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The role of the preaching in Reformed liturgy₂

The purity of the preaching

Because the preaching of the Word plays a central and constituting role in the liturgy, it must always be the *pure preaching* of the gospel. The preaching must be only the administration of the Word. The Holy Scriptures alone are the only source of and the absolute norm for the preaching. Even the catechism preaching is to be fully a summary of the teaching of the Bible.

It is therefore imperative that the ministers of the Word refrain from voicing all kinds of personal opinions on the pulpit, but that they in faithfulness and simplicity bring the gospel of Christ, with its immense comfort and serious admonition. Christ must be in the centre at all times in His work of redemption and renewal. The preaching must be thoroughly Scriptural, Christological and covenantal, week after week. This means that the preachers stick to the text that has been chosen and do not digress into a running social or political commentary.

I am convinced that the loss of membership in many churches — and the general decline of the Reformed Churches in this age — is the result, not of the fact that the preaching is an outdated form of communication, but of the fact that the preaching ceased to be thoroughly Scriptural and truly evangelical. When the Bible was criticized as being irrelevant, the preachers had to take their topics from the world around them, and it ceased to be the authoritative proclamation of the Word of God! Only the *pure preaching* can and does really build the church of Christ.

One of the prime tasks today of the office-bearers (elders) is to see to it that the preaching remains fully Biblical and functional. Pure and to the point. The preaching is the task of the ministers of the Word. But in this work the ministers should not stand isolated, with their own authority and expertise. This work is under the express supervision of the consistory and subject to the approval of the members who have the office of all believers. Only when these three cooperate in submission to the Word of God will the preaching remain pure and true.

The preaching in the liturgy

Now that we have defined the role of the preaching in the liturgy as being of central significance, we may also speak about the other aspects of the liturgy as well. Preaching is central, but not exclusive. The other elements of the liturgy also have their importance and function. Through the studies of men such as C. Trimp, K. Deddens and G. van Rongen we have again begun to appreciate more the beauty of the entire Reformed liturgy.

The complaint was voiced that the preaching is outdated. The sermon, we heard, is a dull monologue. It is true that the sermon is a *monologue*, for in the preaching God alone speaks and His people listen! Dr. Trimp has written, “the monological character of the sermon has to do with its contents. The mono-

logue gives expression to the saying ‘by faith alone.’ Indeed as a monologue, the sermon is a means of grace.”⁸

The sermon is a monologue and we need not apologize for it. Yet we must also understand that the liturgy is a *dialogue*, a conversation, a communion between two parties, the Lord and His people. The sermon must reflect this as well. The preaching must give evidence of addressing the people within the living context of the covenant with God, in the situation of their own specific needs, and must lead to a response of the people to God!

Through the preaching the Lord seeks the response of His people and there must be in the liturgy room and attention for this response. Liturgy is constituted by the Word of God but it is also consummated by the word (response) of the people of God. Therefore the choice of the psalms and hymns as well as the wording of the prayers is of great importance. The liturgy must be a unity, formed by the Word of God to include the word of the people. And here we must be careful that traditionalism or conservatism does not stifle the lively response of the people.

There is a trend today to seek more congregational involvement in the worship service. Not all of this is wrong. It must indeed be prevented that the service becomes a one man show of the minister, for it must remain an inter-action between God and His people. Some more action may very well be encouraged.

Let me give some examples here. It has been convincingly argued now by many respected Reformed scholars⁹ that the word “amen” is to be said not (just) by the minister but by the entire congregation. Still this is not done in our churches. It has been suggested that the Creed be sung by the congregation or “said in unison.”¹⁰ Not all churches sing the Creed regularly, let alone that it be said in unison. The Lord’s prayer has been explained as a *communal prayer*, to be said together, and still this is not done in our churches. A case has been made for antiphonal singing (singing in turn)¹¹, but it is not something which can be attempted without calling up immediate resistance. True, we fear a return to Romanist ritualism, but we also tend to resist changes, even if those changes may in a Scriptural sense be for the better and enhance the responsive character of the worship service.

The preaching takes in the prime place and the central position. It plays a key role. But it is not the only thing in the liturgy, and the other elements, such as confession of sin, profession of faith, prayer and praise, need their own accentuation as well. They may function indeed as a keen response to the Word of God, actively involving the entire congregation, young and old. Original Reformed liturgies have stressed this responsive character more than we perhaps do today.

“The great assembly heard”

Be all this as it may, the fact remains that the preaching of the gospel, as first mark of the church, is the constituting

and continuing factor in Reformed liturgy. So it pleases the Lord to speak to His people and to establish and maintain communion with them as the living God through the powerful Word of the Spirit.

The congregation has of old gathered around the open Word to hear what the spirit had to say to the church. This is the lifeline of the church. Here the office-bearers have of old passed on the good news, as David exclaims in Psalm 40, "I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation, lo, I have not restrained my lips, as Thou knowest, O LORD" (Psalm 40:9), as we sing, "The great assembly heard of Thy trustworthy Word and of Thy steadfast love." Here also

lies the strength of the New Testament Church: to hear the true Word of Christ, the voice of the Good Shepherd, and to walk by faith alone until He comes Himself to be with us forever and we may speak face to face.

CL. STAM

⁸Trimp, *Woord, Water en Wijn*, o.c. p. 20.

⁹Trimp, *De Gemeente en Haar Liturgie*, o.c. p. 95 ff; K. Deddens, *Waar Alles van Hem Spreekt*, o.c. p. 109 ff; van Rongen, o.c. p. 114 ff.

¹⁰See *Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper*, Book of Praise, p. 600.

¹¹K. Deddens, *Waar Alles van Hem Spreekt*, o.c. p. 87 ff.

The boundaries of the church₂

Editorial Note: *In the first part of his speech, Dr. Faber showed that the Donatists answered the question where the boundaries of the church are by identifying the catholic church with the church of the Donatists. Augustine rejected this view as un-Scriptural. Roman Catholic theology developed into a Donatist direction by essentially identifying the catholic church with the church of Rome. In this second and final installment of his speech, Dr. Faber turns to Calvin and brings the discussion to a conclusion.*

Now over against that Roman Catholic concept of the church as an entity that is there, a positive entity of which the boundaries can completely be sketched, you can say that the Reformers, Luther and Calvin, basically went back in many respects to Augustine. Luther and Calvin had to answer the question where the church was in the Middle Ages. Under the yoke of the pope the church was there, for because of the faithfulness of God the church will always be there. But where was the church in the tenth century — in that dark century of the Middle Ages? Then Luther and Calvin said, if you speak about the church you should not speak about that pompous institution as such. If you speak about the church, you should speak about the church in the eyes of God. God knows who are His and in the same way as in the time of Ahab there were 7,000 who did not bow their knees before Baal, so God in His faithfulness reserved for Himself a people, a remnant according to His electing love. And that remnant according to His electing love was the church. For the church is not qualified by something external. But the church is qualified by something that you

cannot see and that is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Calvin

And therefore that especially Calvin in the beginning of his work, wrote about the church as the number of the elect. He does so, for instance, in his first catechism in 1536, but also in his catechism of 1545 (his second catechism). You see that Calvin makes a distinction, in a similar manner as Augustine. In that catechism (1545) Calvin asks the question, "What is meant by the word Catholic or Universal? It is meant to signify, that as there is only one Head of the faithful, so they must all be united in one body, so that there are not several churches but only one, which is extended throughout the whole world." He says, "In what sense do you call the church holy? All whom God has chosen He justifies, and reforms to holiness and innocence, that His glory may be reflected in them. And so Jesus Christ sanctified the church which He redeemed, that it might be glorious and without blemish." And then he asks this question, "Can this church be known in any other way than by believing in her? There is indeed the visible church of God, for the recognition of which He has certain signs, but here (in the Apostles' Creed) we speak properly of the fellowship of those whom He has elected to salvation which cannot be seen plainly by the eye." So Calvin says in his catechism, you must make a distinction between the church in the eyes of God and the church in the eyes of man. He says, "we speak properly of the fellowship of those whom He has elected to salvation which cannot be seen plainly by the eye."

And in his Institutes, Calvin in the same manner writes in Book IV, that you must speak about the church in a twofold manner. He says in Book IV, Chapter I, section 7:

How we are to judge the church visible, which falls within our knowledge, is, I believe, already evident from the above discussion. For we have said that Holy Scripture speaks of the church in two ways. Sometimes by the term "church" it means that which is actually in God's presence, into which no persons are received but those who are children of God by grace of adoption and true members of Christ by sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Then, indeed, the church includes not only the saints presently living on earth, but all the elect from the beginning of the world. Often, however, the name "church" designates the whole multitude of men spread over the earth who profess to worship one God and Christ. By baptism we are initiated into faith in him; by partaking in the Lord's Supper we attest our unity in true doctrine and love; in the Word of the Lord we have agreement, and for the preaching of the Word the ministry instituted by Christ is preserved. In this church are mingled many hypocrites who have nothing of Christ but the name and outward appearance. . . . Just as we must believe, therefore, that the former church, invisible to us, is visible to the eyes of God alone, so we are commanded to revere and keep communion with the latter, which is called "church" in respect to men.

[Trans. F.L. Battles.]

So Calvin makes a distinction between the church in the eyes of God and the



“Calvin makes a distinction between the church in the eyes of God and the church in respect to man. It is one church.”

church in respect to man. It is one church. He does not speak about two churches. It is one church but he speaks about the one church in a twofold manner. And I hear in that speaking of Calvin in his catechism and in his Institutes the influence of Augustine. Now that influence of Augustine and of Calvin is to be seen in our Belgic Confession, for instance, and in our Heidelberg Catechism.

Let me immediately take up the point more systematically now about the question what is the church and what can we say about the boundaries of the church.

I believe . . .

Now, first of all, I think that we should always start with a point which my teacher, Dr. Klaas Schilder always started. That is this point. Schilder said, we speak, I believe. In the Apostles' Creed, in the original text the church said, I believe a holy catholic church. And in the Nicene Creed we say, we believe one holy catholic and apostolic church. But Schilder underlined then that word, *we believe*. And he said, you can never approach speaking about the church from what you see before your eyes. You can never approach speaking about the church from your experience. We do not do so with other articles of faith either. You can only speak about the church in faith. And that faith means that you respond to the Word of God, the revelation of God in Scripture. We believe the church and that means you can also say what Scriptures says about faith is a thing by which you grasp what you do not see. But you believe on the basis of God's promise. That is also true with respect to the church.

Let me put it very concretely. Can I see that here is the congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ of Burlington West, by experience. Could not someone who came into your congregational meeting tonight say those people are speaking about the building in the same manner as, let me say, another organization of Protestants speaks about their building;

let me say, the Lodge could speak about their building, that they should have a steeple or not, etc. How do I know that you are busy with matters of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ? I can only say that by faith, so that should always be our beginning — that we do not build it up by experience, we do not build it up from the visibility of the church. We build it up from what God reveals about the church in His Word.

Then you can say that the Word of God speaks about the church in manifold images and illustrations. But I always take three of those words of Scripture because I recognize in those three words the doctrine of the Trinity of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The church is the church of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. You can say the church is the assembly of the people of God. Then I think especially of the Father. The assembly of the people of God the Father. You can say the church is the body of Christ. And you can say the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The assembly of the people of God, the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The assembly

When I take now that word assembly, then I take a word that you will find in Scripture time and again in the Old Testament, the assembly of the people of God at Zion, for instance, already in the Book of Deuteronomy. But you can also think of the word that is used in Scripture for the church that really means, “the called together,” “assembly.” It was even a word that was used in civil life for the assembly of the citizens of a Greek polis, a Greek city. And so the New Testament uses a word for the church — *ekklesia* — that indicates that character of assembly.

Now, Schilder has in connection with that word assembly brought forward this idea that in the French and the Latin translations of the Belgic Confession there are two words used for assembly.

The one word is the word, “congregatio” or “congregation” and the other word is the word, “coetus” or “coming together.” And Schilder then said, there you have the two aspects of the church.

First of all, you should see the church as the congregatio, the bringing together of the sheep by Christ, the Great Shepherd. And you know that our Heidelberg Catechism in answer to the question, what do you believe concerning the holy catholic church of Christ, that the Heidelberg Catechism speaks about the Son of God who from the beginning of the world till the end gathers for Himself a congregation and defends that congregation and preserves it.

The Son of God gathers a congregation and then again you should see [and I follow now again the teaching of Dr. Schilder in this respect]. You should see that the Catechism speaks then about an ongoing activity of the Son of God. The Son of God gathers His congregation. So by faith I see in this world the Son of God exalted at the right hand of God; by faith I see Jesus at the right hand of God crowned with glory and honour and I see the Lord Jesus gathering His church out of all tribes and tongues and nations. That is His activity. And He is still busy with that activity. That activity will be finished when He comes back in glory. When the last elect will have been brought to faith. And when the Lord Jesus Christ appears, then that activity of the Son of God who gathers His congregation from the beginning of the world to the end is finished.

Christ's work and boundaries

But if I now stress that aspect and, if you now ask me the question about the boundaries of the church, then I say, what boundaries? There is an ongoing activity of the Lord Jesus Christ that is not finished yet. If I speak about the boundaries of the church and if I think then of an area, geographical boundaries, then I can precisely say, there lies the boundary of the church of Burlington West and the church of Burlington South. But if there is an ongoing activity of the risen Lord Jesus Christ who will describe the boundaries of that activity? I cannot! That is a question we cannot answer!

That is the sovereign work of the Shepherd, who said to His disciples, I have other sheep who also have to hear My voice. It shall become one Shepherd, one flock. He is still busy gathering His sheep! Do you know what the Lord Jesus Christ does in Turkey, or in Iran, or in Pakistan? I just yesterday received a letter from a former student, [not of our college but from another college] whom I had taught. He is at the moment a missionary in Pakistan and he writes about how he is learning the language and he

is trying to spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I heard in Edinburgh a minister sing in Urdu one of the 42 Psalms that have been translated in Urdu, one of the languages of India and then you might face, you might see something and hear something of that ongoing activity of the Lord Jesus Christ who gathers His catholic church out of all the tribes and tongues and nations. That church, according to our confession, is not bound to one place or bound to certain persons, but is united and dispersed throughout the whole world, but nevertheless, united in one spirit. Do not say to me, you are certainly speaking only about the Reformed churches. No, I am not only speaking about the Reformed churches! I am speaking about the church of God. That church of God that He knows in His eternal decree. That church that will be gathered out of all tribes and tongues and nations. By faith I see the walls of the church building in which I may preach the Word of God, as it were, wider and wider and wider. And I know that by faith I may be a member of that catholic church that the Lord Jesus Christ is busy to gather out of all tribes and tongues and nations. So let us not speak too statically about the boundaries of the church, for at least if you use the image of boundaries then you must say those are boundaries that are continually expanding until the knowledge of the Lord will fill the whole earth as God has promised through the prophet Isaiah.

But probably you will say to me, yes, but that activity of the Lord Jesus Christ also has a preliminary result and that is true. By faith I may see something of that preliminary result of the gathering of the people of God. And then I may indeed say, by faith, that the congregation of which I am a member is an assembly of the people of God. By faith I may say that that congregation of which I am a member is a body of Christ. And I, by grace, may be a member of that body of Christ and may function within that body of Christ. By faith I may say that that congregation is a temple of the Holy Spirit. That is true.

Believers outside

What then about believers outside that congregation? Must I take a very positivist, a rigid position as the Rev. Hoorn did in the Netherlands? The Rev. Hoorn took his confession and he said, Article 27: "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 salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed by His blood, and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit." And he looked into the Latin translation by Vestus

Hommius of that confession written in French and translated into Dutch. The Latin says even a little stronger yet, the church which is a holy congregation and assembly of *all* true Christian believers. So he said, the church is an assembly of all Christian believers — that is the church. And he identified that with the congregation of which he was a minister and he said, that is the catholic church. That is the church of all the believers. Then he encountered a little bit, you will understand that, a little bit of difficulty with Article 28: "We believe, since this holy assembly and congregation is the assembly of the redeemed and there is no salvation outside of it, that no one ought to withdraw from it." Yes, he could understand that — no one has to withdraw — but it says then: "But all and everyone are obliged to join it and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the church." Then he said, that simply means that the members of the congregation on Sunday must faithfully join the congregation of which they are a member. That it means. You cannot say that there are believers outside the church, for the church is the congregation, the assembly of the true believers.

Or there can be another minister probably not in the Netherlands, but for instance, in the Canadian Reformed Churches, who takes that expression of Article 27 and says, the church is a holy congregation, an assembly of all true Christian believers. Now you do not want

to say that there are no true Christian believers outside the Canadian Reformed Churches, do you? So the church is the assembly of all God's elect. He took that same question, that same expression and interpreted it basically in the same manner — only he went to the other side. Is that the way in which you have to read what Guido de Brès writes?

If I read, "the church is a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers," then I say, yes, that is according to the Word of God; that is what we believe about the church. What is the church? The church is an assembly of what kind of people — of true Christian believers — true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed by His blood and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

And if you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you are not a member of that assembly. If you do not believe in the washing by the blood of Christ, and if you are not sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit then you are not a member of the congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may be 100 times in a register of members of a church but you are nothing but a hypocrite. You are like a kidney stone that is in a human body but which does not belong to that human body. It is in that human body but does not belong to it. So a hypocrite is within the church but he does not belong to the church. To



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speak with Augustine, (and our confession speaks with Augustine), Augustine says you have to separate from those who do not belong to the church. Who are those who belong to the church? Those are the true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They belong to the church. And we are speaking of the hypocrites, when Article 29 says, "who are mixed in the Church . . . and yet are not part of the Church." They are in the church but are not part of the church.

For the church is an assembly of true Christian believers washed by the blood of Christ, renewed by His Spirit. And you may say, that the confession now says — if that is the church then every true believer does not, may not, ought not to keep by himself. He is to join that assembly to which he basically belongs. You see, we should not forget that we can use the words sometimes in a manner that is a little bit open to misunderstanding. If I say, do all true believers belong to the church then I can use that in the sense of "ought they to be within the assembly of God's people?" Then I say yes, all *ought* to be in the assembly of God's people. But *are* all true believers already within the assembly of God's people? Then I say no. Therefore I have to be obedient myself time and again, to call others to obedience in order that they join the true church of Christ. So, in Dutch, that "horen bij of behoren tot" can be taken in two ways. You can say, "horen alle gelovigen bij de kerk?" Yes sure, "die horen allen bij de kerk." They are to be there. "Behoren alle gelovigen tot de kerk?" Then you can say, some believers are disobedient. You have people who live by themselves and read their Bible and read all kinds of edifying words etc., but they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are disobedient children of God and God in His grace will deliver them also from their sin with respect to His church. When they die then all sin will be taken away, also the church sins. They will be on the new earth, but it is not only the question whether they will be on the new earth but for them and the way in which we have to speak to them, the question is are they obedient to God? Do they live as God wants them to live? And therefore in respect to this matter we cannot always answer all questions, we cannot bring it into system. We know one thing and that is, the Lord knows who are His but Paul writes in the same breath that those who call upon His name have to avoid going away from all iniquity. They have to go the right path of obedience. That is, you can say, our responsibility. Basically when I speak about the boundaries of the church then I touch also the topic of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. And we always say, the hidden things are of

the Lord our God, the revealed things are for us and our children to do them. Also true with respect to the church.

Distinctions

Now I could say, I myself try to find a kind of a way of expressing things: Then I make this distinction. I say, the church is the assembly of the people of God. But someone can be a child of God and can therefore be a member of God's people without [and this is his sin], joining the assembly of the people of God. So I make the distinction between the people of God and the assembly of the people of God. The people of God ought to be in the assembly but they come not all who are within the people of God. They do not all come to the assembly.

Or I try to make a distinction with respect to the body of Christ. Then I say, if someone believes in the Lord Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit, he becomes a member of Christ. Nobody will deny that believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ; that the Lord Jesus Christ is their Head and that they are members of Christ. And as members of Christ they receive the gifts of righteousness and renewal. But not all the members of Christ

join the body of Christ. So could we not make a distinction between being a member of Christ and being a member of Christ's body?

And with respect to the temple of the Holy Spirit could we not make a distinction between being in the congregation as a temple and being a temple of the Holy Spirit yourself, that the Holy Spirit dwells in you by His grace. And should we then not in the line of Augustine and in the line of Calvin as it were try to answer some of those questions.

Then with respect to the community, the second aspect that I wanted to speak about, you come to the whole topic of the true and the false church. There you can say our confession gives a demarcation between the true church and the false church and the marks of the true church as mentioned in Article 29 indicate the demarcation between the true and the false church. But also with respect to that topic about the true and the false church it should always be our desire to become obedient more and more ourselves and, if God gives it to us, to bring others more and more to the obedience of faith also with respect to the church.

J. FABER

BRANDENDE BOS

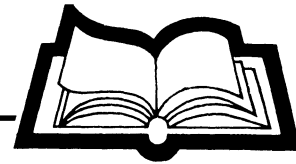
*Hoe comtet dat den bos tot aenden hemel blaectet
En door soo grooten vier tot asschen niet geraket ?
Verwondert u des niet, o Mose, lieve man,
Want God is inden bos diese bewaren can.
Hoe comtet dat de kerck als in een oven gloeyet
Vervolget, onderdruckt, en even heerlijk bloeyet ?
Verwondert u des niet, o Christen, want de Heer
De Heer is in zijn kerck: die laetse nimmermeer.*

*Jacobus Revius
Over-ysselsche Sangen en Dichten, 1630*

BURNING BUSH

*How is it that the bush with raging fire can burn
And, blazing forth to heaven, does not to ashes turn ?
O Moses, my good man, don't marvel at the sight,
For God, who's in the bush, preserves it by His might.
How is it that fierce flames do not the Church consume,
That in oppression's furnace she can thrive and bloom ?
Don't be amazed at this, O Christian. You should know
The Lord is in His Church: He'll never let her go.*

Translated by William Helder, 1987



“At that time men began to call upon the name of the LORD.”

Genesis 4:26b

Come, Holy Spirit!

After reading the vivid account of Lamech’s murderous exploits, the statement that men began to call upon the LORD seems to be little more than an incidental remark. But its importance should not be overlooked! Moses records the beginning of the true worship or *cultus* among men after the fall into sin. This is the first sign of the presence of the Spirit in the hearts of men! For it is only through the Spirit that hearts are turned from selfish works to seek the living God. And this first work of the Holy Spirit after the fall is an anticipation of Pentecost! Here the door is opened that begins the movement to the great day of the mighty rushing wind.

The context clarifies this for us. After describing the terrible effect of Cain’s sin in his progeny, the writer turns to Adam and Eve, and the birth of their son, Seth. His name means “substitute,” or “one set in the place of,” a meaning reflected in Eve’s statement that God appointed to her another child “instead of Abel, for Cain slew him.” Eve’s confession here is not only a song of thanksgiving for the actual physical replacement of Abel, but much more a song of praise at the commencement of God’s *vindication* of Abel’s blood. In the name she uses for God (Heb.: Elohim), she acknowledges having received Seth through the mighty power of the LORD. His birth was an all-powerful act through which God was on the way to bring His salvation into the world.

Seth’s son Enosh stands in marked contrast to Cain’s line, and Lamech in particular. Lamech, a man at the height of his powers, was his own master, a god to himself. Enosh’s name means “weak one,” a name which points to the frailty and curse which existed in the line of Seth as well. Two types of offspring manifest themselves here: one strong in the flesh, and yet rebellious towards God; the other weak and frail in the flesh, but strong towards God. For of the line of Enosh Moses says, “At that time men began to call upon the name of the LORD.” With all its weaknesses, and under the threat of terror all around, the faithful seed are directed to seek after God. They call upon Him, through the gift of His Spirit!

Here are the first rays of Pentecost! For in the birth of Seth, we see the Pre-incarnate One, the Holy Son, begin His entrance into the world. In the name “Seth” His task is already set out before Him! He will be the true and definitive Substitute, born in the holy line! And the name “Enosh” gives a further reflection of His work. He will be a “man of sorrows,” despised and rejected by men, a man from whom men hide their faces, Isaiah 53:3.

In the continuation of the holy line we see the willingness of God to carry out His promise of salvation, and the willingness of the Son to take the yoke of suffering upon Himself! Although there is weakness in the flesh, faith lives

and grows. In Seth and Enosh the work of the Son is foreshadowed. And in seeing this work foreshadowed, the Father Himself proceeds with the giving of His blessings. As the Son agrees to become the Substitute — reflected in the name of Seth — and the “man of sorrows” — reflected in the name “Enosh” — so the Father agrees to give an anticipation of the reward for this work: the gift of the Holy Spirit. After the incarnation of the Son, foreshadowed in the birth of Seth, and the work of the cross, foreshadowed in the birth of Enosh, we see a new dimension to life on earth: men begin to call on the name of the LORD. True worship begins in the fellowship of the Spirit!

What a frail beginning! The full retribution and vindication of the LORD is still a long way off! Cain’s offspring blossoms forth into a powerful godless society. Seth’s line conveys weakness and death, cf. 5:5ff. But the Spirit has come down to begin a mighty wrestling to the day of victory! As the Son carries forth in His willingness to come to earth, so the Spirit carries forth in working faith, and in leading men to call upon the name of the LORD despite many sins and shortcomings.

And God’s promises proved true. The great Substitute came, and as a Man of Sorrows He gave His life for His own, the holy line, Abraham’s offspring. And the shedding of His blood is the offering that “speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel,” Hebrews 12:24. For in His death Abel is finally avenged and vindicated. Eve’s confession finally proves to be true! For the murderer of the beginning is cast from his place, and thrown into everlasting darkness. Christ made a public example of him, triumphing over him on the cross.

Hence, after this event, they could be “all together in one place,” to call upon the Name of the LORD. And the Spirit who had already appeared and worked in anticipation of this day came forth in a mighty rushing wind. This was the day of the triumph of the Spirit over the flesh! Now the universal reign of God has appeared! This is the beginning of the new worship, where men everywhere might worship the Lord in “spirit and in truth,” John 4:24.

Such is the fulfillment that we share! From what appeared as a frail beginning, God has gone forth. The day of victory has come! And as the days of Noah descend upon the church again, we may have this firm confidence before God: His Spirit dwells in our hearts, and today we may share the Spirit in fulness. For we have received not a partial gift, but may drink from the fountain of His fullness, John 1:16, 7:38. Let us therefore live out of the triumph of God, putting off the works of the flesh, and rejoicing in the gift of His Spirit of life!

J. DE JONG

Also the youth . . .

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise Him in the heights. . . .

Praise the LORD from the earth, you . . . young men and maidens together, old men and children!

Psalms 148: 1,7,12

Scriptures gives the children of the church a wonderful title: a heritage from the LORD (Ps. 127:3). They are the LORD's gift to His people, and as a gift they belong to Him.

He also demands that when these children grow up we will instruct them in these things. We will teach our children that the earth is the LORD's, and that they are His peculiar treasure, His possession. We will tell them that He, through His Son Jesus Christ, is busy rescuing and renewing all things to His eternal glory. This present world is passing away, and everything is vanity, death still reigns as king over all. . . .

However, Christ was dead, and is risen again. God has raised the despised horn of the rabbi of Nazareth, and accepted Him, His Son. He judged the revengeful scribes and pharisees. And with the risen Christ, also the horn of God's true Israel has been raised. The suffering and struggling church is in and of herself poor and miserable, certainly not rich nor enriched in her own religiosity, forever put down by the great men of religion. But that very church, expecting her salvation from her Bridegroom alone, that nation shall be raised up — and when the Lord shall return with the revelation of the glory of the church, all of creation shall be saved.

Therefore, already today may the St. Laurens, Lake Huron and the Atlantic Ocean, the Alps and the Rhine Valley clap their hands, because He is on His way to rescue them. *Do we hear? Do we listen? Indeed, the trees clap their hands!*

Therefore Psalm 148 sings — Hallelujah! Praise the LORD of the Covenant. Praise Him, all His angels — and you sun, shine brightly and friendly each day again on the royal children, the faithful — shine over the cradles, over the boys and girls, over the young men and maidens — moon and stars, watch over the children of God when they sleep — Praise the LORD, all God's laws of mathematics and physics and biology, the bounds which

cannot be passed because God maintains them all. . . .

Praise the LORD from the earth, you depths of the sea with your great creatures, the fire, hail, snow, and frost, the stormy winds which obey Him, the Rocky Mountains and the vast prairies, the orchards and forests, bears and badgers, as well as cats and cows, creeping things and flying birds — kings of the earth — all nations with their rulers and judges — praise Him, yes praise Him — because His glory and majesty is great and He has raised the horn of His people.

These choirs of created things "from the heavens" and "from the earth" must be joined by the voices of the youth: young men and maidens together, old men and children. *Are our children, together with their parents, members of this choir? Does the example of the older ones teach the younger ones to use their voices well, skilfully blending with the other voices, knowledgeably interpreting the text of the music of God's praises?*

It is often thought that boys and girls of 12-16 years of age are better suited for games, sports, and festivities, and of course for the intellectual pursuits of study. Perhaps at a later stage (after I make profession of faith, as some say) there may be time and opportunity to learn of God's praises from Scripture and history. What nonsense! All of life belongs to our God: the fear of the LORD is the beginning of all wisdom.

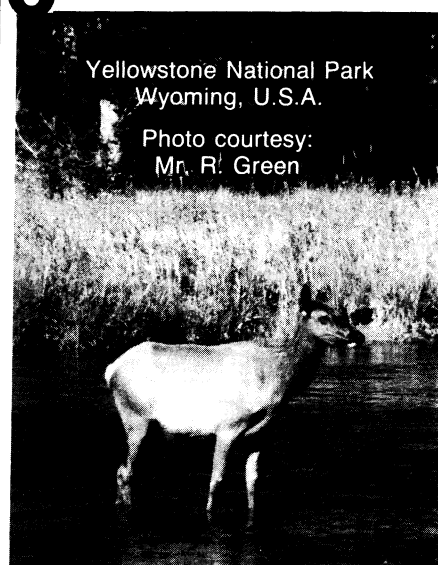
Calvin writes: It may be expected from the older persons that as they grow older they become more practised in the praise of the LORD. Yet also the youth, although with less experience in life, cannot be excused if they do not acknowledge that their young strength is in fact a work of God's grace.

Calvin also notes, that the Hebrew mentions with some emphasis the maidens as well as the young men — "together," lest we think that it is more appropriate for girls (perhaps needing less education than the boys — what a fallacy!) to concern themselves with the everyday matters of the household. However, both would neglect their obligations if they would not proclaim God's praises, AS BOYS AND GIRLS TOGETHER WITH THE WHOLE CONGREGATION.

Scripture calls upon both the maidens and the young men to praise the God of the church, even though they may be as yet immature, even though they might have much to learn. Why? Because His Name is above all. He raised the horn of Christ, and thus the horn of His church, of those He favours.

At every opportunity, the Israelite was to speak of *this* God and of his Messiah (under the law of shadows). The Jewish father had many such opportunities: when he sat down in his house on the Sabbath, when he walked along the road with his son. Those were the hours during which the father taught his son in everything that was necessary to be known. The young Israelite learned in these discussions with his father about life's wisdom, and in this

OUR COVER



way gained much necessary knowledge.

Today such opportunities present themselves to us in our families, schools, catechism classes, youth clubs, in the reading material provided for edification in the knowledge of our risen Lord . . . and in the knowledge of all of God's works.

"ALL OF GOD'S WORKS" Indeed, whatever we enjoy, whatever we study, whatever we use . . . it is the LORD'S, the LORD who maintains all things as with His own hand — all things, nothing excluded!

To His praise. That is the ultimate goal.

May God make us faithful in instructing our children in this basic, essential, Scriptural demand of praise, also from the young men and the maidens, from our

boys and girls. Let us not follow the world by providing our youth with "adapted" things, things which are more suitable for them. It is not true that the age of 12-16 years is not very suitable for a close study of the Scriptures. Secular psychology may consider the natural needs and desires of the heart (the child's nature — a nature which is inclined to all evil!) as characteristic, and therefore normative for that age group, and some may perhaps consider the things of the Spirit too lofty, perhaps even stifling and harmful, undesirable indoctrination. Such "expert" knowledge moves us on dangerous ground, where the apostle John warns us earnestly: Do not love the world or the things of the world. For the lust of the

eyes (I think of film and magazine) and the pride of life (I think of worldly religiosity, as well as the advertised rights to satisfy all lusts and desires), are not of the Father, and cannot exist before our Lord who will return on the clouds, but belong to a world which is vanity of vanities. That world will pass away and the lust of it, but the boys or the girls who as covenant children do the will of their Father abide forever (I John 2:15-17).

T.M.P. VANDERVEN

Based on A. Janse: ONDERWIJS EN OPVOEDING: Verzamelde artikelen. (n.d.) "Ten Geleide: Ook de jongen," pp 5-7.

NEWS MEDLEY



Everyone is happy and grateful when a new sister is received. This applies to the families, it also applies to the Churches. A good tidings from a faraway country is like cool water upon a thirsty tongue. For this reason we begin this medley with telling you that we have received another sister. She does not live next-door, although it is not all that far away from another sister, the one in Mangellum, Irian Jaya.

Let us cease speaking in riddles and tell you what we have in mind.

More than once already we mentioned the work which the Church at Albany, Western Australia, has been doing in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, PNG for short, and the efforts to come to the institution of a Church there or in the neighbourhood.

The Rev. and Mrs. K. Bruning were there quite a few times, and also brother and sister Buist gave themselves for the work of assisting the brothers and sisters. It will also be known to our readers that Cand. J. Koelewijn accepted the call from the Albany Church to become its missionary in that country.

The efforts to come to a more regular and complete church life have been blessed. On April 3rd the Church was instituted.

Our readers will be very much interested in the course of events. For this reason we include in this medley a letter which was sent by the "Church Committee" which had been established to all concerned in the group of Port Moresby. Here it follows.

The Church Committee has broadly discussed the plans to institute the Reformed Church in Papua, New Guinea. The Committee has the opinion that it is now the time to do the decisive step. Several members of our Community have lived in PNG for many years. Some of our people have already passed away. During these long years we have had our Sunday meetings, sermons, discussions and last but not least the help from our Australian brothers and sisters. After 1980 the contacts were increased thanks to the activities of the Church in Albany. Ministers and elders were among us to preach, to teach us and our children and

to serve us with their advice.

However, we cannot remain a group for ever. The LORD wants that His believers establish the Church in accordance with His Word. The Book of Acts gives us clear examples. As Church we have the preaching of the Gospel, but also the use of the sacraments, Baptism and Holy Supper, and the Church discipline.

But for the institution of the Church we need both office-bearers (elders and deacons) and Church members. They all must be able to have their place in the Church in a faithful manner.

The office-bearers must be men of good reputation: healthy in faith and Bible knowledge to lead, to teach, to comfort the Congregation, and to rule over her in the Name of the Lord.

The Church members, too, must be faithful believers with the true faith in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour. They must show a real Christian way of life: not living in the pleasures of the world or in the sins against the commandments of the LORD. They should be examples as sincere children of God. They must also faithfully attend the Church services to listen to the preaching and to make use of the sacraments in order that they may more and more put their trust in the Lord expecting from Him the full salvation of life.

The institution of the Church is a great step. We cannot take it lightly. It is a very earnest decision for our whole life and our children. It is, therefore, very urgent that we will be ready for it, and prepare ourselves with prayer and with faith. Unbelievers and all those who have an ungodly life cannot be in the Lord's Church and are not admitted to the sacraments. The LORD asks of us to accept His Word and to confess it as we agree with it in the 12 articles of faith, and in the Creeds of the Reformed Churches.

The Committee wants to know from you whether it is your sincere desire to be a member of the Reformed Church which will be instituted as soon as it will be possible, the LORD willing; and whether you declare that you feel in your

heart to be called by the Lord to be such a member as it is explained to you in this testimony.

The Committee urgently requests you to answer the following questions for a further discussion with you. It is the plan of the Committee to make up a list of those people who may be suitable to be accepted by the Community as the future office-bearers.

Let us all pray to the Lord that He may bless us in all our efforts to institute the Church, to the honour of His Name and for the well-being of His people.

For the Committee

P. Ayamiseba

Secretary

Port Moresby—Papua New Guinea

28 February 1988

As mentioned above, the institution took place on April 3rd. One hundred persons were in attendance and three elders and two deacons were ordained. It must have been a particular reason for joy that the sacrament of holy baptism could be administered to no fewer than sixteen children!

The brotherhood in Australia are also aware of it that native ministers of the Word are needed. For this reason all the Australian ministers, including the two "retired" ministers, will be engaged in a program to train some of the Papuan brothers for the ministry.

They are also aware of it that no tutelage on the part of the Australian Churches is needed or desirable, and that from now on any request for assistance must come from the newly instituted Church.

We stay in Australia for a little while.

In Armadale the "proposal is brought forward to increase the number of elders due to the considerable increase in ward sizes." Pretty soon another Church to be instituted?

No wonder that the Bedforddale consistory, pondering its own vacancy, stressed the need for ministers. They were also to have a meeting about building sites available.

Back to Armadale for a minute. "A proposal is tabled to hold the catechism sermons in the afternoon services rather than in the morning." This proposal was carried.

If I may speak a word of criticism on the terms used: One does not "hold" a sermon. Yes, you can hold it close to your eyes or at arm's length if you are farsighted. You can wave it or hold it still; but you "deliver" a speech or sermon, or you "give" a speech or address. Perhaps you even "present" a speech or sermon, but you never "hold" it, unless there is a stiff breeze that threatens to blow it away. In Dutch you do, however.

The Bedforddale consistory also "considered a report which draws attention to some practical problems associated with non-compliance of the mutually accepted agreement regarding this matter."

Oh, those borderlines and the problems they cause! People are no pieces of a chess-game which you can move at will and without hearing any protest. When are we going to learn?

This is not to say that members have the right to disobey agreements which consistories have entered into! They don't.

Let's return to the North American continent.

The Lynden Church sees its church building nearing completion. They expect to be able to dedicate it some six weeks from the day this is being written. Having seen the building as far as it has been completed thus far, I can tell you that I long for the moment when I will be allowed to conduct a service in it. However, the desire of the congregation to meet in it will be far greater yet. They are to be congratulated.

North of the border we visit Surrey first.

"After a long discussion council adopts the proposal of the brothers A. and B. which will result in Rev. Boersema relocating in the Recife area (in the Camaragibe area) since we already have a nucleus of approximately 25 people there."

"Some people have brought it to our attention," Cloverdale's information reads, "that some of the *Books of Praise* are beginning to look rather tattered, and have suggested that it is not just due to their normal use in worship. Please treat the *Books of Praise* with care, and please do not give them to younger children to occupy them."

It is nice when there are Bibles and songbooks in the pews, although we always take our own along, but it is more likely that parents as well as children will treat these books with greater care if they are their own. Frequently we see that younger members, as soon as they have taken their place in a pew, put a *Book of Praise* against the back of the pew in front, put their knee against it and, perhaps without realizing it, contribute towards the demise of the book and to the misery of the people sitting in the pew against which they lean, since these people feel the pew moving every time the tired "back-bencher" moves or slides down even further.

The Cloverdale consistory tells us also that "request has been made to re-instate the summary of the law. After extensive discussion it is decided not to accede to this request at this time."

It will be sufficiently known what I think about this so-called "summary" and therefore no surprise to anyone that I am happy with the Cloverdale decision.

The Vernon congregation is growing. "Gradually the pews are filling up. Unfortunately the Seventh Day Adventists informed us that at this time they are not ready to rent us the upstairs of the building. The reason given is that they had refused the same request to a group which is now meeting in their school building." The brothers and sisters keep looking.

"It was noted that the tableware for the Lord's Supper arrived in time. Gratitude is expressed to the Ladies' Aid who so generously contributed for this, as well as the brother who donated the difference."

Larger congregations may not sufficiently appreciate the increase in membership; in the smaller congregations this is still an event to be noticed. For more than one reason we can appreciate the official item in Calgary's consistory report: "The consistory was pleased to note that the membership of the congregation had increased by one through the birth of a daughter to Rev. and Mrs. Schouten." Congratulations to both congregation and ministerial couple.

The Providence Consistory passed on the information that "The consistory was informed by the Rev. Van Beveren of his desire to be released from active service as Minister of the Word to the congregation as per C.O. Art. 13, in order to retire by September 1, 1988. He requests Council's consent in this matter. This was tabled to the next Council Meeting."

Although I certainly do not begrudge my colleague the rest after years of faithful service, I am wondering how they are going to fix this on the ground of the 1986 text of Article 13 of our Church Order, unless there are medical reasons. Age in itself, even retirement age, is no longer a legitimate reason.

"Thank you" to the brother who sent me the bulletin of the Immanuel Church in Edmonton. It is the first time I received one and, at the same time, the first look I could have at a picture of their church building. I certainly do appreciate receiving it.

For further news we have to go to Ontario.

Starting in Ottawa, we are convinced that it must have been very encouraging for the minister when one of the Catechism students, in reply to the question "Which Lord's Day did I preach about yesterday afternoon?" gave a good report and closed with "Over all I think it wasn't a bad sermon."

Building and expansion projects are going on almost everywhere.

In Brampton "this week at the council meeting there was a report from the Committee of Administration. It recommends that we buy a parcel of land from the farmer next door for future

expansion." It was decided to discuss this at the congregational meeting and the result was that "At the congregational meeting there was overwhelming endorsement to purchase about four acres of land for future use." Might be big enough to have a school building as well. Although unintentionally, that is, although it was not planned this way, sale of the present school building and property might yield extra capital to lighten the burden, if the new property could be utilized. Transportation problems towards the high school in Fergus would also be facilitated. As you can see: I see great perspectives. First of all, however, we need more teachers. Forgive me my musings.

In nearby Orangeville "the meeting with the congregation to discuss our church building plans was well attended. We had a very pleasant evening and look forward to the realization of our building expansion."

Grand Valley does not come behind. "We're pleased to inform you that an offer we put in for a piece of land has been accepted. . . . Size: Approximately ten acres: 425' frontage, 900' deep. . . . This offer is conditional upon: a. ratification by the congregation; b. access to Highway 9; c. zoning changed to institutional/residential."

The building committee of Smithville has done quite an amount of work as well and the plans which passed the consistory were to be presented to the congregation.

Lincoln is still waiting for a hand-out. "The Lift project is still on hold. The Provincial government opens applications for grants on a quarterly basis with the next date being March 31 We hope the congregation will agree with us, when we say that the prospect of 50% funding is worth waiting for."

"Although it is not actually incoming mail," Attercliffe writes, "we wish to announce the arrival of the Lord's Supper silverware."

Even though it is not specifically "Church" news, we also mention with gratitude that the Mount Nemo nursing home has received permission to add some thirty beds to its facilities. Not only will the operation thereby become more viable, there will also be more facilities available to our members who need nursing care and would love to have this in an institution where the communion of saints can also be enjoyed.

In this connection I also mention that in the Fraser Valley there are plans to expand the present facilities of Manoah Manor and to add a personal and intermediate care unit. The needs of our elderly brothers and sisters — and we are getting more and more of them — are realized and measures are taken to fill them.

Watford discussed again the rental of a church building in Kerwood for the summer months, when campers in nearby facilities increase the size of the Watford number of worshipers. Watford also will have a new cover for their bulletin, but I haven't seen this one yet and therefore cannot comment on it, if this should be desirable, that is.

Hamilton's consistory pondered the question posed to it "that we may create capital by selling the parsonage and have a new minister purchase his own accommodation." I do not know whether the selling of the parsonage in Hamilton would be all that easy, seeing its location. However, that is not one of my problems. Generally speaking, it might be a good idea to do so, for I do not think that any minister would appreciate it being under such close scrutiny of members and passers-by as the one who occupies the Hamilton parsonage. Besides, when people wish to visit the minister for one reason or another, they may not like it being seen entering the parsonage. We know how things go and how tongues sometimes move. This is no reflection on specific members! I only refer to the situation as such.

Elora's congregation is meeting now for worship in the Optimist Club building in Alma, some five miles north. An official notice was to be sent to *Clarion*. "Brother A. of Fergus heard

that our congregation was in need of a pulpit. He remembered that there was one sitting in the basement of the Fergus Church. Some brothers from Elora had a look at it and before long we received permission to use it." Later on it was reported that "Our caretaker has finalized the pulpit which will be used."

Elora is also going to purchase equipment to tape the services for members who were unable to attend the worship service.

What I do not recall ever having read before, I did read in the Fergus Consistory report. As our readers know, the Rev. Stam was called by the Church at Hoogeveen, the Netherlands. Usually, when a minister has received a call and the calling Church has asked him to come over so that the various needs, possibilities, and desires can be discussed *in loco*, the minister asks the consistory whether it is all right that he takes a few days to comply with this request. This time it was different. "Letter from the church at Hoogeveen, the Netherlands, requesting leave of absence for our minister for approximately one week, to visit their congregation."

By the time you read this, we will know the decision.

The Rev. D. DeJong discussed the announcement of "Footprints of the Reformation" about which we made a few remarks in our medley. He, too, tells the ones who were to attend this presentation that they should distinguish well, and describes some of the errors of people who, in this presentation, are praised as belonging to the true Reformers. Such warnings remain necessary.

In conclusion, we pass on what the Burlington-East consistory decided regarding members who move away.

"Members who move to a location outside of what is normally considered to be the geographical area of the church at Burlington East, where by reason of distance proper pastoral care and supervision of such members becomes impossible, and, where active membership and faithful attendance at the worship services becomes practically impossible for such members, then the consistory must regretfully conclude that such members, by their own action, have effectively terminated their membership of the church at Burlington East. The council reserves that each case should be examined and judged on its own."

Seeing the difference which some assign to the terms "council" and "consistory," the last sentence should have read that "The consistory reserves"

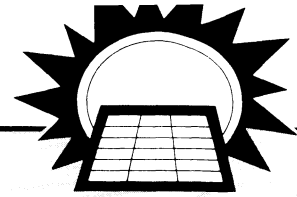
I am glad that each case will be judged on its own, for if someone has been transferred, being in the armed forces or the police forces or in the service of federal or provincial governments, we certainly cannot say that they have voluntarily moved away from the Church and thus have forfeited the right to belong to it. Unless, of course, someone wrongly would claim that positions which may involve such transfers are taboo for our members. For such a statement, however, I cannot find any basis in Scripture. To my knowledge the Lord nowhere demands of us that we shall leave the defense of the country or the maintenance of order or the service for the good of all the citizens to the unbelievers to take care of because of the consequences.

Besides, could it not be that moving away and trying to build up a business or farm elsewhere is a fulfilment of the command to fill the earth? It all depends for what reason and in what frame of mind someone moves away. For this reason it is a wise decision that each case shall be judged on its own.

Just before concluding this medley I received some more bulletins, but the contents of these will have to wait till next time and will be utilized for the following medley.

For today you have received sufficient material to keep your thoughts going for a while. Thankful for it that I have been allowed to contribute to your mental activities, I remain your most considerate commentator.

VO



"The LORD will fulfill His purpose for me."

Psalm 138:8

Dear brothers and sisters,

We all have certain goals in life, something that we would like to accomplish. Especially when we are still young, we are filled with all kinds of ideals and plans for the future. And also when you get older, there are things which you still would love to see or to do.

Sometimes, however, we are unable to reach our goal due to the circumstances which are beyond our control. Sometimes there are financial problems, at other times it are health or family problems. All of a sudden we realize that we never can accomplish what we set out to do.

When David was in deep trouble because many enemies threatened him, he did not get discouraged. In the midst of his tribulations, He praised the LORD, the God of the covenant. He put his trust in God's sure and reliable promises. Although he himself was weak and unable to withstand the enemies, he knew that the LORD would fulfill His purpose for Him and establish His Kingdom for ever. Now we realize that we are not like David, the great King, the Father of Christ. But still the LORD has in Christ a purpose for all His children. We might not see it, that does not matter! That purpose is there! And He works towards that purpose without any hesitation. There are no obstacles and barriers for Him our God. It goes all according to His will in order that we may honour and praise Him. Ephesians 1:11, 12.

The LORD's plan for our life may be different from ours but it is good! Let's never doubt that! We would like to bypass the difficulties, sorrows and pains. But the LORD uses also those adversities to fulfill His purpose for us. By them He strengthens our faith, or brings us closer to Him in order that we finally may obtain eternal salvation. You remember what Paul says, "This slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." II Corinthians 4:17.

Entrusting our life and lot into God's hands we will with renewed hope be able to face the future again, knowing that whatever happens, the LORD will indeed fulfill His purpose for us. He leads and directs our path, even though we have to go through the valley of the shadow of death. His rod and His staff comfort me! In Christ, out of mere grace, He has chosen us to be His beloved children and He does not forsake the works of His hands. So, we do not lose heart but we can always be of good courage!

From the mailbox:

Mrs. Luinge from Abbotsford, B.C. writes: "Rob would like to thank everyone for all the cards he received from across Canada and the U.S.A. We were literally

bombarded with mail! He was thrilled with all the cards and letters he received." Rob himself adds: "Thank you everyone for writing to me."

It was the first time Rob's birthday was mentioned in our "Ray of Sunshine" and I am very happy that there was such a great response from the readers.

A sincere thank you also from the undersigned!

Our Birthday Calendar for June:

Joan Koerselman

Box 624
Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0

Joan was born on June 17th and she will be thirty one on her birthday.

Daniel Stroop

193 Diane Drive
Orangeville, ON L9W 3N3

Daniel hopes to celebrate his 7th birthday on June 20. He and his family moved from Burlington to Orangeville. We wish them the Lord's blessing in their new environment.

Beverly Breukelman

Box 666
Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0

Beverly will be 26 years old on June 30.

Congratulations to all three of you!

Thy way, not mine, O LORD,
However dark it be!
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.

Smooth let it be or rough,
It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it leads
Right onward to Thy rest.

Not mine, not mine the choice,
In things great or small;
Be Thou my Guide, my Strength,
My wisdom, and my all!

Are there other brothers or sisters among us who are sick or feeling lonely and who would like to have some "contact by mail" with others? Please, let me know. It does not necessarily have to be your birthday. I will gladly pass on your request to our readers.

Greetings,

Mrs. J. Mulder

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

By Rev. W.W.J. VanOene

In the above mentioned brochure this reason is formulated as follows:

"We are and remain the Christian Reformed Church because at the union the doctrine of the regeneration at baptism was not only tolerated, but granted a place in the united Churches, and at the Free University is being imprinted upon the disciples."

Afterwards this point held the attention many a time until the decisions of 1942 and subsequent Synodical actions made another reformation necessary.

Above we did quote a few lines from Dr. Kuyper from which it appears that he very strongly defended "this doctrine."

However, that after many decades his theory was made official church doctrine does not mean that it did have any doctrinal standing in the Doleantie Churches.

The merger took place on the basis of God's Word, the Confession and the Church Order of Dordrecht.

The brothers who refused to go along with the union did not consider objections to some of Dr. Kuyper's teachings to be the main objections to a union. Initially these teachings were mentioned — if they were mentioned at all — in an off-hand manner. Their main point was that — in their opinion — the principle of the Secession had been denied and that precious characteristics of the Christian Reformed Church had been sacrificed upon the altar of a union with the Doleantie Churches.

Therein they were mistaken.

There was no valid basis under their refusal and schismatic action.

From those who constituted the Christian Reformed Church after the union of 1892 the line runs to this continent: to the Free Reformed Churches in Canada, although some ministers from that Church in the Netherlands apparently find themselves surprisingly quite comfortable in the Christian Reformed Church on this continent.

However, as little as their joining the Christian Reformed Church in Canada and the U.S.A. constitutes a condemnation of the schism in 1892 — however strange it may be that they do feel at ease there — so little does the fact that the theory of the presumptive regeneration later on was brought to supremacy in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands constitute a justification of this action.

They definitely do not have to raise a finger and say, "I told you so!"

The question is only whether in 1892 the theories of Kuyper played such a part in the life of the Doleantie Churches that it had to be said, "The Lord forbids a union."

This question must be answered in the negative.

The Stipulation Endangered

The conditions agreed upon with the Union of 1892, insofar as they regard the Theological School are called "Het Beding," which is best translated as "The Stipulation." We'll use this term when referring to "Het Beding."

In order to refresh our memory we'll repeat it briefly.

The Synod Leeuwarden 1891 of the Christian Reformed Church stated that "as far as the training for the office of minister is concerned, Synod judges that it has to uphold the principle that it is the calling of the Church to have its own institution for the training of its ministers, at least as far as regards their theological training." The Doleerende Synod of The Hague 1891 finally accepted this statement, but added,

"Always on the understanding that it is *not* the meaning of this declaration

"1. to squash the old Reformed principle of free study; nor 2. to bring any change in the Reformed manner of ecclesiastical examination of future ministers of the Word; neither 3. to take away anything from the requirement of scholarly education which has always been set by the Reformed Churches; neither 4. to contradict that, if necessary, the *united* Churches have to judge the arrangement of this matter."

Although it has been pointed out before, it is good to repeat here that by "the *arrangement* of this matter" not the Churches' own institution was meant, but reference was made to the ecclesiastical examinations and the scholarly level. The very existence and continuation of the "Theological School" was never put at risk when the Christian Reformed Church agreed to the union with the Doleerende Churches.

This has to be borne in mind when we review the further history of this institution.

A Disturbing Report

At the United Synod of 1892 a committee was appointed to come with an advice regarding the above mentioned "arrangement of this matter."

Members of this committee were the brothers Bavinck, Kuyper, Neyens, Van Goor and Van Schelven. These brothers worked fast. Already in April 1893 they sent a "Draft arrangement" to the Churches.

What "arrangement" did the brothers have in mind?

The title of their submission gave already reason for concern. "Draft Arrangement for the Training of Ministers of the Word." Hereby the accent was shifted.

What about the very beginning?

"At their merger at the General Synod at Amsterdam, the Reformed Churches — always within the limits of their authority and then without meaning thereby that their provisions should be counted as being above God's Word or as being on a level with the confession — adopted the principle that it is the calling of the Church to have its own institution for the training of its ministers, at least as far as the theological training is concerned."

Either this is a nonsensical statement — as every one will agree that Synod 1892 never intended to state that its provisions either superseded the Word of God or were on a level with the confessions — or it is a statement which from the very beginning was intended to undermine The Stipulation.

The latter appeared to be the case.

The brothers put three questions to which they also gave an answer. In the first place they asked whether unity of training for the ministry was desirable.

To this question they answered that for the peace and prosperity of the Churches it was not only desirable but urgently necessary. The gravest objection to having two institutions, the Committee stated, is that at both a specific theological current arises and is continued, whereby the unity is harmed. There comes so easily an unpleasant and detrimental competition.

The later history confirmed the fear of the committee and the instruction at both institutions did develop into two distinctly different theological lines of thought by which great harm did come to the Churches.

On the other hand we are to state already at this point that hereby the way was kept open to preserve the Churches with the old and proven doctrine and to call them back from scholastic theories to the purity of this doctrine. We do not wish to try to visualize what the situation would have been if the proposals by the committee had been adopted and if the Theological School at Kampen had merged with the Theological Department of the Free University at Amsterdam!

The second question was what then the nature of this training was to be.

Abstractly speaking, it was said, a Church could be content with possessing its own institution for the training of its ministers. However, the *scholarly* discipline of Theology has different requirements than the Church. The "Reformed Principles" have other requirements.

Thus, to the third question in what way the unity of training was to be achieved it was answered that it appears to be a requirement of the Reformed principles that the Theology be not confined to a Seminary, but as a free scholarly discipline in its own right is to be placed into an organic relation with all other disciplines.

The brothers also gave suggestions regarding the direction in which a solution was to be sought.

Only such an institution can meet the needs of both Church and Scholarship which, on the one hand, has the character of a Theological School, but, on the other hand, is a Theological Department among the academic disciplines.

As neither of the existing institutions meets these requirements, a merger of the two would be the only way in which unity of training could be achieved.

The double character of the one institution could be found only in the persons of the Professors who would be appointed both by the Churches and by a Society.

The brothers came with the proposal "that the Churches should make an effort in the manner as indicated above to place their Theological School into a relation with the Theological Department of the Free University, and to this end to appoint deputies apart from and without the Governors of the Theological School and the Directors of the Free University."

This report, its conclusions and suggestions amounted to nothing less than a denial of The Stipulation, and was one of the various efforts undertaken in the course of time to torpedo the Theological School.

It was a resurrected and augmented version of point 14 of the "Draft-Act of Union" which had been emphatically rejected by the Christian Reformed Synod of Assen at

the continued sessions in Kampen. Even the visit by Dr. A. Kuyper and Dr. W. van den Bergh had not been able to sway the Synod in this respect.

After the Union had become a fact, the old, earlier officially abandoned idea was revived, polished up and presented anew, now under the guise of the fulfillment of a mandate.

It was correctly pointed out that the brothers had never received a mandate to come with suggestions regarding these points.

Reactions

Shock and even consternation were the result when the report was received.

The Board of Governors of the Theological School met in emergency session on April 20 and 21, 1893. After lengthy discussions, the Board declared the following: "According to the judgment of the Board, the Draft-Regulation cannot be dealt with because it is not in accordance with the Stipulations put by Synod."

Only one of the governors voted against this conclusion. He was the Rev. L. Neyens of North Holland, a member of the committee which had drawn up and signed the report.

Everyone will understand that such a report and proposal caused more than a ripple in the ecclesiastical waters. That such a proposal could be made such a short time after the merger of 1892 astounded many people. There were not a few who foresaw a split if this proposal would be adopted and the Theological School would be merged with the Theological Department of the Free University.

Was it only a tactical mistake the committee made?

The Rev. A. Littooy was of a different opinion. "Ah so, merely a tactical mistake? The principle given us by God and so solemnly adopted may and must then be abandoned after several years? Brothers, it is not a matter of tactics, nor of time, but a question of principle indeed."

Prof. L. Lindeboom of the Theological School wrote, among other things, "What many were afraid of, but what certainly no one expected, is expressed in the 'Draft-Act,' namely the closing down of the Theological School and the incorporation of the Theological section of the School into the Theological Department of the Free University. It definitely is *not* a draft 'for the arrangement of the training for the ministry.' Deputies only give *their own wish and sentiment* . . . We recommend to all consistories simply to advise Classes and Synod: '*This draft is inadmissible and its submission is to be profoundly disapproved of as being high-handed and utterly dangerous.*'"

Throughout the country the matter was being discussed and the pros and cons defended in conversation and press.

Reviewing the history before the merger of 1892 and the various synods of the then Christian Reformed Church, we must come to the conclusion that the Churches of the Secession never wavered in their conviction and determination that the Churches should have their own institution for the training for the ministry.

— To be continued