things: "We are firm in our conviction that the Secession of 1834 is a work from God, commanded by the Word of God and the confession of the Reformed Church, and we are of the opinion that with further negotiations especially at this point the necessary light will have to be kindled."

It cannot be denied, however, that with both, the Churches of the Secession and those of the Doleantie, there was right from the beginning the desire and the effort to work towards a merger.

What was the motive behind it was that the brothers were convinced that the Lord did not approve of a separate existence but that it was His will that "brethren should dwell together in unity."

That Dr. A. Kuyper occupied a prominent place in the whole matter and had a finger in many a pie does not mean that the whole striving for unity was his doing, and that there were ulterior motives with him.

There certainly is no ground to say that "First Kuyper did not want to hear about it — i.e. a merger between

Secessionists and Doleerenden — since he considered secession and doleantie (1834 and 1886) as two irreconcilable contrasts. But when the Doleantie had become a failure and the national church was not changed into a free church, — then efforts were made to come to unity."

This, however, is not as bad as what someone else wrote, something which amounts to nothing less than slander.

Listen.

"When, throughout the country, the balance was made up, it appeared that two times one hundred thousand persons were counted.

"A considerable loss for our Netherlands Reformed Church, when one realizes that these two times one hundred thousand almost all were people who faithfully attended the services.

"Yet it was only a small group for a man such as Dr. A. Kuyper, who had thought that he could get all along who were believers or orthodox, or at least who were not-modernistic, and who, above this, being not only an ecclesiastical leader but also a political leader, needed a large following around him.

"Now the eyes were fixed full of desire on the previously somewhat scorned, at least despised Secessionists, who at that time, just as those of the Doleantie, numbered about two hundred thousand. If it could be achieved to unite those with the Doleerenden, the result would be at least a church of some importance in the country.

"That was what they aimed at now.

"And then Dr. Kuyper once again displayed all his talents of insight into the human nature and power of persuasion to bring about that miracle.

"For a miracle it was!"

First Point of Difference

It was a miracle, indeed, that the union did result from the efforts to achieve this.

Mainly three points of difference existed.

1. The men of the Secession did not differentiate between the Netherlands Reformed Church as a whole and the local congregations. In most places breaking with the Netherlands Reformed Church was an individual act. It was, it was felt, the obligation of all believers to separate themselves from the false church, and that's what they did. We can see this in that, e.g. the "Act of Secession and Return" was signed not just by the Consistory, as representing the whole congregation, but by all members individually. Whenever a whole consistory and congregation broke with the Netherlands Reformed Church, this was more or less accidental, so to speak.

With the Doleantie, however, a sharp distinction was made between the denomination and the local churches.

The Consistory was responsible and should make the decision to cast off the yoke.

Should a consistory fail to take this step, those who saw their obligation should petition the consistory to take this action.

In case the consistory refused, it was the duty of the members to come together, to elect office-bearers and thus to continue the Reformed Church in that place.

— *To be continued*

ARTICLE 28 BELGIC CONFESSION

EVERYONE'S DUTY TO JOIN THE CHURCH

We believe, since this holy assembly and congregation is the assembly of the redeemed and there is no salvation outside of it, that no one ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself, no matter what his state or quality may be. But all and everyone are obliged to join it and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the Church. They must submit themselves to its instruction and discipline, bend their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ, and serve the edification of the brothers and sisters, according to the talents which God has given them as members of the same body.

To observe this more effectively, it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate from those who do not belong to the Church and to join this assembly wherever God has established it. They should do so even though the rulers and edicts of princes were against it, and death or physical punishment might follow.

All therefore who draw away from the Church or fail to join it act contrary to the ordinance of God.

fought, then we have the agreement that we shall go the ecclesiastical way of bringing an appeal to the next synod. Publicly writing against such decisions is not the first duty. The first duty is the way of appeal to the ecclesiastical major assembly, or rather, assemblies, if possible, via the consistory. Otherwise the freedom of Art. 31 C.O. becomes an un-Reformed independentism: I do not agree; I see the decisions as in conflict with Scripture; so I reject them and I am going to fight them in public writing. Dr. K. Schilder did not only write against synodical decisions (although in private letters because of the German occupation), but he also wrote his appeals to the synods. And it is clear from . . . *and we escaped* that br. VanDooren did the same together with his consistory in Wezep, in the forties. That is why I would have liked to read some words about this Reformed, ecclesiastical faithfulness as well in Rev. VanDooren's "cri de coeur."

3. Let me give a technical correction. If I am not mistaken, in the days of the Liberation, a brochure was published with the title, "Geen overstemming, maar overeenstemming." It was written by the Rev. R. H. Bremmer and the late Rev. J. P. van der Stoel. The late Prof. P. Deddens wrote, in a different context, in his brochure, "The Position of the Deacons with respect to the Consistory" ("De Positie van de Diakenen ten aanzien van de Kerkeraad," 1947), "The question is not: am I allowed to vote? But the question is: how do we come to agreeing together?" ("De vraag is niet: mag ik stemmen? Maar de vraag is: hoe komen we tot samenstemming?") (p. 20). I agree, the matter is the same.

Further, I can agree that it is a very difficult thing when there is disagreement in important matters at major assemblies,

as well as in consistories and congregations. The remarkable thing is, though, that the decisions against which br. VanDooren has objections were adopted *unanimously*.

4. The Rev. VanDooren writes that he found the basic "slip" of the synod's "train of thought" at the top of p. 99 of the Acts, where it says, "Art. 27 as an introductory article describes the church in general terms . . ." Quite a structure is built on the foundation of VanDooren's interpretation of the use of this word here. Reading is interpreting. Rev. VanDooren interprets the word "introductory" used here by the synod with the help of his dictionary. However, from the context of the decision it can be clear that the (perhaps not so well-chosen) word is not meant in the sense in which br. VanDooren interprets it. It does not mean "not so important," only (!)" (added by VanDooren(!)) introductory. My colleague asks the rhetorical question, "Should we now really, since Synod 1986, confess that what the Spirit of Christ did, does is only 'introductory'?"

In my opinion, what is suggested here by br. VanDooren as the meaning of what the Synod of Burlington said with this unanimously adopted decision is not really and truly meant by the synod. Br. VanDooren is reading an awful lot into a word or word use, in order to build his attack on it. However, the word "introductory" is used here in the sense of "first," that which comes first, when the confession speaks concerning the church.

I would like to refer to what is said on p. 102 of the Acts under the heading "Doctrinal Considerations," where again the word "general" appears. Br. VanDooren can again have objections against the wording, but here it can be clear that Synod 1986 acknowledged that there is

first the Lord Jesus Christ who gathers His church and who regenerates all those whom the Father has given Him.

Rev. VanDooren, as I see it, your reasoning is the following: all those who believe are by faith ingrafted into Christ, and with that, automatically, they are members of the church of Christ. That is the work of the Holy Spirit; therefore, everyone who denies that all believers who are ingrafted into Christ by faith, are, by that very fact, automatically, members of the church of Christ. And then, in your reasoning, comes your conclusion that he who does not agree with this reasoning automatically denies the first and foremost importance of the work of the Spirit of Christ. However, from what is quoted above from p. 102 of the Acts, it can be clear that your conclusion is wrong. Synod 1986 did not deny the foremost importance of the work of Christ through the Holy Spirit in the gathering of the church. You read that into what the synod has said, and then you say: wrong. That is not right.

When I have difficulties, not with saying that every true believer has been ingrafted into Christ by faith through the Holy Spirit, but with the statement that every believer by the very fact that he believes is a member of the church of Christ, I do not for one second deny that it is the Spirit who made him a believer and ingrafts him into Christ, and that it is the Spirit who brings this believer into the Church of Christ. To say that I deny this is, to say the least, confusing the matter. In my opinion, br. VanDooren does injustice here to the Synod of Burlington.

The Synod of Burlington dealt with appeals against the decisions of the previous synod, in which Art. 28 B.C. had a central place. The arguments of these appeals were weighed. In one of its considerations (Acts, p. 129) the Synod of Cloverdale, 1983, said, "Regional Synod West of September 20-22, 1983, correctly stated that the true believers 'thus are included in the Church-gathering work of Christ (*congregatio*).'" Who gathers? Christ does. How does He do it? He does it by the Spirit and Word. He makes those elected believe in Him, obeying the gospel. He regenerates. And in that way He gathers all those whom He made believers. That is what br. VanDooren believes. That is what we all believe. And that is not in the least denied; on the contrary, that is upheld also by the 1986 Synod. I may again refer to p. 102 of the Acts, where Synod Burlington simply maintains as coming first (mentioned first) "Christ's work of gathering all those whom the Father has given Him and whom He regenerates." I hope to come back to this point.

J. GEERTSEMA



Hello Busy Beavers,
 How are you enjoying the summer?
 Have you been swimming lots?
 Maybe you even took lessons? (How did you do?)
 Have you been visiting with your "friends and relatives"?
 Maybe your family went away for holidays!
 Maybe you're enjoying a relaxed summer around the house?
 Your team is doing great, you say?
 Whatever it is you're doing, enjoy it! Summer is so short.
 And be SURE you join in our BIG SUMMER CONTEST (July 10 issue of *Clarion*). It's for EVERYONE! Have fun!

Summer Things To Do

When your friends or cousins come over, here are two FUN things you can do with a crowd!

Blowing Soap Bubbles

Things you need:

1. Pipe cleaners
2. Liquid dish detergent

Mix 1/3 cup of the liquid dish detergent (some kinds work better than others) with 2 quarts of water at room temperature.

Twist one pipe cleaner into the shape of a figure-8. Wrap one end of another pipe cleaner around the middle of the 8 to make a handle. No sharp ends may stick out.

Now you can start your bubble-blowing fun! But it takes practice and also patience!

Scavenger Hunt

A scavenger hunt is a race against the clock to collect all the objects on a list. You need enough players for two (or more) evenly divided teams. Give each team:

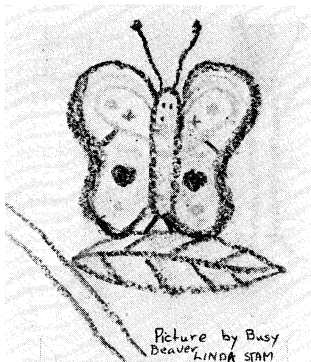
- A list of objects
- A pencil or marker
- A bag

Someone on each team should have a WATCH. Before sending the teams off on their search set a time limit. Forty-five minutes should do.

As the teams find each item, a team member crosses it off the list. The team that collects the most objects within the time limit — or returns *first* with the complete list — wins.

Here is a suggested list of objects. Add, subtract, or substitute as you like.

- Acorn or nut
- Cloverleaf
- Pinecone
- Berry
- Aluminum can
- Something round
- Seed
- Feather
- Three kinds of leaves
- Something blue
- Pure white rock
- Something square
- Piece of tree bark
- Two kinds of grass
- Name of a tree you can see



Picture by Busy Beaver LINDA STAM

Happy hunting!

— September —

Birthday wishes are in order for all the following Busy Beavers. We hope you have a very happy day celebrating with your family and friends! And may the Lord our heavenly Father bless and keep you in the year ahead. Many happy returns of the day!

	September 3
Alisa Schouten	3
Chris Spoelstra	4
Jason Tenhage	6
Helena Hopman	6
Michael Hummel	8
Karrie Eelhart	10
Emily Barendregt	11
Mary Vandeburgt	13
Cindy Huttema	13
Angela Mans	17
Andria Vanderpol	18
Teresa Oosterhoff	19
Walter Bartels	19
Erica Veenendaal	20
Margo Hofsink	21
Joyce Broersma	24
Mary Jane Helder	25
Deanna VanderWoerd	26
Jennifer Dijkstra	26
Anthony Vis	30
Geraldine Feenstra	30

Riddles

by Busy Beavers MARGARET DEWITT and NEIL VAN SETERS.

1. What did the snail say to the turtle?
2. On which side does the fish have the most scales?
3. What letter can you drink?
4. What is a sailor called if he crosses the ocean twice without taking a bath?
5. When is a horse no longer a horse?
6. What do you call a sleeping bull?

Answers: 1. I wish I could afford a house like yours! 2. the outside 3. T 4. a dirty double crosser 5. When it's turned into a field! 6. a bulldozer

And Busy Beaver JOANNE DE BOER has a couple of JOKES FOR YOU

FRED: It's raining cats and dogs!
 BARNEY: How can you tell?
 FRED: I just stepped in a poodle!

STRANGER (to farmer): Why are you using that steam roller on your fields?
 FARMER: I'm raising mashed potatoes!