



Clarion
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 37, No. 7

April 1, 1988

Holy Scriptures and faith in Christ

What follows is a somewhat changed chapel talk, held at the College on Thursday, March 3, 1988. Reading: II Timothy 3, Text: II Timothy 3:15.

Introduction

II Peter and II Timothy have the form of a "farewell address." In them the warning against apostasy through false teachers is connected with the exhortation to abide by the Scriptures. It is noteworthy, although not amazing, that exactly in these farewell addresses both Peter and Paul stress this need to abide by the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God. In both, namely in II Peter 1:20, 21 and II Timothy 3:16, we find the well-known prooftexts for the doctrine of the infallibility of the Scriptures.

Now I do not ask your attention for this famous II Timothy 3:16, but for verse 15. We must begin with verse 14, because here the sentence starts. Paul writes: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it (14) and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (15).

With the words "But as for you" the apostle places Timothy over against the apostate who may have an outward appearance of religion, but never come to the true knowledge of the truth and to a genuine life out of faith. Over against them, Paul exhorts Timothy to "continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed."

In this abiding by what he has learned Timothy can be helped by acknowledging and keeping in mind two things; in the first place by keeping in mind from whom he learned it, namely, from his grandmother and mother, as well as from the apostle Paul; and in the second place, by keeping in mind the fact that it is from his early childhood that he has "been acquainted with the sacred writings." It is on these words in the first place that I will focus the attention of the reader.

Then, the apostle says about these sacred writings that they are able to make Timothy wise for salvation. This is the second element in verse 15 that I would like to discuss. In the third place, I ask your attention for the fact that Paul connects this becoming wise through the Scriptures with faith in Christ Jesus.

From early childhood

From early childhood Timothy knew the sacred writings. I translate "early childhood." Paul uses here the same word for child that we find in Luke 1 for the unborn John, jumping up in the womb of his mother Elizabeth when she is greeted by Mary, and in Luke 2 for the newborn child Jesus about whom the angel speaks and whom the shepherds go and visit. In chapter 18 Luke uses the word for the little infants that are brought to the Lord Jesus in order that He might touch them. The word indicates the unborn child or the child that is still very young.

It is clear, then, that the apostle reminds his spiritual child and fellow-worker, one of the heirs of his mantle, so to speak, of the fact that from early childhood he was taught in the Scriptures. From chapter 1:5 we know that first of all his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice had taught him the "sacred writings."

With the translation "sacred writings" the RSV tries to do justice to the Greek text, which does not have the word that is usually employed for Scripture. The Greek text uses a word that can mean the letters that compose a word; or an epistle, a letter, a piece of writing. In this text the word is synonymous with Scripture. This expression, "holy writings," fits beautifully with the childhood of Timothy. In those days a Jewish child began his official school training at the synagogue school at the age of five or six. First the letters of the (Hebrew) alphabet were learned. All instruction, also in writing and reading, was done with the use of the Biblical text, starting with the text of Leviticus with its many repetitions.

Through the teaching in the "holy writings" by his grandmother and mother, Timothy had become acquainted with the Scriptures at a very early age, and gradually his knowledge had increased. The result was that Timothy knew them thoroughly.

This Scripture passage is filled with instruction and guidance also for today. In the first place, they urge also today's parents and grandparents, mothers and grandmothers, but no less fathers and grandfathers, to begin with the instruction of their children in the knowledge of the Scriptures at an early age; and to do this steadfastly and continuously, so that these covenant children become thoroughly acquainted with God's holy Word. Of course, in order to be able to do this, such Christian parents must have been trained themselves. Only then will they be able to train their children.

There is another aspect. It is exactly that excellent instruction in the knowledge of the Scriptures which, through the grace of God, formed his mind and thinking, and prepared him for the task of being a fellow-worker with the apostle Paul in the service of the gospel, in the building and preservation of the church of Christ in those days. It prepared him for the calling to continue the work for Christ and His church after the "departure" (death) of Paul.

The training in the knowledge of the Scriptures for future fathers and mothers, also for future elders and deacons and ministers should begin at an early age, at home. Parents should make their children aware of this; elders and at family visits, ministers on the pulpit and in the catechism room should point these things out. The same counts for teachers in the class room.

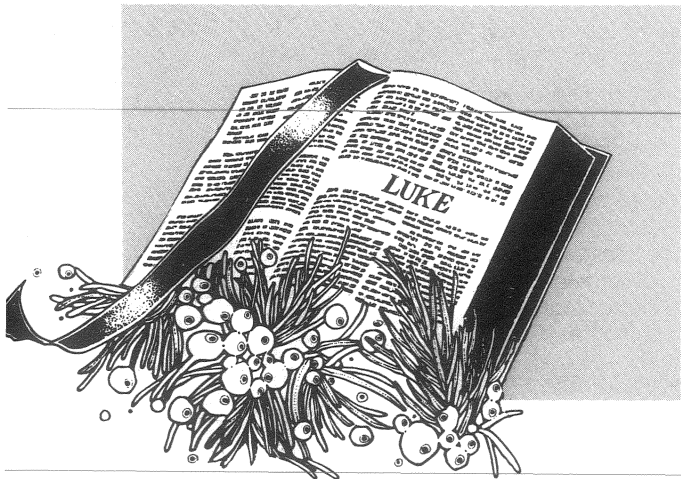
Education in the Scriptures is so intensely important. And it is so intensely important that this starts as early as possible in the homes. It is covenantal education with a purpose that teaches children that their lives have a great and glorious goal; build solid Christian homes as building blocks for solid con-

gregations through the generations. When we say church, we say covenant; when we say covenant, we say generations. The church of Christ needs well-trained boys and girls, future fathers and mothers, who are thoroughly acquainted with the "holy writings," future ministers, elders and deacons as well, who, in turn, are able to educate a next generation of church builders.

This is the more urgent when we consider the contrast in this chapter between Paul and Timothy and the apostate. Paul speaks in the context of the struggle of the church, which is his own struggle, to stand up to false teachings and to refute them. Proper education of children in the church from an early age means, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, spiritually strong churches. It means that a generation grows up that will be useful for Christ, for His work of preserving and building His church.

Scripture makes wise unto salvation

Why is thorough knowledge of the sacred writings of Scripture so important? Paul says that these writings are able to make us wise unto salvation. The Greek says literally that they can make wise. Wisdom, in the Bible, is strongly practical. A wise man builds his own life and that of others. A fool breaks life down. Wisdom is insight. A wise man knows what is right and what is wrong. He receives this wisdom from the LORD, from His Word. Wisdom is rooted in the fear of the LORD. Wisdom is insight in the Word of God.



When Paul speaks here about a being made wise unto or for salvation he means a having insight in what salvation practically means. It is wisdom that makes one know what it means to live the life of one who is saved. This salvation is not only a matter of eternal life later after death, although it is that as well. No, this salvation begins here on earth in this life. Salvation means that one is rescued from the spiritual death of being a slave of Satan, of unbelief and sin. Salvation is that as a believer, one commits his life to the LORD and His service. Salvation is to live a new life as a child and servant of God.

Being made wise for salvation is the opposite of living according to the picture which the apostle drew in the first part of this chapter. Paul said that in the last days people will be "lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, and so on." Such people do not know or understand God's Word. They do not know what is right and wrong in the eyes of God. They do not want to know either. They have no idea of what it means to live a saved life in obedience of faith. They do not live a holy life, because they do not know what a holy life is, and do not

want to know. They do not live in the Christian hope, for they live for themselves, for this world. Thus they also do not keep in mind the future salvation as it still has to be fulfilled in glory. They are, therefore, not church builders, but church breakers in the last days. Useless for the cause of Christ.

Over against them, Timothy has to struggle in faith and with his knowledge of the Scriptures to preserve the congregation for Christ. Knowledge of the holy writings is indispensable, indeed. Also in the New Testament dispensation lack of knowledge leads to perdition.

Through faith in Christ Jesus

There is a third very important aspect. How and when is it possible that knowledge of the holy Scriptures can make wise unto salvation? Paul says: the instruction in the Scriptures was able to make Timothy wise and can make others wise "through faith in Christ Jesus." This is the same message as we have it from the mouth of Christ in John 5:39. There the Lord speaks to the Jews: "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life." Christ does not deny that in the Scriptures is eternal life. Only, He added, "and it is they [these Scriptures] that bear witness to Me."

It is clear, then, that knowledge of the Scriptures must be accompanied by faith in Christ Jesus. He is the contents of the Scriptures. There must be faith in Christ Jesus. It is of Him that the Scriptures speak. Knowledge of holy Writ without faith in Christ misses salvation. All the knowledge of the Scriptures is futile if it is not at the same time faith in Christ. Knowledge of the Scriptures in itself, for the sake of knowledge, does not benefit. It is as Paul writes in I Corinthians 13: even if I understood all mysteries and knowledge, but had no love (which flows from faith in Christ), I would be nothing. I can build up an enormous amount of knowledge of the Bible and of the Confession, but if this is not borne by faith in Christ Jesus, this knowledge is lost.

Just as the Old Testament says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom, so we can now, in the New Testament dispensation, say: faith in Christ is the beginning of all wisdom.

It is the calling of the church, its members and its office-bearers and leaders, "to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered for the saints" (Jude:3). For that struggle, knowledge of, and insight into, the Scriptures is a necessity. What is written has to lead and guide us. What is written is the norm, and it is about Christ Jesus. We have what is written summarized in our confessional creeds to help us to abide by the Scriptures, that is, by the faith in Christ Jesus.

If we contend for the faith, and thus for the preservation and gathering of the church of Christ, without a living faith in Christ, without living in the fellowship of faith with Christ, our contending will degenerate into carnal fighting and destroys rather than that it builds up and preserves.

But when it is through faith in Christ, in His fellowship, driven by His Holy Spirit in love, that we become wise and see what it means to live a saved life, our contending for the faith will meet opposition, but also receive God's blessing.

Faith in Christ Jesus is faith that He died for our sins and rose for our life. It is faith that Christ Himself, through His regenerating Holy Spirit, binds us to Him and to His cause, His church, with thankful loving dedication and obedient commitment. Let us then build up our knowledge of the sacred writings, and let us build up the knowledge of our children from their early childhood, that we and our children may be wise and understanding and skilled in living saved lives through faith in Christ Jesus. Let us so struggle for the preservation and further gathering of the church of Jesus Christ in this world, so that we show His peace bringing light in a dark world filled with stress through sinful selfishness.

J. GEERTSEMA

Shaking of hands before and after worship services

In *Clarion* of February 5, 1988, the Rev. VanOene wrote about the shaking of hands before and after worship service. I have some comments on what he wrote, but first I would like to repeat his writing.

“In answer to a question re ‘the handshake’ it is pointed out that the handshake is for the benefit of the congregation, to confirm that the minister is authorized to proclaim the Word of God.”

A nice story but totally without basis and completely incorrect.

I realize that the same “explanation” has been given more than once and may sound plausible to some. It rests, however, completely on the fantasy of those giving it.

If anyone has access to the volumes of *De Reformatie*, let him look up Volume 61, page 648. For the benefit of our readers I give the following translation of part of the brief article found there.

“The accompanying of the minister to the pulpit and the handshake of the elders came into use in the days of the Doleantie (around 1886).”

“Quite some time had been spent in meetings and quite a struggle preceded the decision to go ‘into Doleantie.’ Once it was that far, the decision had to be made known to the congregation by the minister on Sunday. He was accompanied to the foot of the pulpit and got a sturdy handshake along. This remained a custom, for the ‘going into Doleantie’ was followed by deposition of the minister and the consistory, and by the leaving and formation of a ‘Reformed Church’: it remained difficult! Therefore, accompanying the minister to the pulpit and the handshake are typically ‘Reformed,’ were unknown in the Netherlands Reformed Church — the ‘State Church’ VO — even though it has penetrated into it as well, also as a mark of orthodoxy. Liturgical manuals can write in moving terms about the handshake as support and agreement of the congregation, but the Seven Reformed Churches in the time of the Seven Provinces as well as the Netherlands Reformed Church after 1815 did not know the handshake. This one handshake multiplied, when also the other consistory members shook hands in the consistory-room, before and after the service. Seeming conflicts arose when an elder was of the opinion that he could not agree with the sermon and

then asked himself whether he could shake hands with the minister [after the service, VO].”

Apart from the fact that the whole matter of “authorization” is pure fantasy, I totally reject the idea as such. At best, such might be said of a guest minister whom the congregation does not know and whose name was not mentioned in the bulletin as being the one who was to conduct the service(s). When a minister has been installed in a Church, he has received his authorization at his installation and I reject any idea as if he is authorized — be it symbolically — every Sunday anew or as if the congregation is to see every Sunday and every service anew that the man has received the authorization to proclaim God’s Word.

There is some truth in what the Rev. VanOene has written here. However, he does not give a complete picture. In the same issue of *De Reformatie* from which he quotes, a citation is given (via Dr. C. van der Waal) from G. van Rongen’s book, *Zijn Schone Dienst* (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1956, p. 112). It appears that already before the times of the Secession of 1834 a custom of shaking hands existed; the minister shook the hands of the members of the consistory in the sight of the congregation. It was called “the hand of fellowship.”

Van Rongen also says (p. 110) that it is hard to find out exactly when this custom began, but he is of the opinion that, indeed, there is a kind of authorization in it. He writes: “He [the minister] acts on behalf of the consistory of the church, and, in this way, upon the mandate of the king of the church, our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The author of the article quoted in *De Reformatie*, the Rev. W.H. de Jong, a minister in the Dutch Reformed (Hervormde) Church in the Netherlands, also writes that he is not in favour of abolishing the handshake before and after the service. He considers it a token of good fellowship, expressing that minister and elder, consistory and congregation, all stand together.

It is interesting to read what another theologian of the Dutch Reformed (Hervormde) Church thinks about the matter of the handshake. Dr. H. Jonker, in his

book *Liturgische Orientatie* (Wageningen, n.d.), writes about what he calls “the presbyterial shaking of hands.” “This shaking of hands reminds us each and every Sunday that we are in a presbyterial church and not in an episcopal church” (p. 142). “In the episcopal church the servant, possibly accompanied by his ‘acolytes,’ enters the church and goes to the altar. There is no shaking of hands. He is the one who is sent and because of his mandate from higher [human] authorities, he has to announce, and pass on, the mysteries of salvation to the congregation. In the presbyterial church there is the shaking of hands before the servant enters the pulpit. This gesture is meaningful, because it means that the minister executes the ministry of the Word in co-responsibility with the consistory and the congregation, which is represented in the consistory. The administration of Word and sacrament is borne also by the consistory and the congregation. Also on behalf of them the minister proclaims the Word. The congregation is, as it were, the sounding board of the preaching.” And (p. 143), “Behind the hand of the elder we see the hand of God Himself, who supports, strengthens, and encourages His servants in their responsible but also joyful service.” Also in the circles of the Presbyterian churches, e.g. the Free Church of Scotland, it has been the custom for a long time already to shake hands, at least after the service. They still call that “the hand of fellowship.” Here again the contrast between the presbyterial and the episcopal way of worship is stressed.

In conclusion I would like to say:

1. It is not certain that the shaking of hands before and after the worship service originated in “Doleantie” times. It appears that at least the “hand of fellowship” dates from the first part of the 19th century, or even earlier;

2. The explanation of “authorization” is probably too heavy loaded, but the shaking of hands can, nevertheless, be seen as a token of communion and co-responsibility of the office-bearers;

3. There is no reason to abolish this custom in our churches.

K. DEDDENS

Ecumenical task — cultural mandate — witnessing

Under the title *Your Ecumenical Task* Schilder once delivered a speech in which he called his hearers, as Christians, to witness boldly to the world around them. This call is as relevant, as difficult and as urgent today as it was then and, since Schilder had quite a bit to say about it, allow me to quote liberally from his pearls of wisdom.

I fear that, when we consider this call and the Scriptural examples of our forefathers, our witnessing to those around us leaves much to be desired. Mine does and, I have observed, I'm no orphan in this regard. Too often we lack the boldness, the frankness and the conviction to dare to be ourselves as Christians. We realize that, as members of Christ's church, we are different from the great majority of people around us. And, of course, we should be different, holy, dedicated to the Lord. What we should not, however, be is ashamed of being different, of being Christ confessors in all avenues of our lives. Our timidity, our reluctance to speak and act different to the world there where our holiness demands difference is a denial of Christ. Moreover, our restraint at such a time shows no real love towards our neighbour since, whilst it may arise out of a desire not to wish to offend him, it is doing nothing for his eternal well-being.

Perhaps part of the problem is that we are not sufficiently aware of the importance of the lives of each individual one of us. We know that we are Christ's co-workers. But co-workers in what? We agree with Kuyper that there is not a square centimetre of this earth of which Christ does not say: "It is Mine." And we know that therefore God's commandments must be obeyed by everyone on earth. We have also learnt that we are not strangers on earth. That God has given the earth to us as our work terrain. Yet when we consider our small numbers and the host of unbelievers in amongst whom we have been placed and note that we are the ones who are different, that we are the odd ones out, we tend to smother the differences instead of sharpening them, to be quiet when we should speak out. In short, we do not sufficiently dare

to witness that our lives are dedicated to the Lord.

Why is such witnessing so important? Schilder pointed out that God's purpose in creating the universe was for His self-glorification. Man, the crown on the creation, was given the mandate to glorify God in his handiwork. He was primarily image-bearer and consequently office-bearer of God, a servant son who as prophet, priest and king received the cultural mandate to cultivate the ground, to replenish the earth and have dominion over it, and to do all this to the glory of God the Creator.

But Satan, who had unsuccessfully tried to appropriate God's glory for himself in heaven, and been excluded as a result, now tried to steal it on earth and so destroy God's purpose of self-glorification on earth. And we know the result: man rebelled and denied his relationship to the Father, becoming an ally of God's enemy, the devil.

Had God left things as they stood we all would be doomed to hell, to absolute hopelessness, eternal misery, complete


and utter alienation from God. It would also have meant that Satan would have successfully achieved his purpose.

God therefore set the antithesis, separating the church from the world, saving the one and leaving the other to its just condemnation. He promised the second Adam, Christ the anointed One, who not only is our substitute to bear the wrath of God for us, but also to be our replacement to fulfill the cultural mandate given to our first father.

As the anointed one Christ obeyed the will of God perfectly, witnessing of God through His words and actions. He gave His life as a sacrifice to God for man, spoke God's Word to those about Him and now rules creation.

As partakers of Christ's anointing we, too, says L.D. 12, follow Christ in living to the glory of God. We do that by confessing God's name, by presenting ourselves a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him, and by fighting against sin and the devil.

There is an inescapable relationship between these three roles of the Chris-

 <p>Clarion THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE Published bi-weekly by Premier Printing Ltd. Winnipeg, MB</p> <p>EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Editor: J. Geertsema Co-Editors: K. Deddens, J. DeJong, Cl. Stam, C. VanDam and W.W.J. VanOene</p> <p>ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS: CLARION 41 Amberly Boulevard Ancaster, ON, Canada L9G 3R9</p> <p>ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.): CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd. One Beghin Avenue Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5 Phone: (204) 663-9000</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>SUBSCRIPTION RATES</td> <td><i>Regular</i></td> <td><i>Air</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><i>Mail</i></td> <td><i>Mail</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>FOR 1988</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Canada</td> <td>\$25.00</td> <td>\$44.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>U.S.A. U.S. Funds</td> <td>\$27.00</td> <td>\$41.50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>International</td> <td>\$36.50</td> <td>\$63.00</td> </tr> </table> <p>Advertisements: \$6.00 per column inch Second class mail registration number 1025 ISSN 0383-0438</p>	SUBSCRIPTION RATES	<i>Regular</i>	<i>Air</i>		<i>Mail</i>	<i>Mail</i>	FOR 1988			Canada	\$25.00	\$44.00	U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$27.00	\$41.50	International	\$36.50	\$63.00	<p>IN THIS ISSUE</p> <p>Holy Scriptures and faith in Christ — J. Geertsema 146</p> <p>Shaking the hands before and after worship services — K. Deddens 148</p> <p>Ecumenical task — cultural mandate — witnessing — J. Numan 149</p> <p>Politics — W.W.J. VanOene 151</p> <p>News Medley — W.W.J. VanOene 153</p> <p>Patrimony Profiles⁵⁴ — W.W.J. VanOene 155</p> <p>International — W.W.J. VanOene 157</p> <p>School Crossing — T.M.P. VanderVen 158</p> <p>Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty 159</p>
SUBSCRIPTION RATES	<i>Regular</i>	<i>Air</i>																	
	<i>Mail</i>	<i>Mail</i>																	
FOR 1988																			
Canada	\$25.00	\$44.00																	
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$27.00	\$41.50																	
International	\$36.50	\$63.00																	

tian listed in L.D. 12 and witnessing. For to confess God's name is to witness of Him to others, to present ourselves a living sacrifice of thankfulness is to witness of that thankfulness also to others, and to fight against sin and the devil is to witness of Christ's lordship over all of life and therefore of the need for all to submit to His commandments.

Such witnessing is not easy. In fact it is, says Schilder, the most difficult thing there is, because it means coming with the Word which to the Jews is a stumbling-block and to the Greeks is foolishness. It is foolishness to the world around us. That Word will always be opposed by the Satan, the father of lies.

Thus the antithesis, which God set between the church and the world in paradise, manifests itself there where God's children boldly dare to be themselves as Christians, faithfully fulfilling their threefold office of prophet, priest and king.

This threefold office, the crux of our cultural mandate, manifests itself in our witnessing and forces the antithesis. For God's Word is a two-edged sword. It will cause either acceptance or rejection. And that rejection, when it is continually confronted by the Word of God, and by activities done in faithfulness to that Word, will become stronger and may well result in physical violence.

Consider just some examples from Scriptures. Enoch walked with God. He saw the wickedness around him and admonished the people consistently. They responded by trying to kill him. But God took this faithful witness directly to heaven so that he would not see death.

Consider also Noah, who in a world of millions of godless, wicked people was the only one found faithful. For 120 years he was ridiculed and laughed to scorn as, in faithfulness to God's command, he built a mammoth ship on dry land. Yet his admonitions and his faithful obedience to God's will honoured God and were a continuous warning of the judgment to come.

And so the list could go on: Elijah, Stephen, Paul, and even God's own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ: persecuted even unto death because they boldly dared to witness of their faith and fought against sin and Satan. For such witnessing spurs reaction. It forces the antithesis to become manifest. Yet the work of these faithful witnesses was done in love towards God and their neighbours.

Such witnessing has value for eternity. In the first place because such love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and as such a glorifying of God and an assurance of life eternal for the person expressing that love. In the second place it has value for the hearer because you are seeking that person's salvation, his eternal life.

Thus witnessing is an act of love which places the hearers or observers at the crossroads each time again. They can respond positively to your witnessing, in which case the road to eternal life is opened to them, or they can respond negatively, in which case they stare hell in the face.

Such witnessing is a God-given mandate. Not only do we learn this from the examples of faithful witnesses mentioned earlier, but there are several specific texts relating to it. In Matthew 5:13 we read: "You are the salt of the earth." And in verse 14:

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

And in I Peter 2:9 we read:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Dr. S. Greijdanus translates "declare" into "naar buiten boodschappen." And in Philipians 2:15 we read: "... be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life . . ."

Here you see the antithesis again. We are to be blameless, the world is crooked and perverse. In the midst of this wickedness we are to hold fast the word of life. Greijdanus translates this "holding fast" into "naar voren houden," holding it forth so that others can see it.

From various passages in Scriptures it is evident that witnessing is to be done through both words and works. Through words because I Thessalonians 1:8 says: "The Word of the Lord sounded forth from you." In Matthew 10:32 Christ says: "Everyone who acknowledges Me before men . . ." And in I Peter 2:9 we are commanded to ". . . declare the wonderful

deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." But no less through deeds. Philipians 2:15 says: "Be blameless in the midst of a perverse generation." Matthew 5:16 says: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works . . ." John 13:35 says: "By this people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." We confess the importance of our lifestyle in witnessing in L.D. 32 where, as a fruit of thankfulness, it is said that "by our godly walk our neighbour also may be won for Christ." The emphasis on words and deeds is summed up beautifully in L.D. 12 in our threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. As prophet we witness with our words, as priest and king with our deeds.

Such witnessing does not demand special gifts, such as a fluent speaking ability or a special job. It does demand faith and faithfulness. Schilder said, in *Christ and Culture*, "A Christian labourer, who dares to be himself as a Christian, is again a piece of health in an unhistoric, business-like-Americanized world; he is worth more in subdued force than a whole college of science that has not seen God."

Daring to be yourself as Christian. Yes, do we dare? Or are we afraid of

forcing the antithesis? Our sins in this regard lie not so much in what we do as in what we don't do. And the stimulants for us to speak up are endless: blasphemy, slander, boasts about unjust tax evasion, disrespect for those in authority, rebellion — you name it. Such witnessing is not easy. Indeed, Schilder, in *Your Ecumenical Task*, calls it "the most difficult thing there is, because it means coming not with stories, nor with pictures, or haloes or heroes, but with the Word of God." Witnessing is "speaking pointedly about the carefully disclosed consequences from what God has told us for today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. And do you think that is a cosy affair? You'd better not," says Schilder; "it will cost you your life: pawns are tolerated in a chessboard counter-offensive; but sounding trumpets . . . are smashed up in anger."

Nevertheless such faithful witnessing, the quiet, level-headed passing on of the contents of Scripture is, adds Schilder, our ecumenical task, our primary mandate. Where should we witness? There where God has placed us: on the job, in the home, within the church, at a meeting, in the factory — wherever we find ourself in our daily walk of life. "Never run away from your place," says Schilder, "do not hanker after a place different from where God has placed you."

It will be evident from everything I've said that witnessing in an individual task.

We cannot palm it off on a group set up for evangelism or for political and social action. The call is there for each of us personally, individually, there where God has placed us.

We must continually keep in mind the great purposes for which God has placed us on earth. First, that in our whole walk of life we live to the glory of God. That means being holy, dedicated to the Lord and showing this in everything we do. Second, that by boldly witnessing in our walk of life we show ourselves to be on the side of Christ in the great antithesis God set in paradise.

By boldly witnessing and thereby maintaining the antithesis we are Christ's co-workers and as such play an important

role in promoting the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the reason history is being prolonged, says Schilder in *What is Heaven*, is so that through the antithesis, through the fluctuating tensions of the process, the arena for Christ and the antichrist is being prepared. And through it all God is pursuing His greatest piece of art — namely, the triumph of the last one of his elect over the world.

Thus faithful witnessing is a thankful act of love towards God and our neighbour, but it is no less a judgment on those who ignore or oppose this witnessing. While history continues there will remain two camps: the camp of the world and the camp of the church. Our task is to keep the camp of the church pure and to at-

tract those from the world to it. Whilst history continues, those of the world have the opportunity to repent. That is why witnessing has such tremendous eschatological value. It is a matter of eternal life or of eternal death.

On the other hand our norms for witnessing should be governed not by methods we deem best but by faithful adherence to the clear norms of Scripture.

May God help us to overcome our weaknesses herein and grant us the boldness to confess Him in our whole walk of life. For herein, also, we may show ourselves to be co-workers of Christ in promoting God's glory and the coming of His kingdom.

J. NUMAN

Politics₁

How we should not and how we should influence the area of politics

** The following is the text of an introduction — slightly adapted for publication — delivered at an ARPA meeting in Chilliwack, BC, on January 15, 1988.*

When the chairman phoned me and asked me to have an introduction for the ARPA meeting, my reaction was: "What do I know about politics?" I felt sort of embarrassed that I had to disappoint him and was on the verge of telling him to ask someone else, someone who is more knowledgeable than I am in this field. However, I hate disappointing people and know how hard it is to get a speaker who is willing to introduce the discussion. Thus I accepted the invitation.

I remembered that ARPA is basically a study society, even though the last initial stands for "Action," and that no one would expect of me that I was to come with solutions to all sorts of difficulties and answers to all sorts of questions.

What I, therefore, am going to present to you this evening is just an introduction and this means that what I am going to say is leading up to a discussion. In this discussion things will become clearer and more fixed. In some instances I will only put the question in my introduction without giving an answer.

In the course of the investigation and study which I undertook for this introduction I have, of course, come to certain conclusions and convictions, although

these are for the larger part still provisional and will be abandoned for better conclusions and more firmly based convictions. It is my sincere wish that this evening we may together come to a clearer insight into the place and task which we as Christians have in our society and political system.

I would describe what I am going to say as "How We Should Not and How We Should Influence the Area of Politics."

That we speak of the "area of politics" is to take the field as wide as possible.

We could have used the term "State" or "Government," but in the first place, these terms are too restrictive for our purpose and, in the second place, they are too impersonal. We note that in our confessions we speak of the "magistrates," which immediately draws our attention to persons. We would, therefore, rather

speak of "civil authorities" than of "government," and of "the nation" than of "the state."

In any case, it is clear what we intend to express with the title "area of politics." It is the field with which ARPA is concerned first of all.

That we speak in the first place about the question how we should NOT try to influence the political life of our country and the lives of our fellow-citizens gives us an opportunity gradually to see more clearly how we SHOULD try to do it.

To the question whether we should impose our views on our fellow-citizens, some answer with an emphatic "No." As far as I understand them, they base this partly on the fact that we live in a pluralistic society, a society in which various groups of the population live together, each with their own background, their own convictions, their own lifestyle, and their own religious beliefs.

We all have read about the emphasis which the federal and provincial governments put on the pluralism of our society. They speak of multiculturalism and the need that each and every group of the population receive full opportunity to retain its specific character and culture. Practically every province has a department of multiculturalism which is either a separate department or has been entrusted to a minister who already takes care of another department. Millions of

OUR COVER

Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Photo courtesy:
Travel Manitoba

dollars are distributed to all sorts of organizations for the most strange and unnecessary projects. I always receive the *Canadian Scene*, from which I seldom quote in *Clarion*, as this whole matter of multiculturalism occupies a large part of the available space and we are not all that interested in it whether a Ukrainian group somewhere in Saskatchewan has received fifteen thousand dollars to organize a specifically Ukrainian festival, or whether a group of Dutch descent has received a grant of ten thousand dollars to organize a wooden-shoe demonstration in allegedly Dutch costumes.

We shall not deny the value of contributions from various cultures by which the specific Canadian character of our nation can only be strengthened. Only in countries which have a dictatorial government are the differences obliterated, as now in Zimbabwe, where one man rules in a system of one party as the only officially allowed political group.

However, when the question is raised whether we should refrain from imposing our views on others on the basis of the fact that we live in a pluralistic society, we must distance ourselves from those who come with that claim. The fact that there is diversity and that the diversity should be maintained and preserved is no reason why we should refrain from imposing our views on them.

This applies the more since it is not "our views" that we would try to impose in that case. If it were just "our views," we certainly would have to refrain from trying to impose them on others.

What we are talking about, however, are not views of a certain segment of the population which originates from another country. What we are talking about here is the conviction of a certain segment of the population which have been brought to faith in the Lord our God, and this group of people come from all nations and races and tribes and tongues. Thus the term "our views" is wrongly used here. The question should be rephrased in this sense, whether we should impose that which the Lord our God has revealed to us upon others, also upon those who either have never heard of God's Word or who, although having heard of it, do not believe it or even have rejected it.

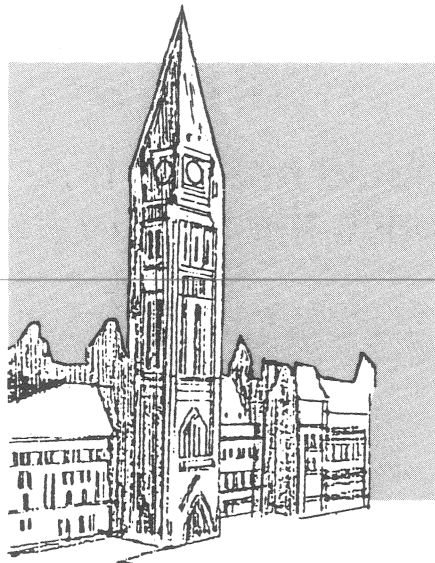
One should never try to impose his own views on others; what we are to answer is the question whether it is our God-given duty to impose on others that which the Lord our God has revealed in His Word and whether we should make His commandments the rule also for the political life of our nation. And if we mention the political life, why then not also the social and economic life? Life cannot be cut into pieces, into separate areas, one area where the commandments of the

Lord apply and other areas where they do not apply. If the Lord's revealed will is to be imposed on others, then the whole life must be subject to it, not just part of it.

To the question whether we are to impose the will of the Lord upon others we must also answer with a clear and profound, "No."

This answer will need some further elaboration and substantiation.

There is and should be no doubt among us whether only in obedience to God's commandments there is light and life. There is hope for the world as a whole only when the will of the Lord our God is recognized, taken as the guide for all actions and measures, and where the salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ is gratefully received and experienced. This certainly is something which we are to make known to all and every one.



But this is different from the question whether the will of the Lord applies to this whole world, to the whole human race, and whether the commandments of the Lord must be the rule also for the political life of the nations.

To this question we have to answer with "No," however strange this may sound in the ears of people who have learned almost from their early days on that — to use a word of Dr. Abraham Kuyper — there is not one square inch of the whole life to which the Lord Jesus Christ does not lay claim and of which He does not say, "It is Mine."

In preparation for this introduction I also consulted my old Guidelines for the study of the principles of the Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands, guidelines which were published by the board of the federation of Young Men's Societies in the Netherlands. In these outlines as well as in other writings, not only from before but also from after the Liberation, I found that especially the Ten Words

or the Ten Commandments were brought to the fore as being the will of the Lord also for the political life of a nation. I found that it was stated that the "Moral Law" as contained in the Old Testament was considered to be still valid and binding for all people.

It would lead us too far from our topic if I outlined my objections to the whole distinction of "Moral Law," "Ceremonial Law," and "Civil Law," as this distinction is still being propagated also among us. Let me say that I reject this whole distinction and don't believe a word of it. But this is a topic apart.

In the reasoning followed, the so-called "Moral Law" is then contained in, among others, the Ten Commandments. And, it is claimed, since the Moral Law is still valid, and then valid for all men, it is the God-given duty of the civil authorities to follow these commandments. On this it is also based that the civil authorities are to enact and maintain a so-called Lord's Day Act, restricting work, activities, and store-closings on the Sunday.

If this reasoning were correct, our only conclusion could be that it would be our God-given duty to do our best that these commandments are imposed upon the nation. For, if they are still valid for the whole human race, then there is no one who would have the right to ignore them or who would act correctly if he did not try to make them be universally obeyed.

It is my conviction that these commandments, that the will of God do NOT apply to the whole human race.

In order to prevent misunderstanding, I repeat: of course, there is salvation and there is happiness and progress only when the will of the Lord is obeyed and when His commandments are followed.

But — and we are to bear this in mind as a principal starting-point — the Word of the Lord and the commandments of the LORD have been given to His people only, not to the whole world, the whole human race.

When the Lord Jesus sent His disciples as apostles into the world, He told them FIRST to make disciples of the nations, THEN to teach them to observe all that He commanded. In other words: those who had been made disciples, who had become believers, then were to be taught how the salvation which they had received through faith could be preserved.

One who claims that the Ten Words apply to the whole human race forgets one basic and important thing: Above these ten words there is an inscription: I am Jahwe your God who has delivered you out of the house of bondage, out of the land of Egypt. In other words: these Ten Words were given to God's re-

deemed people, to His free children. By obeying these words and all the other provisions which He gave through the mouth and hand of Moses they were to prove themselves grateful for the salvation received, and likewise, by keeping these commandments, they were to preserve the salvation which the Lord had given them of grace.

When the Lord God separated Abraham and his posterity from the nations, He continued to speak to Abraham and his seed, but He did not speak to nor did

He reveal His will to the nations. That's why Israel sang of it in Psalm 147: "He declares His Word to Jacob, His statutes and ordinances to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know His ordinances. Praise the LORD."

It was the LORD's will that the blessings of Abraham should reach all the nations, and these blessings have indeed reached all nations: the Gospel of the salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ has gone out into all directions. Now they have come from north and south, from

east and west and they are gathered together with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. Insofar the separation has achieved its goal.

But the big question is whether the separation *as such* has been undone. Or rather, it is not a question, it is certain that the separation *is still there* and that the Word of the LORD has still been given only to Abraham's seed, the remnant of the Seed, the Church of Christ Jesus.

— To be continued
VO

NEWS MEDLEY



It would have been better if a news medley had appeared the other time, for now there is a big chance that this one will have to be divided over two issues, as it may become too long for one.

Let me begin with telling you that I received a letter from a brother in connection with what I wrote about his request for grounds for a decision of a previous Classis.

I am very happy that I can pass on that it was not the brother's intention at all to "appeal" that previous decision after having obtained the grounds for it. It was his sole concern to have ecclesiastical assemblies provide sufficient grounds for their decisions, which grounds he had found neither in the press release nor in the Acts of the relevant classis.

And: his request was not that the next Classis provide the grounds, but that this Classis should publish the grounds which the previous Classis had for the decision meant, such with the help of documents found in the classical archives.

Apparently, that's what this Classis did.

This has now become evident from the documents which our brother enclosed for my perusal, and thus the matter appears to be different from what I considered to be the only possible understanding of the particulars found in bulletins.

With gratitude I pass this correction on. Hereby the brother as well as the Classis Ontario South of December 1987 have been exonerated. Thank you.

As for the point in question: it is important, indeed, that ecclesiastical assemblies be as open as possible, stating their precise reasons for their decisions, so that the Churches can judge them in order to see whether they are correct and have been arrived at in the correct manner.

This was a very uplifting beginning, wasn't it?

We have much more good news from various congregations.

Beginning with the rest of the Ontario news, we work our way up.

The Chatham bulletin tells us: "The First Radio Broadcasting over COZY 95 will probably be on Sunday Feb. 14 from 8:45-9:00 a.m."

Attercliffe had the official dedication of their church building, if everything went as scheduled. They also were already expecting a concert to be given on their organ!

"The Committee of Administration reported on possible renovations to the manse. Due to the considerable cost to renovate, the consistory favours to construct a new manse and will attend to this matter as soon as possible."

Later on the Committee of Administration was charged "to serve the consistory and investigate the estimated cost involved with building a manse on church property."

As in more Churches, so in Attercliffe the consistory discussed the question whether the Lord's Supper should be "continued" in the afternoon services. The conclusion was "to celebrate the Lord's Supper in the morning services only. However, if at any point in the future the situation changes, then the afternoon celebration could be re-instated again." My only question is whether it was "reinstated" before. To be "re-instated again" sounds like a tautology.

In this connection we make a quick jump to the Maranatha Church in Surrey. "In view of reaction of the congregation the consistory decided to suspend the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the afternoon service."

Back to Ontario.

In neighbouring Smithville "The *Evangel* magazines were distributed by the Young People's Societies and the committee received a list of residents in our 'delivery survey' who want to keep receiving the magazine." Encouraging.

Lincoln is not all that far away from Smithville, so we visit there next.

"A question on whether a more parliamentary format should be used in our meetings is talked about. Rounds of discussion will be used when it is determined to be advisable by the chairman and/or the meeting."

When we discussed how to conduct meetings at the College, I stressed the need for always having "rounds." This prevents that two brothers sit there arguing against one another, it makes for a more orderly manner of meeting, and it cuts down the time spent on various matters. It should not be left up to the chairman when this method should be used nor should it be up to the meeting itself to decide that in this particular case the meeting should be conducted in this manner. Having rounds promotes that all things are done "decently and in order."

In Lincoln, as in many other places, the sisters keep busy with cutting out UPC coupons and cashing in on the generosity of manufacturers who want to promote their products. At the end of January "Our total also has managed to rise quickly again this month. It stands at \$ 12,000."! Now that I type this I am wondering whether this is not a typing mistake and the total should not be some \$1,200. Who talks about the sisters needing a more prominent place in Church-life than they are already occupying?? Much is being done by Ladies' Aids,

Ladies' Auxiliaries or whatever other name they may be known by. One day I am going to add all the amounts which they manage to gather in the course of one month in support of Church and School.

Finally we got some news from Ancaster, too. No, not from the bulletin, for I have not seen any of them as yet. It comes from a newspaper clipping which one of my correspondents was so kind as to enclose with other bulletins.

The heading read "New Canadian Reformed Church planned for Shaver's Road in Ancaster." It is a little piece in the *Hamilton Spectator*, and it is my impression that the reporter was very accurate in his reporting. The property was donated by a brother, member of the Ancaster Church, and now it was tried to obtain severance for the purpose of erecting a church building on it. Appearing before the city council, the Rev. R. Aasman pleaded the Church's cause. It must have made a favourable impression on the Council when they heard what the last sentence of the report passes on: "If the church's applications fail, Rev. Aasman said he will accept the decision graciously."

This is different language from what we hear all around us, where the people declare beforehand that they will appeal if they don't get their way.

May the efforts have the desired result. Perhaps, however, the Lord has something better in store for our sister in Ancaster.

The Hamilton bulletin contains the uplifting news that the Rev. P. Aasman expects to receive their visa sometime towards the end of May, which means that the family could be in Brazil by June or July.

In several congregations "Talent Auctions" are held, another of those many schemes which the sisters have invented to gather funds for worthwhile causes. I am not going to tell all talents which were for sale in Hamilton, but my mouth watered when I read that thirty croquettes were for sale. Others would be more interested in an afternoon or evening of sailing on Hamilton Bay, while again others would gladly bid on some repairs to their house.

I could offer some old, used sermons, but am afraid that not very many would bid on them. Perhaps I would have more success if I offered to bind magazines or books that need a new cover.

At the Hamilton consistory meeting "concern is expressed in general comments that mothers go out to work at the sacrifice of the family. It is stressed that the norm in the Christian family is that the mother ought to be at home, especially in families with young children growing up."

Something to be taken to heart. Besides, it is not only the young children that need the mother!

At the same consistory a report was submitted "on how to proceed in raising funds to rebuild the parsonage and to provide assistance to the Ancaster Church in building their new facility."

Burlington East comes next.

The Rev. D. DeJong writes: "As for myself, as long as I don't eat too much at a time, and stick to what is easily digested, everything is fine." A reason to be thankful.

The Ebenezer Church will not be the only Church that struggles with the problem of lack of organists for the services. Although we may thankfully note that there are quite a few younger members who have dedicated themselves to this noble instrument, the King of Instruments, to be precise, yet the talents are sometimes a little unevenly divided.

In Burlington East "The organ committee asks and receives approval to arrange with brother A., formerly one of our organists until moving to Hamilton, to come back one Sunday per month as organist in the worship service. In this way, our remaining 'regulars' can have some relief."

"The deacons ask advice in the matter of a proposal to

sponsor a refugee family. After some consideration, council advises them to proceed. The congregation will be further informed by the deacons and the committee which will be active in this project."

Quite a few years ago the plight of the refugees was in the center of attention, but matters have subsided somewhat in this respect. Yet, there are still many thousands and even millions of refugees when we add those who have fled Afghanistan. The World Relief Fund helps to some extent, but we are happy to note that also individual families are still receiving attention among us.

When congregations grow to almost unmanageable proportions, the office-bearers' pews become sort of crowded. This prompted a proposal to have only four elders and deacons sit "up-front during the worship services (instead of seventeen)" to be discussed at the Burlington West consistory meeting. The proposal was defeated, however.

In the Burlington bulletins, as in other bulletins, I saw an invitation to attend the slide presentation of Don Van Polen's "Footprints of the Reformation." It was called "An excellent travelogue tracing our evangelical heritage."

I saw the slides and they are beautiful, although they do not come to the level of "Springtime in Holland" in my opinion. I can indeed recommend the "show."

However, a word of warning has to be sounded with respect to the spoken comment. Discrimination is needed here, for also the anabaptist originators are presented here as having a rightful place among the "Reformers." Calvin and Luther receive attention, but so do Conrad Grebel and Menno Simons. A discriminating mind is needed here.

The Grand Valley Church decided to support the program of "The Voice of the Church" financially and so has joined this work of spreading the Gospel.

Nearby Orangeville has bold plans as far as an addition to their present facilities is concerned.

On February 22 a meeting with the congregation was scheduled to be held on which the building plans would be discussed. "The sketches we received a few Sundays ago look indeed very attractive. What I personally enjoy is that a large catechism room has been planned! A highly functional catechism room is simply a must in every church building."

These words are the Rev. Werkman's as you will have surmised.

I could make his words my own, however, for the sketches do look very attractive. It will be of special comfort for the elderly members that they will be able to alight from the car under a canopy even though the driver will have to park the vehicle elsewhere.

And as for the catechism room, it should not be too big either, but definitely should be functional, as Rev. Werkman writes. The present facilities did do, but they were far from ideal. There was only a rather thin wall between the room where brother W. Wildeboer was teaching and the consistory room where I taught classes for quite a while, and we cannot say that this proximity promoted the non-interference to a large extent.

I wished someone would come up with a design for the ideal classroom. Thus far I have not seen it anywhere, nor have I ever been asked for advice in this matter. I wonder whether ever any of my colleagues were asked to advise the committee of administration regarding the proper equipment for the catechism room. The closest the facilities came to what I consider to be ideal was the old consistory room in New Westminster, before the organ was installed, where the students were sitting behind tables in some sort of a quarter-circle.

We will continue next time.

VO

By Rev. W.W.J. VanOene

In the meantime, deputies met together, too. They published a Memorandum in which they gave a review of what had been achieved. They stressed that it had not been tried to come to an identical evaluation of each other's origin and past, but that the different methods of reformation had been left to each other's consciences.

"And finally, they both have accepted the principle that the Churches ought to have an institution for the training of their ministers, at least as far as the theological training is concerned; they also, however, have upheld the principle of free study." There are eleven points for which they ask the Churches' attention.

1. Borderlines of the local Churches; 2. the calling of the Churches towards the Reformed people who are not yet united with us; 3. the merger of the local Churches; 4. the combination of Churches in Classes and Synods; 5. local regulations; 6. the name of the united Churches; 7. the "Official Organ"; 8. training for the ministry; 9. the mission; 10. the general assets; 11. the mandate of those delegated to Synod.

Consistories, Classes and Provincial Synods prepared matters for the synods, both of which were to be held in Amsterdam, starting on June 7, 1892.

The Last Christian Reformed Synod

Since deputies themselves did not have the right to convene a General Synod, they requested the Provincial Synods of Friesland and Zeeland to express themselves on the desirability of an earlier General Synod, and to inform the provincial assembly of North Holland of this. Then North Holland convened a General Synod on June 7, 1892, in the Plantage Church. The Rev. W.H. Gispen was chosen as chairman.

On the same day the Provisional Synod of the Netherlands Reformed Churches was in session in the Keizersgracht Church.

The moderamen of the Christian Reformed Synod wrote in the Preface to the Acts or "Proceedings":

"The last-held Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, whose 'Proceedings' we now publish, without doubt may be called the most important of all Christian Reformed Synods. This Synod has been given the honour by the Lord of continuing the work of the Synod of Leeuwarden and thus to bring about the union with the Netherlands Reformed Churches.

"All the members of the congregations, all friends and all opponents, contemporary and posterity, can learn from these 'Proceedings' how this great and good work has come about. It is mandatory that especially the members of the congregations take close note of these 'Proceedings' and consider them before the countenance of the Lord. They will learn from them that with Christian sincerity and caution the Synod weighed all objections, did not abandon any principle, and did whatever was in its power to bring about the union for which we had been longing for such a long time."

Objections there were, and they had to be weighed and evaluated.

One of the first questions which had to be answered was whether the deputies had done their work well. Several sessions were dedicated to this point. Not everyone was happy with the formulations of the Synod of The Hague. Gratitude was expressed for the work done by the brothers. As for the formulations of the Synod of The Hague, Synod did not consider itself bound by their wording. This may be evident from the following.

"Synod judges that the Provisional Synod of the Netherlands Reformed Churches has met the conditions set for union by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church by adopting the Leeuwarden proposal without change; "However, having read the correspondence of the deputies of our Synod with the Provisional Synod of the Netherlands Reformed Churches, and the decision of the Netherlands Reformed Synod of The Hague,

"Synod on its part declares that our deputies have rendered the intent of the Leeuwarden decision in correct wording."

In other words: never mind any explanatory remarks by the Synod of The Hague. They and we know exactly what Leeuwarden meant and we still uphold that.

The point of the Theological School also caused quite a discussion. Fear was expressed that the formulation was not sufficiently clear and that the future of this institution was uncertain, but the reply by one of the deputies allayed the fears insofar that Synod could agree with what had been formulated.

Before a final decision could be made, various objections received from Church members had to be dealt with.

We already saw that the Church at Waddinxveen declared that it could not go along with the abolition of the Regulation of 1869. Now there came more members who sent their objections to Synod.

This was kind of strange and irregular. Almost all of the relevant documents had also been published in the press, all the consistories had received the official communications and therein ample opportunity to discuss the matter. Members who were concerned should have approached their consistories, trying to convince them that the proposed union on the adopted conditions was contrary to the will of the Lord.

We have found no evidence, however, that via consistory-classis-provincial synod any such "appeal" was forwarded.

On the contrary, the Provincial Synod of North Holland, charged with the task of convening a General Synod, had not received anything. The brothers from North Holland stated emphatically that the Provincial Synod wanted to declare in particular two things: "1. that neither at the Classes, nor at the Provincial Assemblies any objection to the union has come in; 2. that this Assembly now before all things bring about the union."

Now, all of a sudden, General Synod was faced with several submissions containing objections to the proposed union. This was an irregular procedure, and the Synod would have had the full right to declare all these submis-

sions inadmissible. Various brothers urged Synod to decide in this vein.

However, in order not to give occasion to the accusation that the objections were not taken seriously, and whatever other accusation might be made and used as an excuse not to go along with a union, the Assembly decided, "leaving the formal right out of the picture, to table the matter of the above-mentioned appeals."

What were these submissions?

Two ministers had written a brief letter, had it printed and sent to the forthcoming Synod. They did so in May 1892.

These ministers were the Rev. F.P.L.C. van Lingen and Js Wisse Csn, who by means of an advertisement urged Church members to buy a copy, to sign it in as large a number as possible, and then to send it to Synod. Those who complied with the invitation numbered 637. Then there were a submission from Dordrecht, signed by 65 male and female members, one from five members in Utrecht, one from the consistory at Twello, and from some individual members.

In total there were a little over 700 persons who registered their objections.

The method of massive protests, co-signing someone else's objections and submissions must be condemned. If one is wholeheartedly convinced that something is against the will of the Lord, he should write down his own objections and do it alone. If he finds someone else who has the same or similar objections, he should urge this brother to follow his example, but certainly not try to get as many signatures himself as he can gather. Every launching of a campaign and all forming of factions in the Church of Christ must be condemned and should be avoided. Ecclesiastical assemblies ought not to deal with groups or with group-submissions.

This is not to say that we condemn the Synod for dealing with the submissions in this case. In the given circumstances, seeing that a decision made at this Synod would be practically irreversible, at least if it decided to proceed with the union, it was justified that they dealt with the objections in spite of the irregularity.

Opponents of the union could have stated — with a show of right — that their objections had not been taken seriously, even though they themselves may be accused of not taking the matter seriously, as they did not follow the proper course which was very well-known to at least several of them, the two above mentioned ministers not in the last place.

Even now already the accusation was heard later on that the objections were not dealt with seriously and that the decision to unite had already been taken before the objections were discussed. The facts show that this accusation was false.

Although we shall come back to the objections more amply later on, we are to pay attention to them at this point as well.

Mainly five objections were brought to the fore.

Objections to Union

What was the first objection?

That the consistories had never "been requested or charged to call a meeting of the male members in each

congregation to either consent or not consent to the conditions of Leeuwarden and their explanation, which may be regarded as the inalienable right of the congregation, since the Union binds *all* congregations together with the churches in Doleantie. We consider the rights of the congregation to have been thereby abridged."

What to think of this objection?

In the first place we remind ourselves of what was said before, that when Synod Kampen decided that the congregations should be heard, the usual term for the local Christian Reformed Church was used. There is no indication that the membership as such was meant. Besides, this would have been congregationalist procedure, not Reformed polity. In those days it most likely would have been called "Brownism."

Secondly, even if the objectors had been right, this complaint should have been directed by the members of the local Churches to their own consistory, not to a General Synod.

That the *Churches* were not heard was not true. If a consistory had not informed and spoken with the membership, this was something local, not general. No complaint was received by Synod that consistory as well as Classis as well as Provincial Synod had refused either to deal with or to accept objections submitted to them in the proper and orderly way.

Synod denied the first objection and stated that "since the union is a union of groups of Churches, the rights of the members have not been abridged."

The second objection was the point of "How is the Netherlands Reformed (Hervormde) Church viewed?" In other words: the "principle" of the Secession is at stake!

"In the struggle of recent years the principles of Secession and Doleantie appeared to conflict with one another, especially in the view of the Hervormde Church. Unless, then, one of the two principles in the United Churches will be sacrificed to the other, of what but quarrel and endless confusion can their junction be?"

What was Synod's reply?

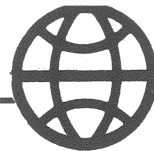
"a. that there are different ways to reformation;

"b. that there is no ground for the assertion that eventual union will be a reason for quarrel and endless confusion, especially when the prayer for the peace of Jerusalem is increasing, since Secession and Doleantie, although differing in some respects, yet herein have come to an agreement that breaking of the ecclesiastical communion with the board and members of the Netherlands Reformed Denomination is necessary."

Point three: It is difficult for us to recognize off-hand all Churches in Doleantie as "pure Reformed Churches after Confession and Church Order." Who knows what all persons have been registered as members without any ecclesiastical examination?

Synod's reply was that what was done according to the method of Doleantie cannot be undone. If difficulties should arise, these can always be brought to major assemblies. The decisions of Leeuwarden and The Hague have given us a starting point to come to a decision.

— *To be continued*



CANADIAN SCENE

Ottawa's Canadian Museum of Civilization, due to open in 1989, has released a detailed description of the attractions it will offer visitors.

Among them is the History Hall, which will re-create the sights and sounds of nearly 1,000 years of Canada's history. Visitors will be able to wander through full-scale reconstructions of period settings, accurate in every detail, many furnished with artifacts from the Museum's collections. The three-story hall, which incorporates a mezzanine level, is bigger than a North American football field (3,065 square metres with a 17-metre ceiling).

The settings will be arranged so that visitors cross Canada in time and space, from the arrival of the first Norse ships on the Newfoundland coast to today's changing northern frontier. The structures will depict various regions, themes and periods of Canada's history. The interior of a 16th-century ship, a town square in New France, a Louisbourg tavern, a 19th-century merchant's house and a turn-of-the-century railway station are only a few of the structures that will open a doorway into the lives and times of the people who helped forge our Canadian identity.

SURVEY

Christian Reformed ministers are the highest-paid clergy in mainline Christian denominations in the United States.

According to figures gathered by the Church Pensions Conference, Christian Reformed ministers, with an average salary of \$32,296 a year, receive the top ministerial pay in the United States.

The figure includes the estimated value of a church-provided parsonage; the average cash-salary of Christian Reformed ministers in the United States is \$22,038. All but 13 per cent of Christian Reformed ministers live in a parsonage. (TB, CN)

CANADIAN SCENE

The oldest driver in Quebec, 102-year-old William Pettes, decided to quit while he was ahead.

Pettes hung up his car keys with a spotless driving record — not an accident or ticket in 60 years!

MADRID

Recently two elders were ordained in the Church which is being served by the Rev. J. de Segovia. This means that the institution of a Reformed Church in Madrid has become a fact.

A committee in Bussum, the Netherlands, has maintained contact for several years already, and also supported Rev. de Segovia, while it also has contact with several other groups. (ND)

AMSTERDAM

In Amsterdam many people turn their backs to the church. In 1985 some 350,000 citizens stated that they belonged to one church or another. In 1986 this was reduced to 320,000.

The Roman Catholics had the largest loss: 50,000 during the last years; the Netherlands Reformed Church lost over 2000 members during the year mentioned above, while the (syn.) Reformed Churches saw several hundred members break away. (DNC)

ZWOLLE

Faith-problems and leaving the Church by young people are oftentimes the result of their upbringing. What is usually seen as a "youth-problem" tells us more about the parents. Negative experiences which a child has with his parents are later on frequently transferred to God and the Church. This was one of the most important elements in an address by Drs. W.C. van der Horst, teacher at the Reformed Social Academy in Zwolle. (ND)

"GAY" MARRIAGES

Denmark is about to become the first country in the world to grant homosexuals the legal status of married couples. A bill introduced in parliament provides that gay couples registered as "partners" will automatically gain the same rights to inheritance and tax deductions, the same access to social services and the same obligation to pay alimony as husband and wife.

The measure, supported by a majority of members in the 179-seat Folketing, is expected to become law July 1. Hoping to mute criticism, the bill's sponsors included a provision precluding gays from adopting children. (CN)

PARSONAGE VALUE

A parsonage is not worth as much to a minister as the Christian Reformed Church assumes it is, according to a Chicago-area classis.

Classis Chicago-South in January overtured Synod 1988 to drop from the denominational ministers' compensation guide the suggested method for calculating the value of a parsonage.

The compensation guide, published yearly by the church, currently suggests that the value of a parsonage be figured at 39 percent of the minister's cash salary. The classical overture maintains that the figure is unrealistic and is open to abuse, and that housing costs in the United States have been shown to range between 17 and 25 percent of cash income. (TB)

ST. PAUL, MINN. (RNS)

A Roman Catholic priest can refuse to testify about a conversation he had with parishioners who might know about an alleged case of sexual abuse, a judge has ruled here.

Judge David E. Marsden of Ramsey County District Court said the Rev. Patrick Griffin cannot be forced to name the parishioners or disclose what they told him because a Minnesota law strongly protects the privacy of clergy-parishioner relationships. (CN)

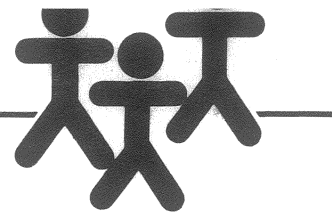
CHURCH NEWS



CALLED to the Church at Hoogeveen, the Netherlands:

REV. CL. STAM

of Fergus, ON



1. Positive feedback

In our communities ministers and teachers are rather visible personages. This visibility is all too often resulting in criticism, at times even harsh and often unwarranted. Perhaps such criticism is warranted, but what about some encouraging words at times? Usually teachers are told when things are NOT to the liking of parents and students. What about some positive feedback? Is the lack of appreciation, public as well as personal, a possible reason that the teaching profession continues to lose some of its experienced members, and seems unable to attract a sufficient number of new members?

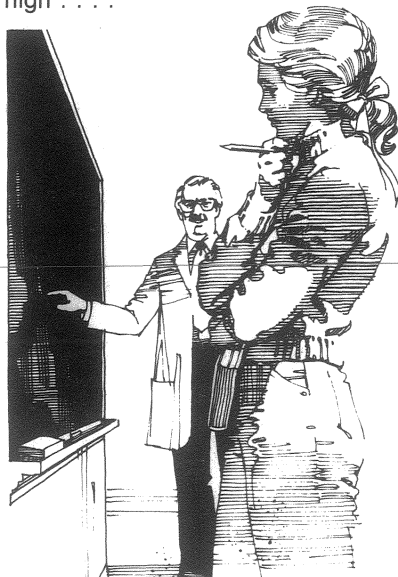
At least two recent school magazines paid attention to this matter. It is indeed so much easier to find fault than it is to find reasons for praise. The old cliché, familiarity breeds contempt, appears rather true and alive!

From a recent issue of the magazine of the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed School, Smithers, I pass on the following presidential comments.

Another month has gone by. Another month of pupils going to school to be taught and instructed by our teachers in accordance with the will of God. We had a Board-Staff Meeting to discuss and to get a better view on things and to support each other in our task. The more one gets involved, the more one can see the rich heritage we have and the blessing of having this school (this little Dutch School by the river). Perhaps it is beneficial for you to know that two of our graduates recently (out of a class of 10) in college were among the four that were exempted from two English courses. Maybe, we as parents, should give a little more credit to our teachers than we usually do Our complaints are often voiced before they are thought through. We should all take time to tell them once in a while, "Teacher, that was a good job, thanks."

Another magazine also warned against the danger that the communication between home and school tends to be about negative things only, about things that should be changed or else From the magazine of the Guido de Brès High school I clip the following comments of the principal.

This passage of time reminds both teachers and students to use their time wisely. This is true not only for the academic work carried out in the classrooms. It is also true in demonstrating proper Christian stewardship and the true fruits of the Spirit. Recent questionnaires returned by our graduates indicate that teachers have the greatest impact in this "lifestyle" training through the models they as teachers present. With parents we share the task of challenging, helping, comforting, restraining and motivating our teenagers. This has been a task since their infancy. However, it takes on even greater importance as these young men and women approach major life decisions relating to confession of faith, career and a marriage partner. Postponement of responsible action was warned against so vividly in Ecclesiastes when the Preacher said, "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw nigh"



We count on your prayerful support in helping us continue this important task. We require strength and patience in moments of difficulty. We require humility when through God's help we experience success. Proper nurture in the school is no less difficult than it is in your home. However, reports from school tend to accentuate the negative and downplay the posi-

tive. Keep that in mind as you sift through the constant feedback that you receive from our school. Call us if you have questions. Thank us if we are doing something right.

I hope the schools practise what they preach over against their students. When report time comes around let's emphasize the positive rather than the negative in the comments on the report cards!

2. Be informed

The matter of positive feedback, publicly recognition of things done well, not only depends on our willingness to say "thank you" (how difficult that often is!), but also on whether or not we are informed. How can we judge whether a job is done well unless we have taken the trouble to learn WHAT was done in the first place. Don't leave such things to education committee meetings only. Education is the concern of all of us.

It was therefore good to notice in at least one school magazine that school boards are interested in and want to learn about the work in the school, especially when changes occur and new ideas are explored. The school in Orangeville has become interested in the whole language approach to the teaching of reading and writing, and this interest is not limited to education committee and staff only.

Much discussion at the last board meeting was given to "Whole Language." This is a "NEW" method of teaching reading and writing to pupils especially at the lower grade levels. For a number of years this has been combined in some form with phonetic teaching at the DACS. There is, however, at the teacher college level a great interest in whole language and I gather that this is gradually being introduced at this level. Maybe we as membership can be informed at some point in time again i.e. PTA concerning whole language.

Yes, indeed, the possibilities exist for your membership to be informed about the merits of particular instructional methods, or the strength and weaknesses of new ideas about teaching and learning etc.

The faculty of the Teachers' College would be delighted to receive an invitation to speak about a topic of interest to your association (e.g. whole language, study skills, guidance, discipline, learn-

ing difficulties, children's books etc.). If approached they will be able to make suggestions for you to choose from.

The Canadian Reformed Teachers Association publishes a magazine for teachers and boards, often with interesting information for parents as well. Contact Mr. J. Roukema, c/o John Calvin School, 607 Dynes Road, Burlington, ON, L7N 2V4 for a subscription (\$6.00/year).

Colleague Roukema will gratefully accept contributions from parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, old and young, which will help us develop our thinking about and understanding of education and instruction. You cannot write an article, but you have questions, concerns, worries, anxieties about education? Let him know, and perhaps a way may be found to answer and help.

3. Keep us informed

Most schools faithfully send their magazines to the address below (= Teachers' College). Much appreciated, it keeps us informed, and we will do our best to keep you informed. It would be nice when the publications of all schools would arrive in our mailbox!

T.M.P. VANDERVEN

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

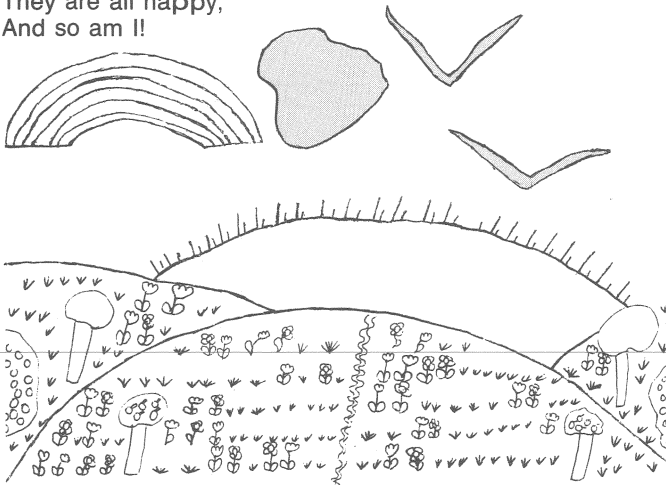


Hello Busy Beavers,

Busy Beaver *Katrina De Haas* has a spring poem and picture for us.

Spring

Flowers are blooming
Spring is here.
We should be thankful,
Let's give a cheer!
The birds all sing,
The butterflies fly,
They are all happy,
And so am I!



And Busy Beaver *Debbie Jagt* has a funny story for us.

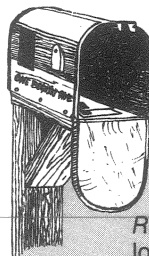
The animals were having a football game.
The coach told his kicker,
"Whatever you do, don't kick it to the hippo."
Sure enough, it went right to the hippo, who charged through for a touchdown.
The next two times their team got the ball the same thing happened. So their coach told his kicker,
"If that happens once more, you're out!"
The kicker's kick went straight to the hippo, but this time the tacklers got him down.
The coach asked,
'Who did that?'
The millipede answered "I did."
"Where were you the first half?" asked the coach.
"Putting on my shoes," answered the millipede!

RIDDLE FUN FOR EVERYONE!

From Busy Beaver *Jennifer Van Pykeren*

1. If you have 10 apples in one hand and 20 apples in the other, what do you have?
2. What's yellow, round and goes slam, slam, slam, slam?
3. Why did the plum kiss the banana?
4. What vegetables are good looking?
5. Which fruit comes in twos?
6. What did the fork say to the spoon?
7. What's the best kind of fish to eat with peanut butter?

(See answers)



From the Mailbox

Of course you may be a Busy Beaver, *Rachel Pruim*. Welcome to the Club! Do you help look after all those pets, Rachel? I'm looking forward to hearing from you again.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Lee-Ann Beintema*. Thank you very much for your winter poem. I think we'll have to save it for a while, don't you? Bye for now.

You may be a Busy Beaver, too, *Rebecca Stel*. Welcome to the Club! And congratulations on your baby sister, Rebecca. She loves your talking to her and playing with her, right?

Thank you for your poem, *Jessica Beintema*. I think the Busy Beavers will enjoy that! I hope you have a very happy birthday, Jessica. Will you write and tell us about it?

Hello, *Jennifer Van Pykeren*. It was nice to hear from you again. Did you enjoy your spring break, Jennifer? Maybe you'll write and tell us what you did? Thanks for the riddles!

So what did you do in art class this week, *Maria Stel*? Congratulations to you, too, on that sweet little sister! She's a lucky girl to have big sisters, too. Bye for now, Maria. Thanks for the puzzle.

Quiz Time!

A SPRING PUZZLE! By Busy Beaver Andrea Feenstra

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

Find:
 trees rabbits
 apples ducks
 butterflies turtles
 swans flowers
 robins roses
 rainbow snails
 rain frogs
 windy deer
 kite foxes
 maple trees kittens
 ponds puppies

UNSCRAMBLE THESE BIBLE BOOKS

By Busy Beaver Christine Lodder

1. XUDEOS _____
2. KLUE _____
3. ONMUEDTOYRE _____
4. WATHETM _____
5. NBSREUM _____
6. ASTC _____
7. TIUVELSC _____
8. I.NAISNTHRCOI _____
9. RMKA _____
10. HOJN _____
11. ARMOSN _____
12. SAOM _____
13. TURH _____
14. SJUAOH _____
15. EMAIHREJ _____
16. BUKAKKHA _____
17. LVRAOINEET _____
18. SMJAE _____
19. PLMENOHI _____
20. DHIAOBA _____

(See answers)

Answers:

Riddle Fun for Everyone: 1. Big hands! 2. a four dour lemon 3. It had a-peel! 4. cute-cumbers 5. pears 6. Noth- ing, forks can't talk. 7. jelly fish

Bible Names Scramble: 1. Exodus 2. Luke 3. Deuteronomy 4. Matthew 5. Numbers 6. Acts 7. Leviticus 8. I Corinthians 9. Mark 10. John 11. Romans 12. Amos 13. Ruth 14. Joshua 15. Jeremiah 16. Habakkuk 17. Revelation 18. James 19. Philemon 20. Obadiah

TWO CODE QUIZZES

By Busy Beaver Sarah Vanderzwaag

4-D	7-G
5-E	12-L

15-O	21-U
10-S	22-V

7 15 4 12 15 22 5 19 21 19

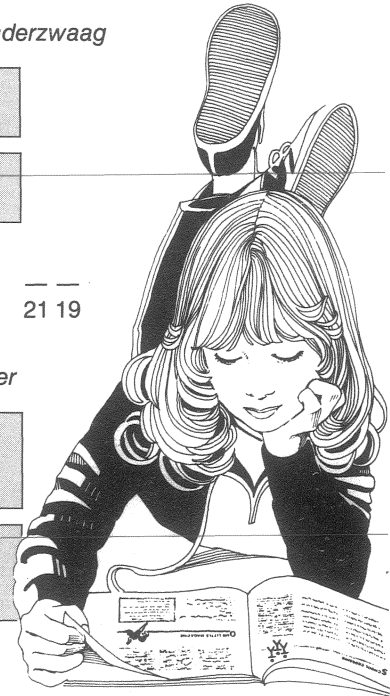
By Busy Beaver Tony Bikker

1-A	3-C	5-L
2-B	4-I	6-O

7-V	9-U	11-T
8-E	10-N	12-E
		13-Y

4 5 6 7 8 1 9 10 11

2 12 11 11 13



How did you do, Busy Beavers?

Did you get all the words unscrambled?

Did you find all the words in the wordsearch?

Great!

Let me hear how you can tell spring is coming. Keep a sharp eye out!

Love to you all
 from Aunt Betty