

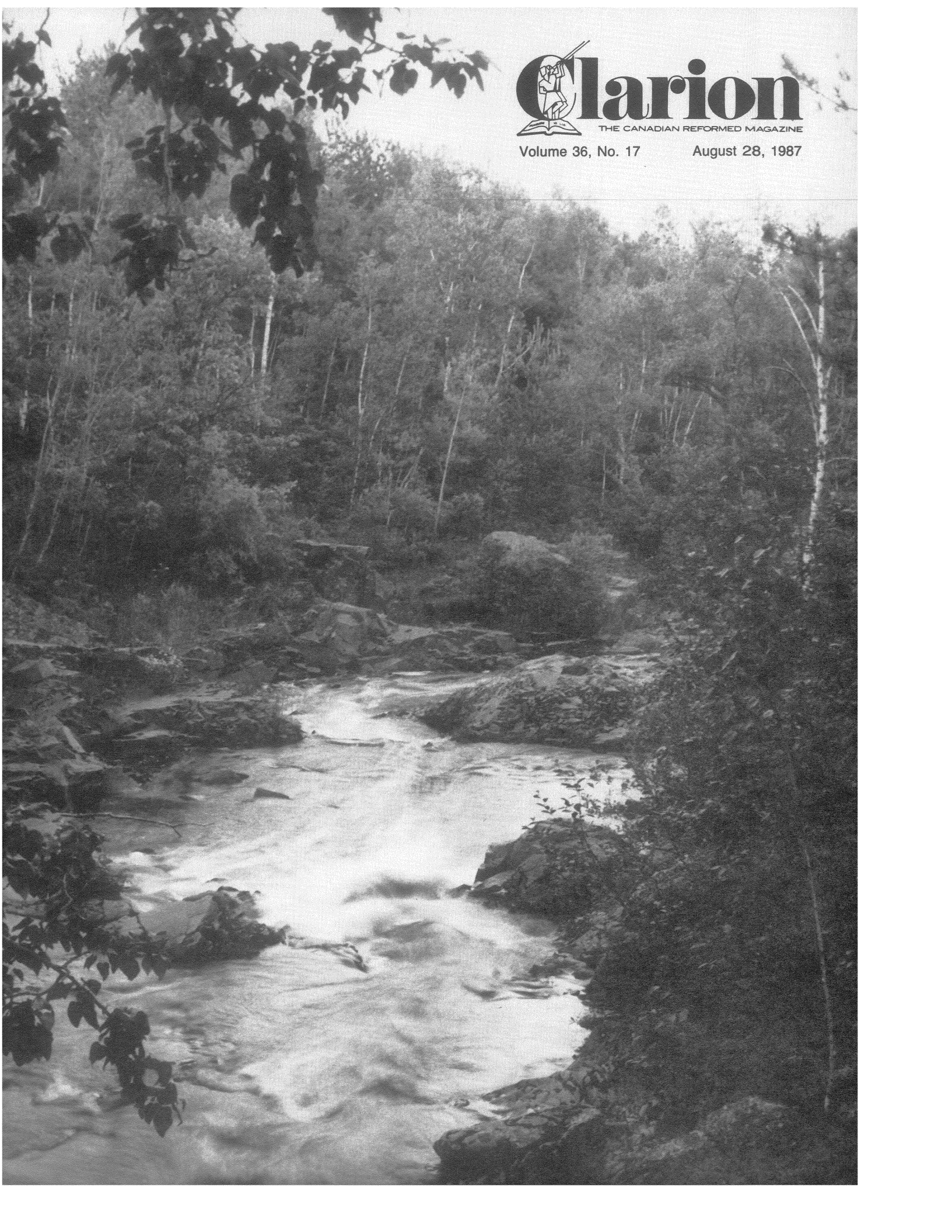


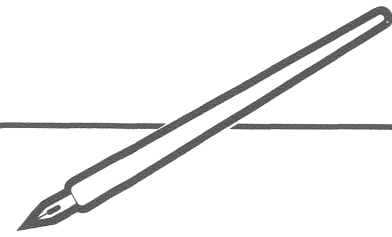
Clarion

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Teachers

The need

There is not only a need for Reformed ministers of God's Word. There is also a need for Reformed teachers in our midst.

It is June at the moment of this writing, and there are still school boards asking for applications for a teaching position. It is even so that one of the schools is still in need of a principal. This need for teachers is not only caused by the fact that a number of female teachers exchange the classroom for the living room and kitchen, the school for the home, the position of teacher for that of wife and mother, but we see also male teachers leaving their profession in exchange for involvement in business in one way or another.

When I asked why these men make this change, the answers I got were: some find the job too hard; others seem to have a hard time making ends meet with today's exorbitant high prices of houses and the high first and second mortgages. I heard of one teacher's statement that he earned less with his fifteen years or so of experience than a young girl that just started and was in possession of a number of papers that he did not have. Again others find dealing with parents too frustrating.

As for the statement that teaching young people is not an easy job, but can be quite hard on a person, who will deny this? A conscientious teacher who loves God and His church, and, therefore, the youth of the covenant, and whose desire it is to do a good job and who works hard for it, has his/her hands full. However, there are more people who find their daily work demanding. Teachers are not the only ones.

Then there is the financial side. Or rather, there are the financial aspects. And let me, before I continue, make the remark that I do not want to blame any specific person, or have any specific person in mind. I do not want to talk about persons, only about matters, issues, situations; about what is and what could and should be.

There is in the first place room for the question, "Do we let our teachers earn enough, so that they can make ends meet in the present situation?" Do we, as school societies, being in the position of employers in this respect, treat our workers justly and fairly? (Col. 4:1) This means, not only those who are single, but also those who have the responsibility for a, perhaps, growing family? It should not be so that we push the male teachers with families out of a teaching position for financial reasons.

On the other hand, I hope that it is not so that male teachers leave their profession because of the desire to make (more) money, influenced by the fact that making money has such an important place in our community, so that they get infected and lose sight of a God-given calling. I shall not write more about this matter here. In the previous issue it received enough attention.

A revolutionary situation

Then there is the complaint that the job is often so frustrating because of discipline problems in the classroom, and

even more because parents do not back up the teachers, but take a stand behind their children in opposition to the teachers, when there are minor or larger problems.

Now I do not say that teachers always are right. Also a teacher can misjudge a situation, can say the wrong word, can do the wrong thing, is not always tactful and wise. And I hope that teachers, just like others, have the courage, the wisdom, and the humbleness to acknowledge to a student and possibly his or her parents that (s)he was wrong, when this should be acknowledged, even partly. Such an attitude can clear the atmosphere and restore troubled relations. Besides, acknowledging wrong does not mean losing one's face; on the contrary, in most cases a child or student will respect it in the parent or teacher when he or she admits to having been wrong on a certain point, when this was so. If, under normal circumstances, a teacher acknowledges his wrong, the child or student is also more inclined to acknowledge his wrong.

However, we deal here with a complaint that needs our serious attention, because this phenomenon appears to be increasing. When we were still living in BC, the principals of both the elementary and the high school in the western part of the Fraser Valley brought this matter of parents backing up their children against the teachers to the membership at general membership meetings, because they experienced this problem as a serious one that was increasingly undermining a proper functioning of the school. I have heard more teachers complain about this matter. Is the general "crisis of authority" in the world around us taking hold more and more of our Reformed parent-generation (while we probably do not realize it), and *therefore* also of our youth?

Around us authority is eroding. In general, people show less and less respect for those in a position of authority: the government, including police officers and judges, management in business, teachers at school, parents at home, and so on. We are confronted here with one of the consequences of the French Revolution and of all subsequent revolutions which have proclaimed, and are continuing to proclaim, the gospel of equality. All men are equal. All have their human rights. Also those who have a position of authority adhere to the same revolutionary philosophy, and often speak and act accordingly. In such a situation it is already extremely difficult, especially for a sinful, rebellious human nature, to have a submissive attitude, and this situation is aggravated when those who are in a position of authority undermine that position by misusing it.

This revolutionary crisis of authority is the most basic, most ruinous evil of our time, because it is rebellion against God. It is the sin of paradise, in which man wants to be like God, his own god. In this gospel of equality man has no place for God, unless God becomes also equal and gets robbed of His majestic sovereignty and becomes man's partner, who develops and grows with man; whereby man is elevated to being god. This is why the eastern religiosity with its pantheism (god is in everything, especially in man; and everything, especially man, is god) is so attractive.

Nevertheless, this revolutionary gospel of equality is also

conquering a modern Christianity in many respects. Let me give one example. All *persons* are said to be equal; therefore women have to be allowed to become office bearers in the church. And when objections are raised from the Scriptures, the argument is heard: does not the Bible teach that all persons are equal before God?

A fundamental mistake of the highest order is made here. When God's Word teaches that all true believers in the church are equal before God as His children; that in Christ there is no male and female, no slave and free, but that they are all one in Him (Gal. 3:28 and Col. 3:11), then this is an equality in the position of believers, of being children of God. However, this equality as believers, or, if one wants, as persons before God, does not mean equality in a social position. The gospel maintains the order that God has given with creation: man is head of His wife, and of the family. And from there we have that ruling position of authority in all kinds of social relationships. Besides marriage and family, there is the relation of master to slave, government to subjects. In all these relationships Scripture requires submission of the one to the other. This is God's life-building and preserving rule for man who received dominion over His creation, and this requirement is expressed in the Fifth Commandment.

The equality of the revolution is and remains first of all rebellion against God and His Christ. It is the rebellion that rejects the sovereign Creator and His Christ, revealed in the Scriptures as Redeemer and Restorer of what God has created.

However, Satan is and remains the deceiver and murderer from the beginning. This revolutionary gospel of equality is a false gospel, inspired by the devil, that deceives and murders its adherents, its believers, its followers. He who has eyes to see can notice that very clearly. The gospel of equality, conceived by revolution, breaks down all authority, and brings forth ruin of modern society, chaos in the nation, disorder in business, disruption in schools, destruction to the families. Today's crisis is a crisis of authority, based on the rejection of the saving and restoring gospel of Jesus Christ.

Are parents the problem?

When it rains in the world, it drips in the church. Let us return to the situation in our schools. I spoke with a parent about this crisis-of-authority-situation in our schools, this complaint of teachers that parents do not back them up, but, instead, place themselves often with the child over against them. We first of all came to the conclusion that there are circumstances that can increase this problem situation in our schools. Mostly parents and teachers belong to the same congregation. They know each other as brothers and sisters; they know each other's weak points. Living as brothers and sisters in a quite close community, we are inclined to weigh one another, and look at one another in a critical manner. We are quite critically minded, not just on issues, but also regarding persons. And we talk easily in a critical way about each other.

This talking easily happens between different parents, and can easily be done in the presence of children. The consequence will be that children start with a critical attitude. Of course, students also talk among each other about the teachers. Children have their likes and their dislikes. This discussing the teachers by the students in a critical manner adds greatly to their critical attitude towards the teachers concerned.

Moreover, it is a typical feature of adolescence to be critical regarding the preceding generation: parents, teachers, and so on. Youth sees wrongs and, growing to independence, thinks it knows better and can and will do better, forgetting about its own sinful nature and weaknesses and shortcomings.

To this we can still add the fact that going to school is not always an undivided pleasure for students. Learning can be experienced not only as boring, but as a daily punishment, a

continuous torment, which produces a rebellious attitude. And since the one teacher is easier in his teaching than the other, — teachers are also human —, learning problems can easily be blamed on the teacher, not only by the students but also by the parents. Parents are inclined to defend their children. That is part of our sinful nature. Are we not inclined to excuse ourselves and accuse others when something is not so good? Are not our children so much part of ourselves, so that we are inclined to do the same excusing and accusing with respect to them? Is it not quite common that parents tell a teacher that their child "would not do a thing like that?" Is not rather the teacher wrong? Does it not happen that parents, when seeing the teacher, e.g. on Sunday in church or somewhere else (preferably not in school?), address that teacher with words that betray an unfriendly attitude: "What did you do to . . ." (follows the name of the child)?

Every one can understand what will happen when, in a critical situation of confrontation between a teacher and a student, the parents back up the child over against the teacher. The child glories in his victory and becomes much more difficult to deal with. When the teacher, to maintain his position, gets tougher, the parents, with the child, put even more blame on the teacher. The teacher loses his authority, often not only with that specific child, but also with the circle of his friends and companions. And a frustrated teacher is inclined to give in, in an almost impossible position of having to fight against children and their parents. Such situations are frustrating, not only for the relation of the teacher and that one child, but for his position in the classroom.

The rule

The parent I spoke with said, "When we were young, our parents always placed themselves behind the teacher. When there were problems, we, children, were wrong. Whatever the teacher had done, we simply were considered to have done so much that was not right that we deserved the treatment we got anyway. And when the punishment was truly undeserved at a certain time, because the teacher did pick the wrong person as culprit, we were told that we deserved the punishment anyway, because at other times when we did something wrong we had escaped a deserved punishment." Was it hard to have such parents? No, it was a constructive blessing. The teacher was the teacher, for he was the person in authority, and that position had to be acknowledged. Only in that way order and discipline could be maintained.

My brother also said that his parents never would talk about a teacher in a critical manner in the presence of their children, because they saw that also as undermining the position of the teacher who had to maintain good discipline and, in that way, a good working condition in the classroom.

Is this a picture of "those good old times?" Not really. The point is, that in those days Reformed parents had the Fifth Commandment written in their heart, and they applied it in their daily life.

They did this not only with regard to the teachers in the school, but also with respect to the office bearers in the church. As children, my spokesman said, we were not allowed to say one bad word about the minister or the elders. These men were placed in a God-given office. They had received such a position from God. That is why such a position had to be maintained and honour and respect had to be shown.

These parents had also, most of the time, no problem with maintaining their own authority in the family. The children knew: father and mother speak and act in this way, because they want to live in obedience to the will of God. God's authority, that is, the authority of His Word, was and had to be acknowledged, and therefore the authority of persons who had a ruling position. Being submissive to them was being submissive to God.

Learning these things from the older generation and seeing its truth in the Scriptures, we shall have an open eye for the grave danger in this crisis of authority, also for our families and for the next generation of families. When parents back up their children against the teachers, they harden those children, the next generation, in a rebellious attitude toward those in authority. This rebellion will often backfire. The students will be non-submissive and rebellious against their parents as well when it comes to getting their way. Parents, to avoid trouble, give in to the demands of their children. And a generation grows up, that knows no discipline. How can such a generation teach discipline to those who come after them?

The solution

The first thing that is necessary for a solution is thorough knowledge and understanding of God's Word and humble, submissive acceptance of that Word and will of God for our life in all its aspects and relations, in this case acceptance of the Fifth Word of the Covenant and its implications. This knowledge and acceptance is only truly possible through faith in Jesus Christ, who is our wisdom and redemption. In other words: we must live out of Christ, out of His love, in communion of faith with Him and, thus, in true Christian love.

The second thing we need to know for a solution is a thorough insight in the philosophy, the "gospel" of the revolution that is conquering a modern mankind around us. We must have an open eye for this un-godly, anti-Christian revolution, and its devastating, ruinous impact on modern life, threatening also to invade our families, our schools, our congregations, so that we can be on the alert as people who know what is going on.

The third element for a solution is that we, as parents and teachers, as a community, help each other and listen to one another and form a unity of faith, a like-minded army of Christ in our battle against the powers of revolution, the powers of the evil one, who seeks to keep a firm grip on the world and destroy also the congregation of Christ with the spirit of revolu-

tion. We must be aware of our calling that we should not fight each other for selfish reasons, but together fight the real enemy who tries to destroy both the parents and their family as well as the teachers and the school. It is easy to see that this goal can best be reached by sowing discord between those who should be one, namely, the parents and the teachers.

Let us, therefore, examine ourselves constantly. And let us help our children on the way of faith, that is, of obedience. Let us help them to learn to obey in their life parents at home, teachers in the school, and so on. Let us teach them with word and example. The future of the church of Christ Jesus "depends" on it. Children who submit, even when in their eyes the teacher is not right, will submit to God. They are doing it. But children who learn from their parents a non-submissive attitude, most likely will not show that attitude with regard to God either. Not God's rights, but what they see as their own, will dominate them. And that is the end of faith, the end of the church of Christ as well.

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you. Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith . . ." (I Peter 5: 6-9).

We need teachers

Yes, we need teachers, not only female teachers, but also male teachers, who make teaching their profession for life. It is not a good thing when fewer and fewer male Reformed teachers are available to teach the different subjects at our high schools. Is there among us a lack of talents? I doubt that. Is there a lack of ambition? I am afraid so. May the Spirit of the Lord gird us, and make us all faithful to Him and useful for His cause, according to the talents granted us. And let us not discourage one another, especially teachers, but encourage and support them. They do important work.

J. GEERTSEMA

Analysis of an interpretation₂ (Synod 1986 on Art. 28 of the Confession)

The slip

Although I felt from the start that, notwithstanding the many truths stated by this Synod, "something" was wrong in its "train of thought," it was not easy to pin it down right away.

Where was the "slip?" Suddenly it sprang into my eye. At the top of p. 99 of the *Acts*: "Art. 27 as an introductory article describes the church in general terms. . . ."

Although more is coming, more questionable words about this most beautiful Article of our undoubted Christian faith, let's first consider the implications of this term "introductory."

Some have said to me: "Ah! Do not read too much into that one word; Synod could have used a better word, but. . . ."

Synod '86 is "passed away;" no one can say anything about what Synod wanted to say. We only have the text of Synod's *Acts*. I am not "reading anything into" here. I am just reading. And I believe that the words one uses come from what is present in the mind. This word reveals a "train of thought."

"Introductory." Webster interprets it as "serving to introduce; prefatory; preliminary." An introduction "prepares the way for. . . ."

If a certain remark, or even here a whole Article, is called "introductory,"

then you say: the real thing is yet to come. A book could possibly do without an introduction. But it cannot do without the (main) body of the book; in that case there would be no book.

Let us ask: what is, in Synod's reasoning, "introductory" to what?

In Art. 27 "we believe and confess one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers. . . ." We all know that this Article runs parallel to *answer 54* of the Heidelberg Catechism. The latter concentrates the full contents of the former in one sentence full of action.

A good heading for both would be: "Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, is gather-

ing His Church from all over, and will complete this gathering." Thus we confess what He did, is doing, and will do according to the plan of His Father ("chosen to everlasting life"). That is Art. 27. Then comes Art. 28 with the old heading (which is to be preferred above the new one!): "Everyone is bound to join himself to the true church."

Although in the course of my remarks it will become clearer why I prefer the old title, I must already here state that the new heading may create the impression that a believer has to do what only the Holy Spirit can do, and did.

The new title is: "Everyone's duty to join the Church."

In Art. 27 we confess the Lord's saving, divine act.

In Art. 28 we claim that therefore every true believer should look for and join a local true or faithful church. The sheep should go to a place where he hears the Voice of the Shepherd, and not of a hireling or robber (John 10).

Art. 27 — the doing of the Lord. Art. 28 my consequent act of thankful obedience.

Or, in terms of the catechism: Art. 27 belongs in the second part: redemption; Art. 28 in the third part: obedience and gratitude.

Should we now really, since Synod '86, confess that what the Spirit of Christ did, and does, is only "introductory?"

Does, indeed, the decisive thing come in Art. 28?

I must confess that I cannot accept that.

I invite all my brothers and sisters in Christ to confess the same.

The slip is showing

I have now the unpleasant task to point out that this term "introductory" produced a number of ideas, statements which, to say the least, are somewhat strange.

First a general remark.

The fact that a synod could come to such pronouncements, proves that such ideas live among us. There seems to exist a form of "tenseness" among us. A fear that, if we do not all the time hammer away at "we are true churches," we will soon become extinct. This is fear, yes; it is a proof of weakness, that hardly dares to "touch" anything "outside us." We might lose our "identity." It is also "little faith." Does one really believe that the full and joyful confession and only comfort that church-gathering is safe in Christ's hands, endangers the existence of the Canadian (American) Reformed Churches?

Is it not rather the other way around? Are not believers "from elsewhere" shied away by such an attitude, instead of being drawn to the sheepfold of the Good Shep-

herd, where they can hear His Voice, undiluted, and where joy and love abound?

But now then the "train of thought" that in Synod '86 started with: "Art. 27 is introductory." Withstanding the temptation to elaborate on each point, I will try to point them out in brief terms.

1. "Art. 27 . . . describes the church in general terms." What are God's people to do with that? The only meaning that Webster gives for the combination "general" and "terms" is: "vague; not precise. . . ." Read Art. 27 again! Is that "vague?" if Guido de Brès could reach us today from heaven, he would tell us that he wrote this article with the song of the King in his heart: "My heart overflows with a goodly theme; I address my verses to the King!" Ps. 45. Thus he wrote: "Christ is an eternal King who cannot be without subjects," even when the Church became "invisible" during the perilous reign of Ahab, Art. 27, and in the Middle Ages.

2. When you put the act of man in the centre, you get next (same page 99 of Acts '86): "It (Art. 27, VD) nowhere states that everyone who is a believer is already a member of the (holy, catholic) church even if the believer is not a member of a true, local church."

Here we touch already the heart of the matter. It is impossible to put one's reactions into one sentence. Does Art. 27 "nowhere state. . . ?" I quote it: "We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers," who "expect their entire salva-

tion in Jesus Christ" (not in Mary, or in the church of Rome, or in good works).

The Latin text (Latin does not have an article) says: "omnium fidelium" (all believers).

Further: not, they will be washed by Christ's blood, and eventually sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit."

But: "they are washed, they are sanctified, they are sealed," Art. 27. How can one confess, Lord's Day 7:21, "that not only to others, but to me also, God has granted forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation," and then still not be "ingrafted into Christ, and His body?"

Synod '86 came to this position, because the brethren had decided, that Art. 27, as "introductory," speaking only in general terms, is vague in this respect.

I am sure no Reformed Confessor will confess that our salvation is made complete by an act of man! Even our good works are "prepared by God," Eph. 2:20.

3. It more and more became clear to me that Art. 28 is put so central (as the "key" to everything else that we believe) that all other articles of our faith are "flattened" before the footstool of Art. 28. I quoted Lord's Day 7, ans. 21. But Synod '86 would forbid that. I quote: "Lord's Day 7 answers the question who are saved. The answer stresses the need for a true faith by which one is grafted into Christ and by which we accept (read: "receive," "accept" has an arminian flavour, VD) receive all his benefits." And now, synod

— continued on page 363



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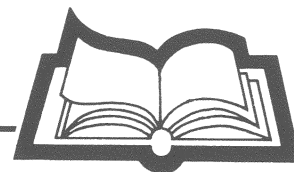
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“If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” Psalm 11:3

Lasting Foundations

The complaint of the psalmist in this verse appears to us as an expression of hopelessness and pessimism concerning the possibility or ability of the righteous to do anything in the face of widespread social decline. We might wonder about the appropriateness of the attitude reflected here; and we certainly would not be alone in this view, since many translators (including the RSV) take the words of this verse as part of the advice that the faint-hearted counsellors gave to the king. They told him to flee to the mountains, and the reason they are then assumed to provide is: the righteous are not able to do anything here anyway.

Yet it is more probable that the words of this verse come from David himself. In a certain sense he shares the fears of his advisers, and expresses in these words that the situation is one of *crisis*, affecting the basic stability of the nation. The exact historical circumstances cannot be determined with any certainty, although most commentators think of the civil war that brewed with the rise of Absalom. This conspiracy did, in fact, grow very strong, and David was eventually left with no recourse but to flee. At any rate, David sees himself surrounded by wicked and treacherous men who are relentless in their pursuit of those who fear the LORD.

So forceful is the onslaught of evil power that the very foundations of the heavenly city are threatened with destruction. And what are those foundations? The use of the same term in Isaiah 19:10 indicates that the word refers to the social and economic fabric of the community, the “invisible hand” through which order and economic stability are guaranteed. The evil workers strike at the very basis of the community, and threaten to destroy the basic relationships of trust and decency required for a society to function.

But what is David’s response? Is this really a song of escape, a flight from the battle enjoined by the LORD? David rather takes his refuge in the LORD! And even if this may entail flight, then it only includes flight at the appointed time, and under God’s clear guidance and direction. But his stand *begins* with a sound appraisal of the real situation. And this remains the only honest and realistic approach. David himself realizes that when the foundations are attacked, and when the whole social fabric suffers under the strain of destructive forces, the righteous are essentially powerless in themselves. What influence can they bring up against such an attack?

Rejecting premature flight does not imply that David takes the stand of the hero who looks for fame and recognition. He takes his stand in the LORD, and begins the battle with Him! And the battle begins by a realistic assessment of the situation, which implies a clear and unequivocal statement of the *antithesis*. To take up battle, one must draw

proper battle lines, and for David this is the battle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between the Church and the world, between the wicked and the righteous, between those ingrafted into Christ by a true faith, and those outside of Christ.

Once this antithesis has been properly set, one can take his position in the battle, knowing that “those who are with us are more than those who are with them,” II Kings 6:16. The onslaught is fundamentally against the LORD and His Anointed! In such a battle, the righteous man is powerless in himself. He cannot draw on his own resources, nor choose the avenue to compromise in order to bolster his strength. Compromise may appear to increase one’s effectiveness and strength, but the net real effect is a loss of solid conviction and an erosion of the enduring foundations. In this battle, the righteous can only serve in faithfulness, waiting and resting in the sovereign and free *decision* of the LORD!

Still today the forces working for the overthrow of the foundations are everywhere at work. What can the righteous do? “Do not be amazed at the matter,” says the Preacher, 4:8; fret not yourself because of the wicked! (Psalm 37:1). Has not the shaking of the foundations been foretold? Have we not heard of the growth of apostasy, and the appearance of Anomos, the man of lawlessness, (II Thessalonians 2)? Still today, we must remember that the Seed of the woman, and all His own, forms the focal battle point of the powers of lawlessness and evil.

In a battle like this one will be as innocent as a dove — he will not relinquish or compromise his confession! He will also be as wise as a serpent — he will flee if the necessity requires it. And he will be ever watchful for the devious ways of Satan, who through pious words seeks to lead the righteous astray! Fundamentally, he will not build his own defence, but *rest* in the LORD, who acts, and who also uses the righteous as His instruments in the manifestation of His victory.

For if we adopt the style and pattern of the secular player, we have already lost the battle, — for ourselves and our children. A voice in social life today can never be a voice divorced from the Church, and from the union with Christ through His Word and sacrament! Only those who properly draw the antithesis can fight a meaningful battle. For only they learn that the battle is not theirs but the LORD’s, and He will come at His time, and in His way, to reward both the righteous and the wicked, Psalm 11:6, 7.

What can the righteous do? Wait on the LORD, and serve Him with sincere faithfulness and with a living consciousness of the antithesis that shapes this world. Then we may be assured of inheriting a city with lasting foundations!

J. DE JONG

ANALYSIS OF AN INTERPRETATION₂ — continued

continues: "To deduce from this answer that every believer (sic! VD) is incorporated into the body of Christ, the church, even before they officially (sic! VD) join themselves to the church, is a misuse of the answer and of the word 'church'." Thus far Synod '86.

You may want to read these words twice, because they do not register right away. Thus, *either* belonging to "the body of Christ, the church" is not one of the benefits of Christ that the true believer receives, or this believer does not receive "all His benefits," by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Thus we must "explain" Lord's Day 7 in the light of Art. 28 as Synod '86 understood it.

We have, obviously, to accept the supremacy, the absolute rule of Art. 28 over all other doctrines of faith, otherwise you commit the "sin" of "misusing" such other doctrines.

4. We confess in Art. 35, that "Christ has instituted the sacrament of the Holy Supper to nourish and sustain those whom He has already regenerated and incorporated into His family, which is the Church."

Before Synod '86 we would all read these two words "regenerated and incorporated" in one breath. By regenerating us the Holy Spirit incorporated us into the family of Christ."

After Synod '86 you just keep on doing that, although '86 would like to do otherwise. . . .

(N.B. the whole paragraph C. on p. 99 rattles, and is filled with confusion. One example: why did Synod identify "the regenerated and the elect?" Election took place before the foundation of the world. Regeneration takes place in time, when the Holy Spirit makes a sinner a new creation, cf. Art. 24 of the Confession. Or does Synod commit here the same doctrinal "sin" as the *Westminster Confession* does in Ch. XXV?)

5. Again, we confess, *Canons II, 9*, that from the beginning of the world God's counsel has been powerfully fulfilled. . . . "In due time the elect will be gathered into one, and there will always be a Church of believers founded on the blood of Christ."

Synod '86 again: "to deduce from this, that this article teaches that believers, before joining the local church of Jesus Christ, already are members of an ill-defined universal church, is a misuse of this article." We are, thus, not allowed to "deduce" anything from anywhere, unless seen in the light (or shadow) of Art. 28 that — in this train of thought — rules over all articles of faith.

6. The same is the case with the *Form for Adult Baptism*. I remember heated discussions in Enschede's consistory

when we made some rules for "church-weddings." The issue was, whether a person admitted to public profession and (adult) baptism, is already a member of the "body of Christ" by faith, or becomes a member at the moment he is baptized. I remember how we, then, referred to the third question in this Form, part of which is: ". . . do you confess that . . . by the power of the Holy Spirit ("believing in Him") you have become a member of Jesus Christ and His Church?"

The meaning of this question is so plain and clear, that it needs no further explanation. If that person cannot answer this question in the affirmative, he or she cannot be baptized. Yet, by baptism one is ingrafted into the Christian church!

But Synod '86 said no! "under the circumstances" you cannot say that. That person was in a way already a member. How? The *Form* says: "by the power of the Holy Spirit." *Synod* said: "by appearing before the consistory." Even after discussions with brethren I still say to everyone: "Keep your hands off our adopted official forms! Let your yes be yes and your no no!" Suppose this person gets a heart attack in between the moment that he answered this third question and the moment he was to be baptized, and dies. Then he has never been a member of this local faithful church. His name will not be written in the church register, although he had confessed that "by the power of the Holy Spirit he had become a member of . . . His church!" synod said, "one should not press this language." We all should say to that past synod: "you should not twist this language," in order to force it into agreement with Art. 28 the way you read it!

7. References to the *Form for Infant Baptism* and *Answer 74 of the Catechism* do not fare any better. I quote: "Cf. the parallel in the case of infant baptism, in which the infants 'must be grafted into the Christian Church,' and yet 'as members of His Church ought to be baptized.' "

What did Synod mean by "and yet?" That the one statement should swallow up the other, because of Art. 28. . . ? Are such confessional statements "by way of speaking?" Where do we end up in the pillar and bulwark of truth, which is the church of the living God," *I Tim. 3:15*, if we act like that?

Leave *both* statements, of Catechism and Form, alone. Take them seriously. They are too important for our whole church life to be "ordered around" in this way!

Again: suppose, as happened often in the days of Dort, that the infant died before it could be or was baptized. Then its name would *never have been entered into the register of that local church*; as *Cat. answer 74* says, never "ingrafted into the Christian Church by baptism as a sign of the Covenant." Do I have to take this confessional statement with a grain of salt, "because of Art. 28?!"

This line-up of seven victims of the specific interpretation of Art. 28 of our Confession is long enough, one would say. There is, alas, more.

But before that is mentioned, I want to react to a question that has been coming up in the mind of the reader: "what is, then, left of Art. 28 that confesses, that 'every one is bound to join himself to the true church?' " May, then, believers stay in any sect, apostate church, false church because they are members of the church by the Holy Spirit anyway?

I plead for the confidence of the reader, that along the path we have been going till now, we will come to a much better, even glorious understanding of this Art. 28.

We will discover together, that we are not to use Art. 28 in a judgmental, inquisitorial way, sitting in judgment, but will learn (again) to understand it, and to use it in a "pastoral" way: in this article the Good Shepherd is looking for lost sheep, sheep in danger of getting lost, but sheep nevertheless.

Art. 28 is more than what Synod '86 called "officially (!) joining the local true church" at the moment you hand over your attestation.

"Nebulous"

Because Synod '86 used Art. 86 as a measuring-stick for everything else, it was (unintentionally, we assume) led to using strange terms.

One example is "*nebulous*."

We recall that in Art. 27 we confess "that the universal church is a holy congregation of the (all) Christian believers, who . . . are washed, are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit."

Synods 1980, 1983, 1986 must have had references to this article of faith on their tables. 1986 thus declared: "This (that all christian believers are members of the holy, catholic church) would make the concept of the holy, catholic church into a *nebulous term devoid of meaning* (my stress, VD), since 'church' means an assembly which Jesus Christ gathers, defends and preserves, and which can be discerned by means of three marks. . . ."

OUR COVER

View from Skyline Parkway
Duluth, MN

Photo courtesy of
John F. Vanveen

Thus far synod.

Thoughts multiply, and one knows not where to begin expressing them.

One may defend synod by saying that synod had to do with a person or persons who had strange, nebulous ideas in their heads. I did not read everything, but deem such “nebulous ideas” a distinct possibility. On the condition that we agree that many of our good Reformed brothers and sisters walk around with nebulous ideas! On both sides of the present controversy.

Then: Art. 29 is quoted with its three marks. But Art. 29 says a bit more. A true church “rejects all things contrary to the Word of God, and regards Jesus Christ as the only Head.” Agreed! This is the *norm*. But are we so sure of ourselves? Do all our pulpits “practice the pure preaching of the Gospel?” Recently, in my hearing, someone’s preaching was called “legalistic” by someone in the know. If our pulpits would so exclusively, one-sidedly, stress the act of joining the true church as the keystone of our salvation, would that still be “pure preaching of the Gospel?”

Remember, synod said: “Art. 27 speaks in general terms.” We found out: that means *vague*. That is pretty close to “nebulous.” *Webster*: “unclear, vague, indefinite.” Is then not also the Catechism “nebulous” in that beautiful confession of our only comfort, in *answer 54*?

I ask this, because synod said more: I read on p. 100 of the *Acts*, about what we profess every Sunday; “*I believe a holy, catholic church*,” the following: “*an ill-defined universal church*” and “*a Scripturally unknown concept of a non-observable church of the elect and regenerated.*”

Bad news to me.

Synod persistently avoided the term “invisible,” which for many beloved believers works as a red rag upon a bull. But nevertheless, the terms “nebulous” and “non-observable” come close to “invisible.”

I again protest against speaking of “the elect and regenerated” (the article is not even repeated!) in *one breath*. On p. 99 the order is even reversed: “the regenerated and elect.”

Was synod rubbing shoulders with the *Westminster Confession*, Art. XXV about the church? I think I know what I am talking about. I wrote a thesis on “*Paul or Plato? A Search for the Origin of the Concept of the Invisible Church as an existing Entity*” (stress on “*already existing entity!*”)

The Westminster divines also mixed up “the elect and regenerated,” “the regenerated and elect.” They mixed up God’s *predestination* with the *actual gathering* by Word and Spirit according to that predestination (or election). Thus Westminster sat in the lap of *Plato*. An invis-

ble something up-in-the-air, and then here and there, in pluriform variations, a number of “manifestations” of that (indeed!) “nebulous” idea-church.

Synod, being mixed-up in this respect, will — may God forbid — only cause more confusion among the membership.

When two speak about “invisible church,” it is not the same.

Westminster spoke, speaks of an “*already existing entity*” of a Church, containing all elect. Mind you: *now* already. That is vain philosophy.

But “invisible” used for the church is not a “dirty word,” as so many among us think.

K. Schilder followed *Augustine* and *Calvin*, in speaking of the greater part of the church being invisible to us. All we see, said K.S., is “local and temporal activities” of the gathering of the church. But Schilder, Calvin, etc., are not the final authority. “I believe the holy, catholic, christian church.” “*I believe*,” that is “I accept as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word,” *Cat. Answ. 21*. But also: “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things *not seen*” *Heb. 11:1*.

“Not seen,” “non-observable.” Hal-lelujah!

What do I see? A local congregation, the gathering of people who have only a small beginning of the new obedience, *Cat. Lord’s Day 44*. I see a federation of churches, in whose midst there is much love for the Lord, and zeal for His kingdom. But I also see distrust, judging each other. I think our preaching is in general far from perfect and pure.

But every Sunday we gather and profess: “I believe a holy universal church.” And then, by that faith, I “see” locally and temporally, here and now, that universal church being gathered where the Voice of the Good Shepherd is heard, and thus I can sing Psalm 48, 84, 122 etc.!

In all humility I suggest that Synod ‘86 did us all a disservice with its talk about “nebulous” and “non-observable.”

“*I believe the Church!*” And that article professed in Art. 27, H. Cat. 21, forbids me to see the “here-and-now gathered flock” as equivalent to the holy, universal church. Is that not a sickness, a weakness anyway, if we try to “compress” this whole universal church into this local church, and into the federation of these churches?

G. VANDOOREN

Response₂

1. With respect to this “general remark,” I would like to say: this is only one side of the picture. Why are we now already for more than ten years struggling about the doctrine regarding the church and related matters? On the one hand there is a concern as expressed here by br. VanDooren. On the other side there is the concern among us that we lose the sharpness of vision for what is right and wrong and accept more and more things which we did not accept some twenty years ago, for instance the ease with which some worship in other denominations, whereby this worshipping is based rather on a subjective faith present in Christians than on the objective norms of God’s Word. We must examine ourselves constantly in many respects, whether we are remaining faithful to our God and His Word.

2. The Rev. VanDooren stumbles over more words used by the Synod of Burlington, 1986. He reads the words “in general terms” in the light of his interpretation of the word “introductory.” Again he reads into the words of synod, with the help of *Webster’s* dictionary, meanings that are not intended and meant by the synod. I admit again that the word choice might

not be such a good one. But again my colleague reads into these words things which the synod did not say. Synod did not mean to indicate vagueness with the word “general.” I may refer here to the last part of my response in the previous issue.

3. There is another point in which the Rev. VanDooren suggestively puts things into the mouth of the synod which it did not state at all. He writes: “How can one confess, Lord’s Day 7:21, ‘that not only to others, but to me also, God has granted forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation,’ and then still not be ‘ingrafted into Christ, and His body?’ ”

In the first place, this confession of Lord’s Day 7:21 and 20 is taught first of all to children who are already members of the church and who are instructed in this confession of the church in order that they may make it their own personal confession.

In the second place, when one is of the opinion that faith does not automatically mean being a member of the church which is congregation and assembly, this does not imply the denial that the believer, who believes in Christ, and in Christ receives forgiveness of sins and ever-

lasting righteousness, is by faith also ingrafted into Christ. Nowhere did the synod deny this connection or consequence, that every one who believes is through faith ingrafted into Christ. Why does br. VanDooren suggest that the synod does deny this connection? It is because for br. VanDooren "being ingrafted into Christ" (including receiving forgiveness and righteousness) is identical with being a member of the church. With this view in mind, he reads what the synod said, and so comes to his (wrong) conclusion about the meaning of the words of the synod.

It may be known to br. VanDooren that the Rev. J. Francke has written two booklets about the doctrine concerning the church, "*Varia de Ecclesia*" and "*Iterum Varia de Ecclesia*" ("[Once again] Various Things about the Church," published by Boersma Enschede). The latter was written in answer to reactions to the former. On p. 16 of the second volume Francke responds to the reactions of prof. Dr. J. Douma, who referred to what prof. Dr. S. Greijdanus had said, namely, "Every true believer belongs to the church. With it I mean all God's elect. . . ." See also my response to Rev. S. DeBruin in the 1986 Year End issue of *Clarion*.

Francke writes, Douma "agrees with the pronouncement of prof. Dr. S. Greijdanus: *'every true believer belongs to the church.'*" He will not do so in an absolute way, because then Art. 28 B.C. would be deprived from its force." Francke, then, refers his readers to an article written by prof. Dr. C. Trimp in "*De Reformatie*" (vol. 39, nr. 35; p. 271, June 6, 1964). The title of Trimp's article is "The Danger of the Smooth Formula." Francke writes: "In it, he [Trimp] discusses also the terminology (word use) of prof. Greijdanus, in a note. . . . Prof. Trimp (at that time still minister in Voorburg) writes, among other things, against the systematization of the abnormal. When this is done, one constructs behind the concrete institutes of the church the real church, called the invisible church, the totality of elected believers or those who are baptized, or (one could say) the mystic body of Christ. All sheep are *here* inside, all wolves outside." On p. 18 Francke concludes, "Prof. Trimp has, in my opinion, formulated in a good way what is wrong [with Greijdanus' words]." Francke points to the warning which Dr. Trimp added: What remains for us, in this time, is then that we try to apply the brakes to the relativism regarding the concrete gathering of the church that principally flows forth from this system."

Francke distinguishes between "Drie-erlei inlijving" (a threefold incorporating). (This word means: the act of ["-ating"] making someone part of ["in"] a body ["corpor-;"] the Latin word for body is "corpus".) These three "incorporations"

are: "(1) the incorporation into the covenant of grace; (2) the incorporation into Christ by a true faith; and (3) the incorporation into the church of Christ." (vol. 1, p. 40ff; vol. 2, p. 19ff). In response to the reactions on this point, Francke writes (vol. 2, p. 20), "I have the impression that the reference to Lord's Day 7 of the Catechism ('by faith incorporated into Christ' ['Christus ingelijfd']) forms the basis of the thought construction "all believers are members of the church." For, is not mostly this the reasoning: by faith incorporated into Christ, thus taken up into the body of Christ, and thus member of the church (which is called in Scripture the body of Christ)? In my opinion, this word "incorporated" of Lord's Day 7 is the Achilles' heel of this church theory. I thought that it cannot in any way be defended with the Scriptures that this incorporating refers to church membership. The image ('incorporating'), which Lord's Day 7 uses for belonging to Christ, may not, just like that, be applied to the image (body of Christ), which Scripture uses for the church, the congregation of the Lord."

As I see it, Francke here makes a valid point. Lord's Day 7:20 answers the question who are saved. They are those who by a true faith are incorporated into Christ. They belong to Him through faith. In faith they are one with Him. That is the work of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel (Lord's Day 25:65). Must we really identify the two "ingrafted into Christ by faith" and "ingrafted into the church," being member of the church?

I think that Rev. VanDooren cannot identify the two either in an absolute manner. Lord's Day 27:74, speaking about infant baptism, says that infants ought to be baptized because they "belong to God's covenant and congregation. . . . Therefore, by baptism, as sign of the covenant, they must be grafted into the Christian church. . . ." Thus we see children of believing parents as belonging to the church of Christ together with their

parents. (At the same time we say that these children, by baptism, must be ingrafted into the Christian church; we shall come back to this point.)

But also my colleague will not say that this fact that children belong to the church, "as well as adults," means that we see these children as, at the same time, automatically, "ingrafted into Christ" through faith in the sense of L.D. 7:20. Such thinking would be a following of the teaching of the synodical synods of the forties. We confess that this "being ingrafted into Christ," this being incorporated, "ingelijfd," requires faith, and happens through faith (L.D. 7:20), which a two week old infant does not have yet. Yes, in the theory of the synods in the forties, in the "train of thought" of Dr. A. Kuyper, this identification is understandable: they presume that the infant to be baptized has been regenerated, and has the germ of faith already in his heart, and thus must be considered as being ingrafted into Christ by faith. The Rev. VanDooren, with his consistory and congregation in Wezep, liberated himself from (a binding to) this construction.

Is it, in the light of the above, really so horrible that Synod 1986 said that one should not make incorporation into Christ by faith and church membership the very same, identical, thing? When br. VanDooren then comes with his conclusions, e.g. "Thus, *either* belonging to 'the body of Christ, the church' is not one of the benefits of Christ that the true believer receives, *or* this believer does not receive 'all His benefits,' by the work of the Holy Spirit," this is again a conclusion of Rev. VanDooren, made on the basis of his view of identity, but it does not follow from what the Synod said." And also the conclusion "Thus we must 'explain' Lord's Day 7 in the light of Art. 28 as Synod '86 understood it" is for VanDooren the conclusion, but it is not truly the consequence of what the synod said. Again I conclude that VanDooren reads the synod's Acts through his glasses, with his "system," and therefore makes synod say what he thinks it says, but what it does not really say.

4. In Art. 35 of the Belgic Confession we confess that Christ instituted the Lord's Supper "to nourish and sustain those whom He has already regenerated and incorporated into His family, which is His Church." These words were used by the appellants, and are used by br. VanDooren to prove that all the believers, all those regenerated, are members of the church. "By regenerating us the Holy Spirit incorporated us into the family of Christ." The reasoning is the same: regeneration and being by faith ingrafted into Christ go together; thus regeneration makes you a member of the church. Again, I ask: is the one the same as the



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other? Infants of believers are incorporated into the church of Christ, but not through having been regenerated. Or must we assume that infants are, after baptism, just incorporated into the visible, local church, but not in the (invisible) church of Christ? If it is so that the Holy Spirit incorporates us into the church of Christ through regeneration, how can infants belong to the church of Christ?

What is the church which Art. 35 is speaking about? It is, in the context of Art. 35, the concrete, the visible church that has the preaching of the Word, through which the Holy Spirit regenerates. It speaks of the believers' "second birth" which "is effected by the word of the gospel in the communion of the body of Christ." And what is here the body of Christ? It is the church which is called mother of the believers. She bears children through the gospel preaching. So, this church of Christ, this mother, is, as I see it, at the same time, the concrete, visible congregation, where the gospel is preached and taught. It is the church of Christ as it is locally gathered.

5. With respect to ch. II, Art. 9, of the Canons, br. VanDooren accuses Synod 1986 that it demands that also this article be read in the light of Art. 28 of the B.C. In this article we confess that "in due time the elect will be gathered together into one, and there will always be a Church of believers, founded on the blood of Christ. This Church shall steadfastly love and faithfully serve Him as her Saviour and celebrate His praises. . . ." Now the question is: what is this church? Is this a number of elect or believers as such? Or is it the church which Christ gathers and as it is locally gathered in concrete congregations? Synod says: it is the latter. The elect will be "gathered together" into one, and so "there will be a Church of believers."

6. The last part of the third question of the *Form for the Baptism of Adults* reads: "Believing in Him, do you confess that you receive the remission of sins in His blood and that by the power of the Holy Spirit you have become a member of Jesus Christ and His Church?"

If I understand br. VanDooren well, then he is of the opinion that the synod, by using the expression "by appearing before the consistory" (*Acts*, p. 100), forces what the Form says ("by the power of the Holy Spirit") "into agreement with Art. 28 the way you read it."

What must I do then? Must I read it in this way: first one becomes, through faith and regeneration, a member of Christ and of His catholic church (all those who believe and are regenerated), which is one thing, the real thing; and then, afterward, one also becomes a member of the visible, local congregation through or after the act of baptism, which is a second

and totally different thing? But is this not forcing a certain "system" of thought onto this question?

Anyway, I can understand the reasoning of the synod. I do not read this question in this manner: as if an adult who becomes a believer first becomes a member of the invisible church of Christ through the Holy Spirit, through faith, and then also, as a different matter, becomes afterward a member of the visible, local, denominational church through baptism. I see here basically the same matter of church membership in different aspects.

7. With the reference to the Heidelberg Catechism, QA. 74, the Synod wanted to say: We do not force the words about infants either into such separation of the real or invisible church and the visible, local church, when, on the one hand, we say that the infant must be baptized because it belongs to the church, and on the other hand, that the child must be ingrafted into the church by baptism. And, again, I don't think that br. VanDooren reads and understands it in this way: an infant is by baptism incorporated into the local, visible church, but, later on, when he is made a believer through the Holy Spirit and regenerated, then he becomes a member of the real, the invisible, the truly true catholic church of Christ.

Are here no difficult questions? Can we now say exactly how things fit together? I don't dare to say it. I am reminded here of the words of Dr. C. Trimp, quoted above, in which he warned that we must not try to press everything into a smooth system. If one wishes, one can easily read this Answer 74 of the Heidelberg Catechism in this way: there is an outward, objective, membership in the visible church through baptism, and there is an inner, subjective, membership in the invisible church, which is the real thing. But I do not want to read this catechism answer in that way. Do I then make membership in the local, true, visible church the very same thing as being regenerated, being ingrafted into Christ by faith? No, I do not want to do that either. It is not all that smooth.

8. Hebr. 11:1 is quoted here: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." My colleague applies this text to the church. The catholic, universal church is object of faith, and since faith is the conviction of things not seen, the church is "non-observable," invisible. Is this use of Hebr. 11:1 correct? From what follows, the faith of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and so on, it is clear that faith is here absolute trust in the truth and reliability of God's words of promise. God spoke of a flood and of rescue for Noah in the ship he had to build. Of that flood and destruction nothing could be seen for 120 years. Yet God had said He would send it; and Noah believed,

although he did not see anything during all those years. Abraham did not see the realization of God's promise, but he believed that he was going to see it in the future.

If we apply Hebr. 11:1 to the church in this way, I can wholeheartedly agree with it: God's Word promises that Christ will gather all those whom the Father has given Him; He will gather them all together into His fold, as His new mankind; in the new Jerusalem and on the new earth they will all be there as God's covenant peoples. We do not see this yet. We do not observe the activity of the Holy Spirit, working faith and regeneration in the hearts of all the elect. But we believe that Christ is doing that gathering work through His Spirit.

However, in my opinion, we should be careful and not conclude that, per definition of faith the catholic church is now the invisible church. Schilder said that a body is visible. When Paul speaks about the local, Corinthian church, he speaks about body of Christ. A body is visible. Schilder said further: when we cannot oversee or survey or observe that world-wide church gathering work of Christ, when we cannot observe or oversee the result of that gathering work in the visible true churches, that does not make the church as such invisible. It might be good, in a separate article, to translate what was written down as Schilder's words about "visible-invisible" regarding the church in lectures on the Belgic Confession *Christelijke Religie*. Schilder wrote time and again, that, although many things regarding the church are invisible, that does not make the church invisible.

9. At the end of this second part of VanDooren's article, the author says: "*I believe the Church!*" And that article professed in Art. 27, Heidelberg Catechism 21, forbids me to see the 'here-and-now gathered flock' as the equivalent to the holy, universal church. Is that not a sickness, a weakness anyway, if we try to 'compress' this whole universal church into this local church, and into the federation of these churches?"

If I understand what VanDooren writes correctly, he means to say that the synod teaches that the holy catholic church of Christ is "compressed" into each local Canadian Reformed Church and their federation. Now I do not deny that sometimes a member in our churches might have given the impression that the holy catholic church of Christ is confined to, and only found in, the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. But the Rev. VanDooren must not suggest that that is the teaching of our synod. I do not read that anywhere. We shall come back to this point in the third part.

J. GEERTSEMA

Library Report 1987

The past year has been a busy one for library personnel. Besides the daily maintenance tasks of library work (including book ordering, cataloguing, processing, and circulation), there are two major projects under way. These include the management of the extensive VanderWaal collection, and the conversion of our holdings to the Library of Congress classification system along with the production of a completely new card catalogue. We are thankful to report that progress could be made in these projects.

During the summer of 1986, each title in the VanderWaal collection was accessioned and entered into the library database. The final accession number is 3346, but many of these numbers represent several volumes; therefore, the actual volume total is much higher. From this database, author and title lists were produced, and over the fall and winter months these lists were checked against our card catalogue on a title by title basis in order to determine which titles were already held by our library. Statistics show that about 850 titles were duplicates, or about 1/4 of the collection. These titles are currently being made ready for sale. The rest of the collection is still housed in a room separate from the library and requires cataloguing and processing.

In the "conversion" project, the short entry key list that was produced last summer was run against the Library of Congress (English language) Marc tapes by Mr. R. Kepple, the supplier of our library system. Our matched records netted us the cataloguing for approximately 1/3 of our total collection. However, these keys still have to be run against the foreign language Marc tapes, which hopefully will give us cataloguing for a good proportion of our foreign language books. Other sources for cataloguing records are still being investigated so that as little "original" cataloguing as possible has to be done by ourselves.

There is still a lot of work involved even when cataloguing is received from

elsewhere. Each record is checked against the book in hand and edited where necessary, new cards and labels are produced, the old cards are pulled and discarded, the new cards are filed, the book is re-labeled and finally reshelfed. At the time of writing, approximately 2400 titles have been converted to the new system.

Our progress in both these major projects would have been much slower had we not had the benefit of some generous volunteer help over the past academic year. Volunteers checked for duplicates in the VanderWaal collection, helped label these books with their accession numbers, pulled books from the shelves to get ready for editing, and pulled old cards from the catalogue. We would like to thank Mrs. K. Peet, Mrs. J. Venema, Mrs. B. Slomp, Mrs. C. Neinhuis, and Mrs. A. Kuntz for the time they donated to this work. We especially thank Mrs. F. Smouter and Mrs. I. Flach who continue to volunteer their time on a regular weekly basis. Special thanks also to Mrs. D. Walinga who has been very ably sorting and recording the periodicals and pamphlet material that was part of the VanderWaal collection, and who also volunteers her time on a regular basis.

In September of 1986, the second library orientation was held. All the students were present as the orientation not only introduced the freshmen to the library but also explained the new library system to the senior students. Future orientations will probably be given to freshmen students only.

On April 16, 1987, the second Library Committee meeting was held. The committee reviewed the progress of the conversion project and determined that more help was required in the library if the project is to stay within a reasonable time frame. Accordingly, two High School students have been hired for this summer, Miss Heather Marren and Miss Hilda Bruinsma. Also, action is being taken for continued help after the summer is over. The preferred opinion is to hire a professional part-time librarian who will be able

to perform the tasks previously handled by Mrs. Janet Marren, and who will provide professional guidance in all aspects of library work. Failing the availability of such a person, a second option would be to hire a part-time secretary who would free Miss Mechelse from some of the administrative duties and allow her more time in the library during the academic year. The committee also continues to look for ways and means for some of the other library needs; namely, better library lighting and proper display cases for our rare books.

The collection has grown slowly this year as book ordering was put on hold for a few months due to lack of funds. Our accession book shows an increase of only 100 volumes over last year. The balance sheets at May 31, 1986 showed the assets in library books as \$103,500. This has increased to about \$109,500.

In closing, I would like to make some personal comments. Since this will be the last Library Report I will be asked to write, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Governors and the Faculty of the Theological College for the privilege of working within the College community. It has been my great pleasure to be able to contribute in a very small and indirect way to the important task of the College in the training of Ministers of the Word, and I thank our heavenly Father for the health and strength He has given me for this work. I trust that He will continue to bless the work of the College in the future, and that the library will be an effective tool in this work.

Respectfully submitted,
Mrs. J. Marren, Associate Librarian

P.S. For some additional remarks, especially concerning the work of Mrs. J. Marren, I may refer to the Principal's Report, sub 4, to be published in September.

J. FABER, Librarian



Welcome, welcome to our sisters.

Yes, we are allowed to greet two new sisters, although they are not brand-new, so to speak, for their members were already members of some of the Churches.

I am referring to the Churches at Elora and Grand Valley, both in Ontario.

The institution of the first Church will have become a fact when these letters reach our readers; the institution of the latter took place on July 19. The institution in Elora will take place on September 6th, the Lord willing.

Let us first pay attention to the Church which has been instituted at this moment, the one at Grand Valley. For the larger part its members come from the Orangeville Church, with some from Fergus added.

Rev. Werkman wrote, "Now is also the time to say farewell to the 96 members who from this morning on will belong to the new congregation of Grand Valley: 33 communicant and 63 noncommunicant members are leaving us." As for the total membership of Grand Valley, a newspaper report — which, incidentally, uses the correct name for a change: Canadian Reformed Church — states, "The approximately 130 local members previously attended services in Fergus and Orangeville, however because of growth around Grand Valley, there are now enough members to establish a local church. Worship services will be held for the present at the Grand Valley Public School at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. each Sunday."

We pass the time and location on for the benefit of readers who might wish to attend the services there.

As for the Orangeville membership, "membership to date: 373 (177 communicant + 196 noncommunicant members." In a personal letter, Rev. Werkman wrote, "We are still close to 400."

I express the wish that these two Churches — Orangeville and Grand Valley — may issue a combined bulletin. In the first place, this will keep and preserve the special bond between these two Churches and prevent their growing apart; and in the second place, there are so many things they have in common that to me it appears logical to combine forces in this respect as well.

The same wish is expressed regarding the to-be-instituted Church at Elora and the "mother Church," the one at Fergus.

First one more thing about Orangeville.

A report on the activities of the Vacation Bible School gives reason for joy and gratitude.

"Approximately 85 children registered. Due to daily fluctuations we averaged about 65 children per day. Only a handful of those were our own children . . . One girl, in the oldest group, has come since she was five years old. Several others have come for several years. Most, even the 12-year-olds, are eager to come again. 'May we come as helpers?' They were also very happy to hear they would be presented with a Bible if they were 12 years old."

In Burlington East it was reported that "Up to 95 children participated in the program." There it was the 20th anniversary of the Vacation Bible School.

However, let us first go to Elora or, rather, to Fergus.

In the Consistory report we are told: "The Planning Committee for the church at Elora reports that now 23 signatures have been received with a total of 44 communicant members

and 71 noncommunicant members (115 members). The Consistory gratefully takes note of this."

Further we are told that the June classis gave favourable advice regarding the institution.

In the meantime, the Fergus Consistory discussed ways and means to assist the new Churches, to which Fergus "contributed" so many members.

The following decisions were taken.

"1. To officially decide that financial assistance will be given to the possibly instituted churches at Elora and Grand Valley.

"2. The moneys to these congregations to be given under condition that they be used to help purchase of real estate, for a church building or a manse. This money may not be used to cover a possible deficit on a budget.

"3. The money to be paid out in one lump sum rather than in instalments and only after the aforesaid real estate has been acquired.

"4. The amount of money to be given and the reasons used to determine how this amount was reached to be discussed and decided upon AFTER the respective institutions have taken place."

Reason for the decision mentioned under "4" was that "it is wise that the recipients of this money are not present when these matters are discussed and decided upon."

The Fergus Consistory also reported regarding the "Dutch Services: it appears from the reactions received that there is very little interest in the neighbouring churches and in our own congregation to warrant the commencing of some Dutch services. Consistory decides to shelve the idea."

Although we officially do not favour the one chain at the cost of the other and will refrain from advising our readers where to do their shopping, the following is well worth to be considered.

"The Fergus Ladies Aid has come up with a splendid idea! We have obtained a Club Z-number at Zellers store. All members in the congregation can use this number when shopping at Zellers, and total their Club Z points to get a high value gift. Each dollar spent on purchases at Zellers is worth 100 Club Z points. Keep your eyes open for double Z point days. If we together could obtain 750,000 points, our school would be able to receive a Video Cassette Recorder for example."

I cannot give any information about video cassettes, but the Burlington East bulletin did tell me that the cassette tapes of the Second Massed Choir Concert in behalf of the Association for the Handicapped are available now.

Since I am advertising anyway, I might as well take over the whole piece.

"Cassette tapes of the last combined choir concert are now available from any of your local committee members. Our tapes are being sold for \$10. Anyone wishing a video of the concert should place an order with one of the committee members before the middle of August. The videos, which are a one-time offer, will be produced in Beta or VHS and will sell for \$ 19.95." (Why now that miserable custom of \$ 19.95 followed? Why not just say: Twenty dollars?)

Perhaps there are some among our readers who would wish to have such a video cassette, and perhaps the deadline can be extended for their sakes.

The Rev. D.DeJong visited Lower Sackville and conducted services there. In the bulletin he gave a short report. One thing in particular I would like to pass on.

"Recently a family of five (father, mother, and 3 children) asked to be admitted to the church. This is a refugee family from Rumania, who fled to Austria and from there were allowed to come to Canada. When they arrived by plane in Halifax, to where the government had directed them, they asked the customs officer: We were members of a Reformed church in Rumania; do you know a Reformed church here that we can join? The customs officer said yes, and right away phoned brother Stefani, whom he happened to know.

"Brother Stefani was originally a member of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Hungary; now what appeared? This new family belonged to the Hungarian Reformed Church in a part of Rumania (Transylvania), which originally, before the war, had belonged to Hungary."

The hands of the Lord are behind everything and especially there to direct the paths of His children.

Before the Second World War there was the bond of sister-Churches between the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Hungarian Reformed Church. A representative of the latter was present at every general synod of the Netherlands Churches. We are the more thankful that the old bonds have been reestablished and strengthened.

When I attended College, we always had students from Hungary and also from Poland who studied at this Reformed institution.

As for contact with others, the Carman consistory decided that "A visit will be made by our minister and brother Herman Veenendaal to the Reformed Church in the U.S. in Minot, North Dakota."

Above we spoke of new sisters whom we could welcome. There is another one to be born soon, if everything goes well.

The brothers and sisters in Vernon in the Okanagan Valley have approached the Consistory of Chilliwack with the request to go to the next classis with the request for advice re institution. The Consistory reacted favourably to this request, and thus we can expect the next classis Pacific to deal with the question. I can see no reason why the advice should be adverse.

For the summer months the brothers and sisters in Vernon issued a "Summer Sunday Bulletin," and it was promptly sent to me, for which my thanks. In this bulletin they quote from the Chilliwack consistory report:

"Amongst other things the Council also dealt with our request to Classis for institution. This was received favourably and they will add a letter of support and submit it all to the next Classis, Oct.2. It is good that we can all agree and be thankful for these developments."

Rev. VanSpronsen added: "The situation is now reversed: the Okanagan has a minister and Chilliwack is without. We can now return the favour of lending a minister. Every six weeks I will spend a Sunday in Chilliwack."

As was the case in Grand Valley, so in Vernon a nice piece was written in the local newspaper, the *Vernon Daily News*. Once again I was amazed to find the correct terms in a newspaper report. Some of our members, perhaps Rev. VanSpronsen himself, must be responsible for that. Nevertheless I noted with gratitude that it said that "The Canadian Reformed Church receives first minister." I also saw with great joy that it was said that Rev. VanSpronsen "left for Brazil to serve as a missionary of the Canadian Reformed ChurchES in the north-east of Brazil." The emphasis is mine, of course, but this newspaper did better than some of our own people who speak of the Canadian Reformed Church when they refer to the federation!

A clear picture of the ministerial family on the stairs within

the Chapel graced the article as an extra bonus.

In the meantime, the Okanagan brotherhood enjoyed the fact that "Two-thirds of the BC ministerial force is in our midst." Mind you, the "oldies" are not included in this calculation.

The brothers and sisters in Vernon also have a building fund, and they express the wish that visitors will leave some of their holiday-pay behind — the expression is mine! — to strengthen their piggy-bank for this purpose.

They also have a "Church Committee," which is sort of a substitute for a consistory, if I understand it well.

Some gleanings from its meeting of July 2nd.

"We will add our name to the Church Directory in the local paper once a month and also provide them with news items such as the arrival of our first minister.

"We will place a notice in *Clarion* asking people who would be interested in moving to the Okanagan to inform us and let us know their line of work. If an opening appears, we can contact them."

For this time I quit advertising.

The Church at Houston purchased property for erection of a new church building. "Various aspects connected with the purchase of new property were discussed. . . . It was also decided that once the deal is complete, the School Society will then be approached if it would like to obtain part of the land."

In Lincoln "At the last consistory meeting it was reported that the work to install an elevator for our handicapped and elderly brothers and sisters will soon take off."

Visiting Australia for a moment, we learn that in Armadale "the singing of Hymn 1A will be introduced on the four Sundays we celebrate the Lord's Supper. . . . In order to implement this decision we should learn this tune, which is difficult at first but very easy after a while. We hope to stay for 5 minutes after the morning church services. We will start on July 12 and practice every second Sunday until we know the tune."

For those who love statistics we add that the (old) Kelmscott section has a membership of 361 (162 communicant and 199 noncommunicant members) and that the new (Bedforddale) Ward has a membership of 295 (134 communicant members and 161 noncommunicant members).

For quite a while already I have been planning to say something about the frequent use of the verb "to hope."

I understand — I think — why it is used: to express the thought that we can never be absolutely certain whether we can do the things which we are planning on doing. We do not wish to add "the Lord willing" every time, and so we use "We hope to. . . ."

We should not do this, for it deprives this action of its contents and causes it to acquire a very shallow meaning which has nothing to do any more with the "hope that is in us."

Let me give a few examples.

Recently I received a book with announcements in which it said, "The consistory hopes to meet on such and such a day."

In advertisements we sometimes read that "Our dear parents hope to celebrate their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary."

"On November 2nd brother A. hopes to celebrate his eightieth birthday."

"Next week we hope to have A. visit us."

All these sentences appear to be either nonsense or incorrect.

The consistory does not cherish the hope that they will meet on Monday. They are definitely planning to do so, and, perhaps, hope that they all will be able to make it.

On September 30th brother A. does not know at all what he will be hoping for on November 2nd.

Today we do not know which hope we shall have next week when brother A. visits us.

Why not say that a consistory meeting is scheduled for Monday evening?

Why not say that brother A. is planning to visit us next week?

Why not say that on December 25 our dear parents will have been married for twenty-five years and that we will celebrate this with them, the Lord willing, at a reception where every one is welcome?

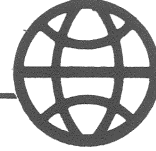
We do not have to say every time "If the Lord wills and we shall live," as long as we live and plan in this faith and conviction.

But to abuse the glorious verb "to hope" in so many cases tends to deprive us of the certainty which the Scriptural term imparts to us.

Think about it.

VO

INTERNATIONAL



AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS

Around the year 2000 there may not be enough scholars who are willing to subscribe to the Christian basis of the university to fill all the vacancies in the teaching staff at the Free University (VU). This concern was expressed by Drs. Harry J. Brinkman, chairman of the governing board of the VU. If this happens, says Brinkman, it will have a serious adverse effect on the Christian character of the university. It already happens regularly that the requirement of expressing agreement with the basis of the university is being waived. The basis states that the purpose (doelstelling) of the Free University is obedience to the gospel and the service of God and His world. Recent investigations have shown that the majority of today's VU students have virtually no ties with a church. (RES NE)

The Presbytery of the Northwest of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has overturned the 1987 General Assembly to take the necessary action to begin direct negotiations with the PCA with a view to full church union.

A second overture has gained the support of four presbyteries in recent weeks. After citing the biblical principles of the unity of the church enunciated last year, it asks GA to mandate the Committee on Ecumenicity to set as its priority in the next year the promotion of the OPC and the PCA becoming one church. (NH)

NEW YORK (RNS)

Forty-six percent of the people of West Germany consider religion obsolete, according to a survey conducted by the Institute for Public Opinion Research in Allensbach.

A report of the survey findings in the Information Service of the German Evangelical Alliance said that only one-

third of the West Germans believe that religion has an answer for the problems of today.

Two-thirds of the people said they believe in God but only one-third said they "stand by the teaching of the church". Fifty-seven per cent said they "rarely or never" attend worship. (CN)

GARDEREN, THE NETHERLANDS

The Rev. J.C. Maris, Secretary of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC), has announced that out of fear of terror, the ICCC will not hold its 40th anniversary meeting in Amsterdam as planned. It was here that the ICCC was organized in 1948 in opposition to the World Council of Churches which was instituted here also that same year.

The ICCC, said Maris, would be in a more vulnerable situation than the itinerant evangelists in 1986 were because Bishop J. Mokoena of South Africa would be present. He rejects any form of violence against the government of South Africa. (RES NE)

PASEDNA, CALIF. (MNS)

The Islamic population of the U.S. is growing and, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, may overtake Judaism as the nation's second-largest faith in the next several years. Growth has occurred both through immigration and conversion. "Generous estimates put the number of Black Muslims at about 1 million and Anglo converts to Islam — a large majority of them women — at between 40,000 and 75,000," Kent Hart, director of field ministries of Zwemer Institute of Muslim Studies, said. (RES NE)

BROMLEY, ENGLAND (MNS)

Church growth in the Netherlands has fallen behind population increases,

according to the recently-published *Handboek van Christelijk Nederland*. In 1975, 61 percent of Holland's population were members of a Christian church; but by 1980 that figure had dropped to 57 percent. Contrary to popular opinion, Protestants are not a majority in Holland. In 1985, 56 percent of church members were Roman Catholic, 29 percent Dutch Reformed, 11 percent other Reformed, and 4 percent other Protestant. (RES NE)

LEUSDEN, THE NETHERLANDS

The considerable loss of membership in the Synodical Reformed Churches in the Netherlands continued during the past year. It decreased from 827,988 to 820,268. After a period of yearly increases, the decrease started in 1975. Initially it amounted to a few thousand, but since 1981 the yearly decrease varied between five and ten thousand members per year. (ND)

HAARLEM, THE NETHERLANDS

In the past year the various Bible Societies have expanded their activities. They are now involved in 573 translation projects, which is 18 more than in the previous year. In total the Bible is being translated for the first time in 384 languages; the other projects regard new translations into languages in which a translation is available which, however, is no longer satisfactory. (ND)

SPAKENBURG, THE NETHERLANDS

Upon request of the Board of Governors, the General Synod of the Reformed Churches decided to increase the tuition fee for the Theological College — now Theological University, VO — to Dfl. 1,600.00. This means an increase from 250 to 1600 in one step (or jump?) (ND)

VO

Our political calling and the Christian Heritage Party²

The previous article contained a report of the presentations which Mr. Ed VanWoudenberg and Prof. J. Geertsema gave at the ARPA meeting of June 4th in Burlington. The present one will summarize the speeches of the other two panelists and provide some notes on the discussion.

Christian politics and the “religious right”

My own presentation focused on the need to discern the spirits in the field of Christian politics, and to avoid the temptation of using a Christian political organization for essentially secular purposes. The tendency to use a Christian party in such a manner is very noticeable among certain “New Right” or “Religious Right” groups in the United States, and the influence of these groups has not stopped at the international border.

Examples were given to show that some of these American activists aim at the procurement of political power in order to usher in their version of the Kingdom of God, while others concentrate more especially on the safeguarding and promotion of the group’s political and socio-economic interests. Whatever the differences, all these various groups, as the generic name already implies, are on the conservative side of the political spectrum. Their right-wing inclinations are evident in policy statements declaring such things as welfare payments to the poor, as well as inheritance, property and income taxes and similar “schemes for the redistribution of wealth,” to be un-Christian, while advocating the introduction of a socio-economic system not dissimilar from old-fashioned laissez-faire liberalism as in full accord with Biblical precepts.

It was further pointed out that even the more extreme of these Religious Right groups are influential also among people of Presbyterian and Reformed background. This is partly to be explained by the New Right’s strong opposition to the inroads of left-wing ideologies, the ongoing secularization of society, and the deteriorating moral situation, but also by the fact that Reformed people have always tended to be of conservative lean-

ings. It is urgently necessary that we realize, however, that this type of political activism is diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Bible, and that its proponents have no right to call their ideas Christian. Christian politics stress the honour of God, the promotion of Christ’s Kingdom, and therefore also mercy and compassion for the poor and disadvantaged. The New Right, on the other hand, confuses the Kingdom of God with the Kingdom of the world, stresses self-sufficiency at the expense of compassion, and is in danger of using the Gospel for gain.

It was admitted that neither the CHP nor any other political group in our midst promotes the New Right ideas wholesale, yet their influence can be clearly detected. This fact, it was pointed out, gives added urgency to Prof. Geertsema’s warning that we make sure of the Biblical, the Reformed character of our political activities. It also underlines the need, so often expressed by Mr. VanWoudenberg, that he be provided with Reformed support.

Christian politics and the church

Dr. VanDam returned to the issue raised by Prof. Geertsema, although most of his conclusions differed from those of his colleague. He warned his audience that in a brief speech it would be impossible for him to substantiate many of his statements, and expressed the hope that the discussion would provide opportunities for further clarification.

Because Prof. VanDam, unlike the other panelists, has, as far as I know, never expressed his views on Christian politics in writing, I will provide a somewhat more extensive report of his presentation than I did in the case of the other three.

The focal point of his presentation was the difference between the task of the Church and that of the state or government, a difference, he warned, that should be kept in mind when we determine our attitude toward the CHP. After referring to utterances by publicists of the G.P.V. (Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond, the political party of the brotherhood in the

Netherlands) and by Prof. Dooyeweerd, he noted that Augustine, Martin Luther, and the Kampen professor of Ethics Dr. J. Douma, described the government’s task (in a nutshell) to be the preservation of outward peace. The Church’s task, on the other hand, is the proclamation of the Gospel and therefore the declaration and preservation of inner peace. The implication of this vast difference in tasks is that the state must tolerate what the Church cannot and may not tolerate. The state must, for example, tolerate heretics and adherents of non-Christian religions such as Hindus and Muslims: full freedom of religion for all is the necessary corollary of full freedom of conscience for all. Therefore the G.P.V. could state that “the government has to see to it that not a single religious, political or social organization exerts spiritual pressure on public society.” But it is entirely different with the Church, which consists of a holy people of God in an unholy world, and must act as the light of the world. The Church cannot admit heretics or Hindus or Muslims: it must proclaim and protect the Gospel and it must protect the sheep of the pasture.

He continued: the distinction that exists between Church and state exists also between Church and political party, and we should not confuse the two. A political party aims for a say in the government of the land; the Church does not. Therefore a political party does not have to exist of members of one Church only: the nature of politics urges, rather, the seeking of wide cooperation in order to attain, under God’s blessing, certain political goals. Such cooperation was accepted as normal by men like Groen van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuyper, and it is also practiced by us in such matters as our fight against abortion.

What is impossible in the Church (e.g., cooperation with Roman Catholics) is possible in politics, *provided* that the basis of cooperation does not involve denying our Confessions, which summarize God’s Word, the basis of our life. But not every point of the Confessions is always at issue, and therefore for certain well-defined goals a different basis, as long as

it agrees with the Word of God, is possible. To join the CHP, he explained, you will be asked to sign an application form indicating that you agree to the following principles: We believe in one Creator God, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the inerrancy of the Bible as the inspired Word of God. You further express agreement with the statement that it belongs to the government's tasks to uphold law and order, maintain justice, ensure the sanctity of life, uphold the citizens' right to own property, guarantee their freedom of

member of the audience wanted information about the party's policies with respect to the Indians. Another asked what differences there would be between the CHP and the Progressive Conservatives (and Socreds) on such issues as the death penalty, the return to the gold standard, and other social, economic and monetary policies. In other words: was the new party simply going to copy the ideas of humanistic parties of conservative signature and become — like some of the Religious Right groups across the border — essen-

various occasions and by various speakers. One member of the audience, who was concerned about the party's vague confessional basis, wondered whether a Christian political organization should really aim at a membership that was as broad as possible. Is it not better, he asked, to give Reformed witness to the world than to sacrifice our convictions in order to come with a show of numerical strength?

Is the idea of this kind of last-ditch stand against the rising tide of immorality realistic and Biblical? We have no promise that we can reform the world, but we have been told to be faithful in our witness.

To these and similar questions Mr. VanWoudenberg replied by urging the establishment of ARPAs in every congregation, and by suggesting that these ARPAs function as support groups and even as "think tanks" for the CHP, evaluating its policies, giving advice, and so helping the CHP in its work and its Reformed witness. He reminded the audience that Reformed witness can also be given in other ways — e.g., by getting involved in hospital and school boards and perhaps in municipal and provincial politics.

“We have no promise that we can reform the world, but we have been told to be faithful in our witness.”

religion, speech and assembly, and enable them to live their lives in accordance with Biblical principles.

Speaking for myself, Prof. VanDam continued, I can agree to that. There is no denial of the Confessions here, and no opposition to the Church-gathering work of Christ. To the contrary, that work would be promoted by a government that subscribes to these principles. If a Roman Catholic or Pentecostal or Presbyterian can agree with this basis, then why can we not work together with them? It is not a Church but a political association. As such, the CHP can be a testimony to Christ's Lordship. Prof. VanDam concluded with the warning that if the CHP should fail because of our apathy or opposition, we should realize that we may not get another chance. We, Christians, are more and more only tolerated, and we have no guarantee that this toleration will last for any length of time.

The discussion: general issues

A large part of the discussion was devoted to the issues debated by the professors Geertsema and VanDam, although several questions were of a more general nature. I will deal with the latter group first. The available space will not allow me to report on every point that was raised, but I will try to give at least an impression of the discussion.

Among the issues discussed were such various ones as the matter of cooperation with the G.P.V., the possibilities of involvement in local politics, and the role of the government in regulating public morality. Various questions were also asked on points of practical policy. One

tially one among many special interest groups?

Mr. VanWoudenberg denied that his party's socio-economic policies would be a copy of the Progressive Conservatives, although he was not yet in a position to give definitive answers to every specific question that might be asked. In many areas the party's policies are still in the process of being formulated, and the party is still working on input from experts in various fields. Earlier he had admitted that there is indeed a tendency, also among members of the CHP, to subscribe to the ideas of the Religious Right, but he added that this influence is being fought, with considerable success. In this connection he explained that sixteen committees have been set up to draft policies for all areas of federal jurisdiction. These drafts are submitted to the executive and sent to about one hundred experts across Canada, who are asked to suggest corrections, deletions, and amendments. From this group of expert advisers the comment had reached him that the party's right-wing tendencies were becoming less noticeable and its policy statements more Reformed. (A member of the audience, who advises the party especially on economic and monetary policy, expressed agreement with this statement.) This development goes to show, Mr. VanWoudenberg concluded, that those who subscribe to the Reformed Confessions should come and help the party so that its policies may come to reflect these standards more and more.

The role of ARPA

The role of ARPA was mentioned on

The function of the Confessions

A member of the audience who felt uneasy about the new party's confessional vagueness referred to the non-confessional basis of the old Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands and implied that this factor was a major reason why in the end it had lost its Reformed character. Prof. Geertsema agreed, and added that a similar development took place among the adherents of the *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* in the Netherlands and with the A.A.C.S. in Canada. He repeated his conviction that the three Forms of Unity provide a safeguard against the danger of losing one's Reformed moorings and going into a liberal direction, and referred to his article in *Clarion* as to the specific meaning of the confessions for Christian politics.

In replying to these comments and to questions addressed to him, Dr. VanDam questioned whether a Christian political party needs to be ecclesiastically defined. The emergence of the G.P.V. as a Church party — i.e., a party formed by members of only one Church — is, he said, a recent development: Groen van Prinsterer and Kuyper did not work in this manner. He agreed that confessors of the Reformed religion should never place themselves in a situation where they must deny their confession, but repeated his earlier remark that not every point of the confession is always at issue in every situation. It is true that the three Forms speak to us on all sorts of political issues, and as Reformed confessors we will bring our

convictions with us, but since the CHP does not deny us our convictions he saw no reason why one could not support the party.

Prof. Geertsema remarked that the insistence on a wider application of the Reformed Confessions than in the Church alone was not as recent a development as the previous speaker had suggested. He mentioned in this connection the objections that in 1880 had come from the side of the Secession Churches to the Free University, because Kuyper had chosen not the Reformed Creeds, but some vaguer Reformed principles as its basis. He also implied that at least Groen van Prinsterer did see the relevance of the Creeds for Christian politics. When he said that "in our isolation lies our strength" Groen referred to an isolation on the basis of the Reformed Confessions. In other words, according to Prof. Geertsema, Groen indeed did not ask that his party be limited to members of one Church, but he did want it to be bound by the Reformed Confessions.

The last word was Prof. VanDam's. He replied that the issue now is not the specific field of education or philosophy, but politics. Groen van Prinsterer did not object to working with others politically. In fact, Groen convinced Kuyper to cooperate with the Roman Catholics, and in

1872 he wrote that he himself would not refuse cooperation with members of that Church when fighting unbelief and revolution. Yet he also made it clear that such cooperation would not extend to the area of the Church; it would be restricted to politics. Groen therefore also wrote: "Cooperation with Roman Catholics? Yes. An alliance with the Church of Rome? Never."

In conclusion

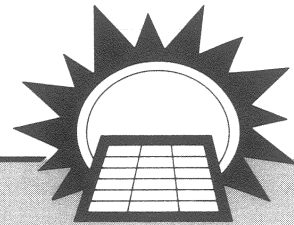
By this time it was 10:30, and the moderator ended the discussion. Some written questions remained unanswered, and one of the points that had been raised by Prof. Geertsema remained hanging in the air. For it is clear from the preceding discussion that the question as to the real basis of Groen's party was not clarified. Admitting that he was willing to cooperate with Rome, e.g., by means of a coalition government, was he also willing to admit Roman Catholics to his party and to modify the basis accordingly? Or did he insist that the party be truly Biblical and Reformed? It would be interesting to hear more about that. I do not, of course, wish to imply that we should treat Groen's pronouncements as canonical, but — as the entire discussion showed — we are willing to listen to him and learn from him.

There were other issues that would have benefited from additional discussion. A member of the audience mentioned Art. 36 of the Belgic Confession and suggested that especially the twenty-one words relegated to a footnote would constitute a threat to all civic freedom — a conclusion that, for some reason, remained unchallenged. Another question, dealing with the choice between political activism and Reformed witness, also deserved further attention. In the discussion of that question it became abundantly clear, however, that also if we have difficulty accepting the CHP, we have no excuse to remain idle: there is much work for Reformed people in politics, locally and nationally, individually and by means of ARPA. The realization of this truth, after decades of political inactivity, is among the fruits of the establishment of the CHP.

Meanwhile the debate on the unresolved issues will no doubt continue, as it should. May it be conducted — as was the case in Burlington — in a spirit of openness, and with the sincere desire to help each other in seeking the Lord's will in fulfilling our political calling.

F.G. OOSTERHOFF

RAY OF SUNSHINE



Do not be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat? . . . or drink . . . or wear . . . your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."

Matthew 6:31-34

Dear brothers and sisters,

I think we all sometimes worry about the future. How we will be able to cope with personal problems, or financial difficulties. What when we would get the message that we are seriously ill? Will we be able to cope with it in such a way that God is pleased with us?

These kind of worries can drain our energy and even affect our health.

The Lord Jesus, however, admonishes us that we should not worry about tomorrows problems, about what we shall eat or drink or wear.

What will happen tomorrow also as to our food, drink, clothing, house, it is in God's hand's. And He is our Father! He has made also those things His con-

cern! Perhaps it seems somewhat unreal to us, that the Almighty God would be interested; that He is even concerned about our daily affairs; whether we have food, can pay the rent or buy that medication. But don't forget that God made a covenant with you; that He has bought you with the price of the blood of His Son, His only one. That is why you are precious in His sight, you and your daily concerns. Those are now through the Lord Jesus also His daily concerns. He cares for you for Christ Jesus sake. Every day! In days of sorrow and joy; days of health or sickness; in prosperity and adversity.

Our concern should be that we every day trust Him and do our tasks as loyal soldiers in His Kingdom.

Those tasks and duties vary. God's assignments are not the same for everybody. Some have to serve Him being busy all day, others have to trust their God while being ill; some are widows or widowers, others are allowed to enjoy each others love and care for many years. But we all should do what God demands of us, using what energy we have to be always truly His child, serving Him as a good soldier being loyal to His Kingdom. Then the righteousness which Christ has obtained for us, is ours; then God looks upon us as if we ourselves had fulfilled all obedience which Christ has fulfilled for us. Then we can also be sure that our heavenly Father will give us wisdom, strength and also food and drink, yes, all what we need to complete His assignments and to meet our responsibilities.

Our lives may be sometimes hard; there is much sorrow, loneliness, struggle against sins so hard to overcome, but it is never a hopeless affair.

Your heavenly Father knows your every need. He knows them before we even ask.

Don't say now, "Why then ask?" Remember He is your Father. He wants to be acknowledged as such. He will provide. He does not always take the burdens away; but He surely will support you every day to carry them!

Tomorrow there might be new troubles, but tomorrow there is also the grace of God and new strength for those who put their trust in Him.

Many securities we build break down sooner or later; many things cease and desist, but the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases. His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning! Great is His faithfulness.

Our birthday calendar for September:

MARY VANDEBURGT

17244 - 61 B Avenue
Surrey, BC V3S 5M7

Mary will be 31 years old on September 11th. She works in "Bethesda," a Christian home for the handicapped. I'm sure she would like to receive some mail from our "Sunshine-friends."

JERRY BONTEKOE

"Anchor-Home"
30 Road, RR 2
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0

Jerry hopes to celebrate his 23rd birthday on September 14th. Last year Jerry was very disappointed not to receive any cards for his birthday. The reason was that his name was somehow not on my calendar. Let's now make sure that his mailbox will be filled to capacity on September 14th!

PAUL DIELEMAN

307 Connaught Avenue
Willowdale, ON M2R 2M1

Paul's birthday is on September 29th. Then he will D.V. be 18 years old. Shall we make it a special day for him? We cannot do much, but a card is easy to get and to send!

Congratulations to all three of you!
May our heavenly Father surround you with His love and care.

A Request!

Trevor Hofsink (9 years old) was born with an open spine and he has had already many operations. Recently he had more serious surgery done. It will take a long time for him to recuperate from this operation.

With a little effort from our side, we may be able to brighten up these for him so difficult days. Just send him a card or note!

Trevor's address is:

1426 Bulkley Drive
PO Box 411
Smithers, BC

STEP BY STEP

God does not lead me year by year,
Nor even day by day;
But step by step my path unfolds,
As He directs my way.
Tomorrow's plans I do not know;
I only know this hour.
And Him who bids me walk each step
Supported by His power.
And I am glad that it is so;
Today's enough to bear.
And when tomorrow comes, His grace
Will far exceed my care.
What need to worry then or fret?
My LORD, who gave His Son,
Holds all my moments in His hand
And gives them one by one.

Greetings,

MRS. J. MULDER

1225 Highway 5, RR 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3X4

Installation of the Reverend J. Visscher at Langley, BC

According to the editor of the regional "Church News," the "transfer" of the Reverend J. Visscher from Cloverdale to Langley, B.C. has been the "shortest ministerial move of the Canadian Reformed Churches."¹ If this statement needs any corroboration, it could be shown that the distance between the two churches is about 9 km. as a bird flies.

On May 3, 1987, the Rev. G.H. Visscher of the Maranatha Church in Surrey conducted the morning service at the Langley Church, on which occasion he installed his brother the Rev. J. Visscher, formerly minister of the Cloverdale Church he had served since January, 1978.²

The Rev. G. H. Visscher chose John 21:15-23 as the text for his sermon. After establishing the theme "The Lord Jesus instructs Peter about the nature of following Him," the following points were developed: there should be

1. undying love for Christ
2. unending obedience to Christ
3. undivided devotion to Christ

Being frightened, Peter denied Christ three times. The problem with Peter at that time was his lack of love for Jesus Christ, because "there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." In Christ's interrogation of Peter, His asking him three questions, the whole future of the Church is at stake. Peter receives a three-fold mandate, which has relevance also for the installation of the new minister. Peter's confession of his love for Jesus Christ becomes the impetus for all his future work as a shepherd for the flock. Therefore, the first and primary qualification is always a deep and lasting love for the Lord Christ. The office-bearer being fueled by his deep love for Christ is constantly renewed in his strength to all true believers, but we may have to pay a price for expressing our love for Him, even the ultimate price.

In the past Peter always wanted to go his own way, but he has to learn unending obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter's self-seeking arrogance had to be broken. Once he is filled with the Spirit, Peter can follow his Lord even unto death. Both the congregation's new pastor and the congregation itself should renew their pledge to follow their chief Shepherd. Both the shepherd and the sheep are to make the same commitment. As always, the work of Christ has to occupy the center of all our activities. When everyone is going his own way chaos will en-

sue. Going where Jesus Christ wants us to go, however, leads to unity. Following Jesus Christ implies that we should be prepared to go even where we may not like to go.

Undivided devotion to Christ always demands that we follow the chief Shepherd, although He may not divulge all things we want to know. The congregation should not be sidetracked by the perennial and favourite questions regarding God's secret will and counsel. The mandate is: strive to enter, and follow Me. The congregation is exhorted not to pry into things that are not revealed but to commit itself in undivided devotion to the chief Shepherd — our hearts glowing with love, our wills submissive in obedience, and our eyes not swerving from the Author and Finisher of our faith — our Lord Jesus Christ.

After the sermon the installation took place, followed by the congregational response "The Lord now bless you from above. . ." (Ps. 134:3).

In the afternoon service Langley's newly installed pastor read Romans 12 and used as text for his inaugural sermon Eph. 4:11-14. In his preamble the minister referred briefly to the new beginning this day, resulting in a time of adjustment not only for the congregation but also for the minister of the Word. What does the congregation expect from the minister, and what does the minister expect from the congregation? The answer is found in Christ's giving ministers to His Church in order that all members may become ministers. This theme is developed as follows: 1. the Giver of ministry, 2. the gifts of ministry, 3. the tasks of ministry, and 4. the goals of ministry.

Office bearers, like prophets, apostles, ministers, elders and deacons, are gifts of Christ. The Head of the Church, Christ, is the source of her life. He rules over the entire universe and over His Church, which is controlled, filled, penetrated by His presence. Indisputably, all these gifts come from Christ. The Church depends entirely on Christ as the Provider, so that it can exist and survive.

In the gifts of ministry we discern two distinct offices: those that are temporary and those that are permanent. With the eclipse of the apostolic age, the temporary gifts have vanished; but the ministry of pastors and teachers continues. The minister has to be filled with the awareness of whose mouthpiece he is. His office is a gift from the ascended Christ. The saints, too, have to be

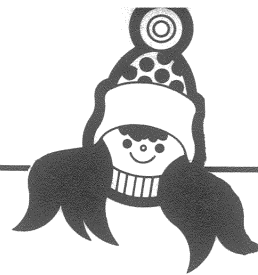
equipped for the service; that is, they have to be put into a condition in which they ought to be. The members are to act like a catalyst to make all other members into servants performing the service. The task is, in fact, to make all the saints participate in the work of the ministry. Yet, office-bearers are not obsolete; they have to stimulate the flock into activity so that it lives up to its potential. The local church belongs to the body of Christ, but we should understand that its structure does not resemble a pyramid with the minister at its apex. In a living church there is no room for indifferent spectators or bystanders; the building up of the body of Christ requires participants.

The goal of ministry is to show how great are the gifts of Jesus Christ to His people. Paul points out three goals. The first one is "unity of the faith." When there is disunity, the members are not doing what they are called upon to do; they are neglecting their duties. The second goal is to reach maturity. Our talents must be used so that we continue to grow spiritually, developing ever closer to "the stature of the fullness of Christ." Thus, Christ demands our spiritual growth, development and maturation. The third goal is stability so that we are not going to be "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine." The immature believer is prone to instability because of ignorance, deception, and insecurity. Standing on the sidelines he never pays serious attention to the message of the gospel. But those that are firmly rooted in faith, are steadfast and bring honour and glory to their Father in heaven.

The agenda of the newly installed minister is not hidden or secretive, but plainly visible to all. The agenda is to equip the congregation so that unity, maturity, and stability may abound. In the summary of his closing words the Rev. J. Visscher expresses the fervent hope that this objective may coincide with the agenda of the congregation in Langley "to the greater glory of God who called us all."

¹"Church News," Vol. 28, No.9

²On July 28, 1986, the Rev. G.H. Visscher was installed in Surrey, B.C. by his brother the Rev. J. Visscher.



Hello Busy Beavers,

Let's pretend I'm a mindreader and I know what you are thinking!

"I'll be glad to see my friends at school again."

"I wonder about my new teacher."

"Will we have to do a *project* this year?"

"I have to listen carefully in math class."

"This year we will be learning French!"

"I think science units are interesting."

How do *you* feel about going back to school?

In case you want to tell me about it, here is my address:

Aunt Betty
c/o Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R2J 3X5

Best wishes, Busy Beavers,
for a happy and successful
school year 1987-88!

KIDS DID IT!

These kids in Bible times had to learn and work just as you do! Do you know all their names?

1. This boy started helping the priest Eli in God's house at kindergarten age. His name was _____.
2. This girl watched over her little brother's cradle boat at the river's edge. Her name was _____.
3. This little boy was crowned king at the age of eight. Later he read the book of God's law to the people and was called the good king _____.
4. This boy was thinking ahead and brought five little loaves of bread and two fish for lunch. Later he gave this lunch to _____ to feed a crowd of people.
5. This boy was a hard worker as a steward of his master's house and later as a jailer's helper. His name was _____.
6. These boys were told by the prophet _____ to collect as many jars as possible to hold all the oil their mother was to sell.
7. This brave boy went to the Roman commander to warn him about the danger his uncle _____ was in.
8. This boy was sent from home to the Egyptian palace where he learned the many, many things a young "Egyptian" prince should know. He was _____.
9. This boy had the job of looking after his father's sheep. Sometimes while he watched them he played his harp and sang psalms to God. His name was _____.
10. This boy and his three friends loved the Lord and did not want to eat food offered to idols even though it came from the king's table. His name was _____.

(See answers)



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Maria Stel*. Thank you for your big letter. Did you enjoy your summer holidays with your friends close by? And did you try the quizzes in our summer contest, *Maria*?

And welcome to you, too, *Netty Sikkema*. I see you are a real Busy Beaver already, sending in riddles to share with the Busy Beavers! Bye for now. Write again soon.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Karissa Veldman*. Be sure to join in all our Busy Beaver activities, *Karissa*. And yes, I can see you drive to church in a van. Thank you for the picture, *Karissa*.

Welcome to the Club, *Joni Dekker*. We are happy to have you join us. What a pretty picture you sent me! Are you and your two sisters having fun this summer? Write again soon!

Of course you may join the Busy Beaver Club, *Rebecca Hekert*. How did your swimming lessons go, *Rebecca*? I hope you have a great time with your grandparents visiting. Let us know how they like it in our country.

How did you enjoy your cousin's wedding, *Esther Bergsma*? And how is your sister's arm coming along? Have you entered our Summer Quiz Contest, *Esther*? How did you do?

Sounds to me as if you had a good time visiting in the States, *Julia Jonker*. Have you been keeping busy during the holidays since then? How do you feel about going back to school?

Did your stitches heal up fast, *Linda van Sydenborgh*? How did you enjoy your camping vacation? And have you entered our contest? Thanks for writing, *Linda*. Bye for now.

Thank you for the interesting puzzle, *Alex Sikkema*. I'm glad you're enjoying the summer. How do you feel about going back to school, *Alex*? Till next time!

Thank you for your pretty note, *Christina Vandervelde*. What did you do to keep busy this summer, *Christina*? Will you be happy to go back to school? Bye for now.

How is your injured brother doing, *Alida Knol*? Sounds to me as if you had one fun holiday at Wasaga Beach. And I can see you had fun at your family reunion. Thanks for the puzzle, *Alida*.

You're having a great time this summer, I see, *Alice van Woudenberg*. You're right, *Alice*, it's always more fun to be doing something along with a friend. Write again soon.

RIDDLE FUN

From Busy Beaver *Netty Sikkema*

1. What did one chick say to the other chick after the hen laid an orange instead of an egg?
2. What letters are not in the alphabet?
3. What happens if you throw a black stone into the Red Sea?
4. What kind of shoes are made of banana skins?
5. What did the porcupine say when he bumped into the cactus plant?
6. If one pig is in the pen and another is running loose, which one would sing "Don't fence me in?"

(See answers)