

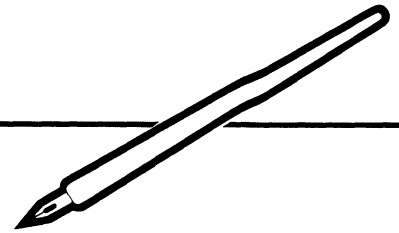


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 37, No. 23 November 11, 1988





The breath of God

The year 1988 calls to mind a significant event in the history of the church. This summer it was four hundred years ago that the Spanish Armada was defeated in the English Channel, and later ruined off the coast of Ireland. Of the 134 ships that set out in the spring, only about one-half returned; of the men, over two-thirds were lost. The enormous fleet, hailed in Spain as the "Invincible" came home crippled and worn, having failed in its essential mission.

Why do we stop to consider this event? Its significance cannot be underestimated! The Spanish king, Philip II, had made it his aim to include England in his realm, and punish the Lowlands for their insubordination to Spanish rule. He was particularly concerned about eliminating the spread of the Reformation, and reintroducing the supremacy of the Romish faith. Thus, the mission of the Armada was both political and religious.

To achieve his ends, the king, under the blessing of Pope Sixtus V, sent with his soldiers and seamen an extensive contingent of "clergy": Jesuits, priests, prelates, and so on. Many active in the Inquisition were also on board, including the administrator of the Inquisition himself. And besides the vast array of religious articles and artifacts on board, there were also instruments of torture: neck-stretchers, pincers, thumb-screws, and other implements designed to subdue the unruly by force.

Looking back, once can say that if Philip had been successful in his mission, this would have resulted in the end of Protestantism in the north. The plans even included an attempt to assassinate Queen Elizabeth I, the monarch who supported the Reformation in England. Philip was clearly bent on a total removal of the Protestant faith.

How was the Armada defeated? The English had a much smaller fleet, and their ships were also not nearly as large as those of Spain. Since many of the ships were destroyed after the Armada attempted to escape by way of Ireland, it was held that the victory came by a Divine Hand. In Holland, a commemorative medal was cast with the inscription *FLAVIT JEHOVAH ET DISSIPATI SUNT*, God breathed and they were scattered. The other side of the medallion saw an engraving of the Reformed Church built on a rock in the midst of stormy waters, with the inscription *ALLIDOR NON LAEDOR*, I am assaulted but not wounded.¹

Others are quick to point out that much of this is myth, and that while there were indeed several references to a Divine Hand in the battle from the surviving documentations of both the English and the Spanish, this was only a common view in all naval battles of the period. Each side normally attributed victory or defeat to the will of God. And most believe that the Armada was essentially broken in the Battle of Gravelines, which began shortly after the English sent fireboats in the midst of the Spanish fleet. Indeed, the fireboats themselves, although small and unmanned, created havoc and confusion among the Spanish. The soldiers screamed "The fire of Antwerp!" taking the flames as a divine retribution for the Spanish sacking of Antwerp in 1576. The large Spanish ships also found they had little maneuverability in the Channel, and were in fact no match for the smaller English craft.

Another factor contributing to the defeat was the role of the Dutch. The small Dutch flyboats patrolling the northern part of the Channel prevented the ships of the Duke of Parma from linking up with the Armada. This was all a part of the original plan. But it failed to materialize because Parma was afraid of the smaller Dutch ships and their crews, who knew the channel better and were able to escape and attack by surprise much more easily.

It is not for us to attempt to calculate the relative importance of these different factors in the defeat of the Armada. It is true that many prayers were offered in England and Holland for the safety of the church and the welfare of both nations. And the English reported that it was a favourable breeze that brought success to the English venture with the fireboats. And what really happened off the coast of Ireland? S. Usherwood says that "many ships put in for food and water and, caught in a violent hurricane, were battered to pieces off the shore."²

Who can deny it? God blew with His breath, and they were scattered! In fact, we commemorate not the bravery and skill of men first of all, but the hand of God that leads all events in history. To be sure, He used both the English and the Dutch in the defeat of the Armada. And with the wind He showed to men how victory depends on His leading hand. Therefore, in all things we give thanks to Him, because He was pleased to lead history in such a way that His church was spared, and the gospel could continue to flourish and work in northern Europe.

Indeed, this was a crucial turning point in history. Although Spain tried to bring England into submission with more Armadas, none ever reached the magnitude of the first Armada, and none were successful. Years later the freedom of religion came to be established more and more, and in later periods the gospel, rediscovered with the Reformation, also spread through the colonial efforts of the Protestant countries.

As in other cases in world history, here we must also say: It could have been so much different! Since the days of Philip II and Pope Sixtus V the world and the apostate church have risen up more often in order to destroy God's people from the earth. But God has intervened in order to allow us to share His truth. So we may live in thankfulness to God, and say with our forefathers:

Let Israel now say in thankfulness
That if the LORD had not our right maintained
And if the LORD had not with us remained,
When cruel men against us rose to strive,
We'd surely have been swallowed up alive.

Blest be the LORD who made us not their prey;
As from the fowler's net a bird may flee,
So from their broken snare did we go free.
Our only help is in God's holy Name;
He made the earth and all the heavenly frame.

(Psalm 124:1,3)

J. DE JONG

¹Cf. S. Usherwood, *The Great Enterprise: The History of the Spanish Armada*, (London, Bell and Hyman, 1982), p. 100.

²*Ibid.*, p. 10.

The Protestant churches in Nazi Germany²

German anger at the unfair treatment rose further when the disastrous economic consequences of the reparation payments became apparent. In the early 1920s a terrible inflation took place which changed well-to-do people into paupers almost overnight and reduced the country's economy to chaos. Although eventually Germany recovered, and was even able to participate in the prosperity of the "roaring twenties," it faced another economic collapse during the early 1930s, after the American stock market crash of 1929. These economic disasters would further reduce the credit of the Weimar Republic and help pave the way for Hitler.

German Protestants joined in the general disapproval of the Weimar Republic. They were nationalistic practically to a man, and the defeat in World War I was traumatic for them. So were the collapse of imperial power, the fall of the princely houses, and the establishment of a democratic republic. What made the new government particularly unpalatable and threatening for the Protestants was that it was composed of socialists and the Roman Catholic Centre Party. To many German Protestants this was scandalous: the people had rejected the emperor and the princes and brought in a left-of-centre government in which the Roman Catholics were represented, and the Protestants were not. In rejecting the old system, the people had also turned their back on the Protestant church which had been so closely allied to the government.

As far as the Protestants were concerned, disaster had struck. Upset and feeling threatened, they issued declarations condemning the leftist and liberal government, and they blamed it for the secularization and loose moral climate of the twenties. To strengthen their ranks against the domestic enemies they also tried to bring about some unity among the provincial church federations. In 1922 the twenty-eight provincial churches set up a loose national federation of Protestant churches.

It was time, for conflicts had arisen between government and church. Changes were introduced in the government's tra-

ditional ecclesiastical policy. The close ties between church and state were cut, financial arrangements were changed, and the church schools were threatened. The Protestants issued protest upon protest, and in the end the government compromised. Even so, the Protestants were not satisfied. In fact, they never learned to develop a sense of belonging in the new state, and they continued to look back longingly to the old days when strong princes had cleaned up church and country, when Protestantism had been supreme, and German greatness assured. The heyday of *Kultur-Protestantismus* under Bismarck, as well as the great power and prestige of the German nation and empire, seemed lost forever. Many Germans no longer felt at home in their own country.

It was in this situation that Adolf Hitler came to the fore with his National Socialist Party. Sadly enough, many Protestants looked for a "saviour" and they thought they had found one in the Nazi leader. In majority they were so stuck in their nineteenth-century mentality, and so fanatically afraid of socialists and communists, that initially they embraced Nazism without a worry.

The rise of Hitler

Hitler and his Nazis had been agitating throughout the twenties, but they did not become influential until the stock market crash of 1929 had introduced the great depression. That depression hit Germany hard and caused many to look for a strong man to pull them out of the morass. Hitler grasped the opportunities offered by the depression and the general feeling of malaise. He not only promised jobs and renewed prosperity, but also all the other things the majority of Germans wanted: a restoration of Germany's greatness, revenge on the allies for the Versailles treaty, a war to the death on socialists and communists, law and order, strict discipline, and strict public morality. A revival of the old, conservative, paternalistic and imperial Germany was beckoning — and it would be a Christian Germany once more. At least, so Hitler promised.

In fact, Hitler hated Christianity and

was convinced that it was incompatible with National Socialism. He was enough of an opportunist, however, to realize that the Christian tradition was still strong in Germany, and that he would be wise to begin by courting the churches' favour. If they trusted him, they could be excellent supporters in his rise to power; if he alienated them, they could be formidable enemies. But although he courted them, he never intended to allow them any independent power in the totalitarian Nazi state: they were to be merely his tools, to be discarded when no longer needed.

In January 1933 Hitler became chancellor of Germany. In March of that year he addressed the churches as follows:

The national Government sees in the two Christian Confessions (Protestant and Roman Catholic) the most important factors for the preservation of our nationality. It will respect the agreements that have been drawn up between them and the provincial states.

... The national Government will provide and guarantee to the Christian Confessions the influence due them in the schools and education. It is concerned for genuine harmony between Church and State.

... The rights of the churches will not be curtailed; their position in relation to the State will not be changed.¹ Hitler dealt first with the Roman Catholics. After discussions with the archbishops, who conferred with the pope, a concordat or agreement was signed in June 1933. The concordat assured the church (on paper) of its privileges and was intended to guarantee either its neutrality or its support for the Nazi regime. The Roman Catholic Centre Party was disbanded.

Hitler and the Protestants

When Hitler turned his attention to the Protestants, he faced a different situation. How does one deal with at least twenty-eight different church federations? The national assembly of these churches had no real authority, and the Protestants had neither archbishop nor pope. Hitler therefore decided to create such a figure. He suggested that the Protestant church-

es elect or appoint a national bishop who would sit in the religious affairs department (the Ministry of Cults) of the national government.

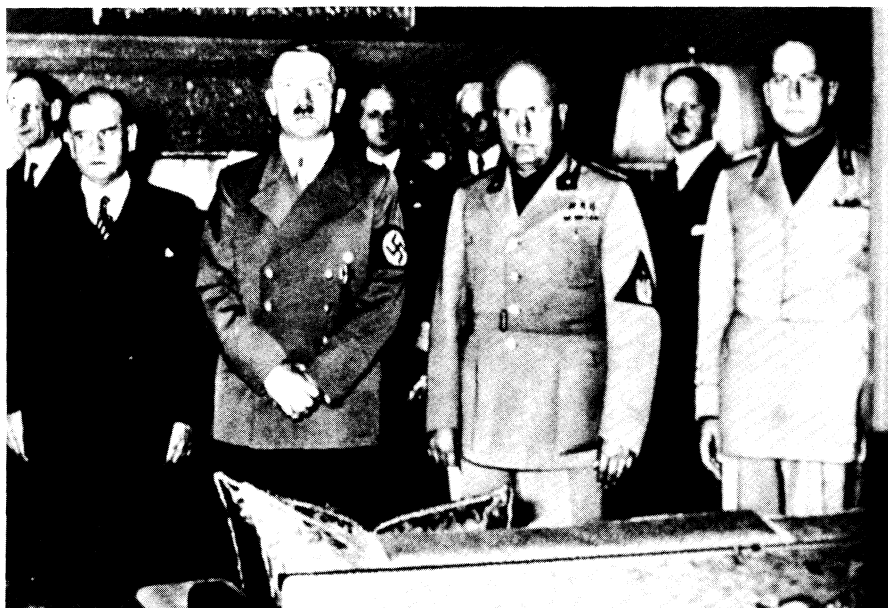
The reaction of some German church leaders was ecstatic, witness this message:

Through God's intercession, our beloved German Fatherland has experi-

under one bishop. Few, very few people realized that all was not well. Fewer still issued warnings.

The "German Christians"

There was no excuse for this mass approval of Nazism by the German Protestants or, for that matter, by any other



"Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer!" From left to right: E. Daladier (French Premier), A. Hitler, B. Mussolini and G. Ciano (Italy's Foreign Minister)

enced a mighty exaltation. In this turning point in history we hear, as faithful evangelical Christians, the call of God to a closing of ranks and a return, the call also for a single German Evangelical Church. . . . The Confessions are its unalterable basis. . . . A national bishop of the Lutheran confession stands at its head. . . . Christ comes again and brings an eternal completion in the majesty of His Kingdom.²

Although not all Protestants voiced these sentiments, a general feeling of elation grew in the Protestant churches. Miracles seemed to be happening. The Protestants were asked once again to play a role in the affairs of the nation. They were even offered a chance to form a national, unified church. Could all this simply be coincidence? It seemed to be the hand of God at work in Germany. He was calling the churches back to their old place and task in the midst of the nation.

The Fuehrer was popular. He was giving work to the millions of unemployed. The country was picking up rapidly. Nationalism was growing. Leftists were being suppressed. Surely the Lord was with such a man as Adolf Hitler! Provincial churches united and synod after synod voiced its approval of a national church

German group. They could have been aware of Hitler's ideology and aims: he had revealed much of them in his autobiography *Mein Kampf*, published in the twenties. They could also have an inkling of what was likely to happen to the German churches if the Nazis gained power. Long before January 1933, when Hitler became chancellor, groups had arisen in Germany which attempted to combine Christianity with the type of paganism that the Nazis also espoused or would espouse. In 1932, that is, before Hitler became chancellor, a number of these groups had united in what came to be known as the movement of the "German Christians" (*Deutsche Christen*).

This movement espoused the Nazi party's "positive Christianity," which is meant, among other things, that it denied sin and depravity, as well as humility, and that it stressed nationalism and the saving character of the state. The church, as part of the state, was to march alongside the people to bring it to its earthly paradise. As Karl Barth described it, "The state is eternal, equal to the Bible in expressing God's will. The Fuehrer is equal to the commands of God, rather, he is above them."³ With Hegel, Nietzsche, Rosenberg, and Wagner as their prophets, the

"German Christians" preached their perverted gospel.

Their movement consisted of various streams. There were conservative Lutherans, who merely wanted a political voice in the new state, were against war debts, democracy, and the exclusion of the churches under the Weimar regime. Another stream propagated the religion of the "Volk," an old, nineteenth-century idea. According to this group, Christ came to help Germans fulfil their potential as a separate folk and nation, with its own law: that of struggle. Germans were born for struggle: they would fulfil their folkishness by that means. The call to arms and slogan for the Christian life was "struggle, cross, and sacrifice" over against "false and weak freedom." Christian ethics, such as those of the Sermon on the Mount, belonged to the kingdom of heaven, not to the earthly German one. Weaklings and non-Aryans were not to be allowed. Euthanasia was good; it would help keep the folk pure and strong. War also was good: it would bring the highest religion of all (Christianity) to other peoples, and it would bring the greatest folk of all, the Germans, to full fruition as rulers of lesser peoples and churches and religions. The Germans were the super race, the *Herrenvolk*.

Needless to say, Marxism, socialism, pacifism, as well as Jews and blacks and other non-Aryans, were to be rejected. Church confessions were declared outdated, and race and people, blood and soil, became the standards. Hitler stood next to Christ as the leader of all Germany, the manifestation of the divine in history. Hitler as Fuehrer was infallible, and revealed God's will to men better than any Bible or confession. History had given Germany its messiah.

The "German Christians" in action

It was especially these "German Christians" who pushed for a national church under one bishop and one Fuehrer. Once Hitler consolidated his power in the course of 1933, their influence grew tremendously. They had members in every provincial church-governing body and were openly supported by members of the Nazi party, many of whom now joined the church. It was the patriotic thing to do. The church was not only a religious body, but also a bulwark of morals and of German traditions. Storm-troopers and Hitler Youth came to church in full uniform. What an impressive sight to see more than a hundred young men march to church on Sunday in uniform and sit in the front pews. Mass marriages were rigged; army bands in SS uniform played. The spectacles drew many to the churches.

In April 1933 Hitler appointed his friend Ludwig Mueller, a member of the "German Christians," as his advisor in church

affairs. Having moderated his movement's platform to some extent, Mueller offered himself as candidate for the position of national bishop. The churches, at a national meeting held in May, put forth their own candidate, however, a respected conservative. Mueller was defeated. In revenge, the "German Christians" prevailed upon the government to dismiss various conservatives from church-governing bodies and to replace them with "German

Christians." After these purges, and with the endorsement of Hitler himself, Mueller was now easily elected bishop. The church order was changed, and the so-called Aryan Paragraph introduced which stated that no one of non-Aryan background, or married to someone of non-Aryan background, could serve as either pastor or church official. Those pastors and officials who had married a non-Aryan were to be dismissed.

It was these developments in the summer and early fall of 1933 that at last began to act as eye-openers for an increasing number of German Protestants.

— *To be continued*
GARNET PEET

¹Cochrane, p. 85.

²Zabel, p. 28.

³Barth, p. 42.

Confession and school¹

What follows here was originally a speech in which these eight theses are worked out:

1. The confession does not deal only with ecclesiastical life, but has to function in the whole life of Christians.

2. The consequence of this function of the confession is that the schools to which we send our children, must have their own Reformed character.

3. To provide for Reformed schools means much more than to respect the tradition of ancestors: we must have the same faith and the same consciousness of a calling.

4. To maintain the confession with respect to the school means to maintain that we confess our faith in our triune God, as stated at the baptism of our children.

5. According to Lord's Day 8 of the Heidelberg Catechism we have to confess God the Father and our creation, God the Son and our redemption, and God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.

6. This confession means in the first place that our children have to learn to live to the honour and praise of the Name of God the Father.

7. Furthermore, this confession means that our children are set apart as children of God's covenant, being bought by the Mediator of God's covenant, our Lord Jesus Christ.

8. Finally, this confession means that our children are governed by the Holy Spirit, that they may be nurtured in the Christian faith and in godliness.

Function

To say that our confessions only deal with ecclesiastical life shows a lamentable misunderstanding. Some people have the opinion: in the *church* we are bound to the confession, but in our common daily life

we are free from it. When we think in this manner, we create a contrast. However, we are bound to our confessions not only on Sunday, but on Monday as well. We are bound not only in ecclesiastical life as members of the church, but also in daily life as members of society.

It does not need proof that we are bound to the law of our heavenly Father every day and every hour of our life. We also know that the obedience to this law is the true freedom for God's children. God's law is *universal* and deals with our whole life. In the same way we can say:

what we confess as Christians is universal and has to do with our whole life. There is not a so-called *neutral* territory, in which we are allowed to follow our own desires and to feel free from God's law.

Consequence

When we say that there is no neutral zone it becomes obvious that this has also consequences with respect to school life. Such a consequence of this universal function of our confession is that — to the utmost of our power — the schools to which we send our children must have



Published bi-weekly by Premier Printing Ltd.
Winnipeg, MB

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ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000

SUBSCRIPTION RATES		Regular	Air
FOR 1988		Mail	Mail
Canada		\$25.00	\$44.00
U.S.A.	U.S. Funds	\$27.00	\$41.50
International		\$36.50	\$63.00

Advertisements: \$6.00 per column inch
Second class mail registration number 1025
ISSN 0383-0438

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their own Reformed character. We are not able yet to establish a Canadian Reformed College or University. However, we have the calling to establish schools for our children with their own Reformed character, on the basis of our confessions as much as we can. That is not a matter of a kind of *hobby* of some enthusiastic people, but that is the precious calling of Reformed believers, who profess their faith by words and deeds.

Respect

It remains necessary to emphasize this our duty and calling with respect to establishing schools for our children. For it is possible that we still have a certain feeling of *alliance* with that which has grown in the course of history and which has been given to us by a previous generation. There can be a kind of respect for tradition, and a kind of piety. This has, of course, a certain value. However, when this piety is not motivated by an awareness of calling, it becomes a worldly matter. This danger can threaten us also with regard to our Reformed schools. We know that a previous generation struggled hard for these schools; so we can feel obliged to maintain them and to give our money for them, while we do so out of *tradition*. This would not be good. We should maintain our oneness in faith with the previous generation. We should retain the same awareness of calling as our fathers had. If that faith is not there anymore, then we can inherit the books with the minutes and the buildings, we can preserve them respectfully and carefully, but we would have lost that inheritance as a work of faith. So it remains very important to see the school in the first place as a matter of faith. This implies that we must act on the basis of the same confession.

No confessionism

If we stress that the confessions really are to function in our schools and that we must have the same contents of faith as our ancestors had, that does not mean that we want to *overestimate* the confession. This would be a kind of *confessionism*. In such a case we would not do justice to the unique dominion of God's Word. A confession can only have a derived certainty, derived from the original certainty of Holy Scripture.

But we must say at the same time: if there is room and a calling for having a scriptural confession, then this confession may not be made suspect.

No biblicism

When we say: we should not go in the direction of confessionism, we must add: neither in the direction of *biblicism*. It was a slogan of the Arminians: only the Bible! If the Arminians were correct then

it would be possible to attach a function to the Bible which the Bible does not have. It would place the Word of God outside the reality of life, namely, outside the reality of church-life in her age-long struggle to guard and to keep what had been entrusted to her.

Exactly because of the character of the confession as *confession*, which is based on the Word of God, we may not abandon it, as long as the confession is not disproved with clear and firm arguments from God's Word. Even in that case we may not say farewell to the confession, but we have to go the ecclesiastical way. Therefore on the one hand there should be no overestimation of the confession, but on the other hand no *underestimation* either.

No dead formula

The confession may never function like a dead formula. That is what *Calvin* said when he stressed that the confession always has to function as a spiritual guide. He writes: "We have to esteem the confession highly. Indeed, the confession is a human writing. But the contents and the ornament of it are derived from the prophets and the apostles."

Calvin put emphasis on that fact that the confession may never become a dead formula. Just three hundred years after Calvin's death *Groen van Prinsterer* said the same in connection with the State Church in the Netherlands: "The confession of the Church has to be respected above every form of the Church and every regulation, and no stipulation may be considered as binding which could be an obstacle on the way of maintaining the confession of the Church."

No limitation

However, there was the tendency to place *limitations* on the confession, especially in the sense that people would not be bound by the whole confession in each and every activity or situation. One would like to have a special confession for mission, for politics and also for education.

In an article of February 1982, published in *Reformed Perspective*, *Dr. J. Faber* pointed to the fact that there is a tendency in the U.S.A. and in Canada to exchange the Reformed Creeds and confessions in the constitution of the school societies for an educational creed.

He gave an example of a so-called educational creed formulated in Toronto, which speaks about life, Scripture, Christ, reality, knowledge, scholarship, and academic freedom. He said: what is good in this statement is found in broader and better form in the Reformed confessions, and he concludes: "Whoever studies the samples of educational summaries of prin-

ciples offered during the last decades and compares them with the contents of the creeds and confessions must conclude that, if in school communities they are to replace the historic confessional documents of the Reformed churches, they will impoverish Christian life and action." In fact, what *Dr. J. Faber* warns against is a limitation of the confessions. We must be aware of the danger of going in that direction!

Relevant?

The background of such a desire for educational confessions or creeds can be that one has the idea that the confessions are not *relevant* to school life, or that one is not able to apply the Reformed creeds and confessions to the education of the children. However, consider this: what did the parents promise at the baptismal font with respect to the education of their children? It is very clear. The third and last question directed to the parents of the children of God's covenant is: "Do you promise as father and mother to instruct your child in this doctrine (that is the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, summarized in the confessions, as the true and complete doctrine of salvation), and to have him (or her) instructed therein to the utmost of your power?" When the parents answer in the affirmative, the children are baptized into the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. From this baptism formula we can see right away what the *content* of our confession is. It is clearly stated in Lord's Day 8 of the Heidelberg Catechism. The articles of our catholic and undoubted Christian faith profess God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, into whose name the children are baptized. So the three parts of our confession are about God the Father and our creation, about God the Son and our redemption, and about God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification. Are these three parts not relevant to our schools and to the education of our children?

— To be continued

K. DEDDENS

¹K. Deddens — *Function of the Belgic Confession*, in: *Lux Mundi*, III, 1, March 1984.

²J. Faber — *Schools and Creeds*, in: *Reformed Perspective*, I, 2, Feb. 1982.

³B. Holwerda — *De betekenis van verbond en kerk voor huwelijk, gezin en jeugd*, Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, Goes, 1958, p. 89ff.

⁴D. Nauta — *De verbindende kracht van de belijdenisschriften*, Kok, Kampen, 1969.

⁵C. Stam — *Covenantal Education*, in: *Reformed Perspective*, III, 9, July 1984.

⁶C. Veenhof — *Prediking en Uitverkiezing*, Kok, Kampen, 1959, p. 193ff.

⁷D.K. Wielenga — *De akker is de wereld*, Bolland, Amsterdam, 1971, p. 33ff.

⁸J.R. Wiskerke — *De strijd om de sleutel der kennis*, De Vuurbaak, Groningen, 1978, p. 35ff.



Visit to South Africa

Invitation

Not long after I started my lectures in Hamilton at the Theological College, I received a request from Dr. P.J. Rossouw of South Africa to write a chapter about *Women and Office* in a big South African Handbook about the *Offices in the Church*. Just a month ago that Handbook was published in South Africa by "NG-kerkboekhandel" at Pretoria. Two years ago I received the request to be an "external examiner" of the dissertation of Dr. B.J. de Klerk on a liturgical topic. Dr. de Klerk had to defend his dissertation at the University at Potchefstroom. Last year I was invited to give some guest lectures in several places in South Africa, especially for the Theological Department of the University of Potchefstroom. These lectures were delivered during the second part of August and the first week of September of this year.

Some history

First of all I want to say something about the history of the churches in South Africa. What is actually "NG" and what does "Potchefstroom" mean in ecclesiastical respect?

"NG" is the abbreviation of "Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerken," whose origin goes back to 1652 when the Dutchman Jan van Riebeeck came to the south of South Africa, now called Capetown. Although these churches were liable to the theological developments of Europe (especially the Netherlands) in the 19th century, they condemned liberalism (in 1862 several liberal ministers were suspended) and they maintained the Three Forms of Unity as the basis of the church. In the 19th century some ministers from Scotland came to South Africa; this had as result that the NG church was influenced by presbyterian church polity. Unfortunately the NG church is still a member of the "RES" (the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, since this year called the Reformed Ecumenical Council), in which also the Christian Reformed Churches and the synodical churches of the Netherlands participate.

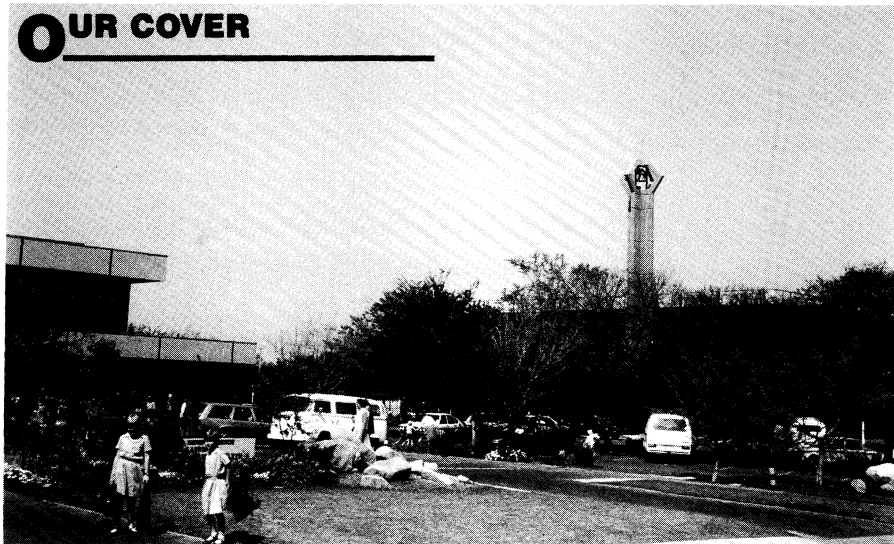
There is still a large number of ministers in the NG church who are thinking in a sound Reformed way. Some contact is sought between the NG-church and our sister churches in the Netherlands. The NG is a large church with some three million members, showing all the dangers of a national church, but there is still a strong resistance against a critical approach to the Bible.

The second federation in South Africa is the "Nederduits Hervormde Kerk van Afrika." In 1853 there was a separation from the NG church, mainly for political reasons. The farmers who went with the

"Grote Trek" in 1838 from the south to the north of South Africa (from the Cape Province to Transvaal) wanted to be independent from the dominion of the churches in the south. This church consists of about 200,000 members. It has ties with the state church in the Netherlands, the "Nederlands Hervormde Kerk."

Already in 1858 there occurred a secession from this church, because the Nederduits Hervormde Kerk had taken over the Hymnbook of the Hervormde Kerk in the Netherlands. Again we see a parallel between South Africa and the Netherlands. In 1834 the Secession in Ulrum took place. One of the ministers of the Secession churches in the Netherlands was the Rev. D. Postma. He was involved in the establishment of the Theological School at Kampen in 1854 and his name was even mentioned as a possible teacher in Kampen. In 1858 he emigrated to South Africa and he gathered together the people who had seceded from the Nederduits Hervormde kerk. Later he became a professor of the S. African Secession churches (called "Gereformeerde Kerk"), first in Burgersdorp, later in Potchefstroom when the Theological School

OUR COVER



Church (r) and school (l) at Pretoria

was established there. "Potchefstroom" is for the "Gereformeerde Kerk" what "Kampen" is for the "Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland." The people of the "Gereformeerde Kerk" are called "Doppers," but they themselves consider this a bad nickname. It should never be used. The "Gereformeerde Kerk" has about 150,000 members. This church was also a member of the "RES" but earlier this year it suspended its membership because of the bad development in the synodical churches in the Netherlands. Missionaries of the "Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken" (the so-called *buitenverband kerken*) do their mission work within the federation of the "Gereformeerde kerk" of South Africa; this is the main reason why these churches are recognized by the "Gereformeerde Kerk."

odical churches in the Netherlands makes it understandable that in the early fifties, when people from our sister churches emigrated from the Netherlands to South Africa, there was no other choice for them than to institute the Free Reformed Churches there. Thus our sister churches of Pretoria, (now about 800 members), of Capetown (about 300 members), and of Johannesburg (about 160 members) were instituted. It was a joy to visit these churches, especially on Sundays, and at congregational meetings. More about this will follow later.

Across South Africa

The trip led us via London, England, to Johannesburg. The flight lasted about 20 hours. It was still wintertime in South Africa. The temperatures were low at night (about 5 degrees Celsius), while about

nesburg, Capetown, and in Bloemfontein.

It was good to see that the extensive libraries contained so many good Reformed theological books. Most of the lectures could be given in Dutch (the African language is related to Dutch), but sometimes, especially for the black people in Hammanskraal, in Kemptonpark and in Bloemfontein, they were delivered in English. The topics covered liturgics, hymnology (especially about the modes of the Genevan Psalm melodies), homiletics, church history, and missiology. The opportunity was given to say something about our rich Reformed inheritance, not only from the reformation times of the 16th and 19th century, but also about the inheritance of the "Vrijmaking," the teachings of men like S. Greijdanus, K. Schilder and B. Holwerda. There was an open ear and many times we had rather extensive discussions in which some misunderstandings could be taken away. Sometimes the discussion was held in groups and afterwards the groups came together for a general evaluation. Video tapes of the lectures were made and are given to our College.

We were also the guest of the mayor of Capetown at a dinner on the occasion of the commemoration (150th Anniversary) of the "Grote Trek" of the farmers in 1838 from the South to the North. A visit to the parliament building in Capetown, where we attended a session of the parliament and spoke with some ministers of the state who showed that they were very much interested in church matters. We discussed also the situation and the future of South Africa.

Soweto (actually South-West Town, namely, the black town, southwest of Johannesburg), was visited together with two church ministers (a black and a white one). There were no disturbances at that time, but we almost lost all our luggage when three black young men tried to steal the van of one of the ministers. Fortunately the black minister could expel the boys. There are many unemployed in Soweto. Some of them wrote on the walls, "We don't want jobs!" They only want revolution

Our trip to the "Kruger Wildtuin" was very interesting, where during two days all kinds of animals could be seen even from a short distance: impalas, gnoes, elephants, monkeys, zebras, girafes, buffaloes, etc. We were impressed by all these animals and also by the beauty of the whole country of South Africa.

Sister churches

Three Sundays were spent in South Africa and during these Sundays we were in the neighbourhood of our three sister churches of Johannesburg, Capetown and Pretoria. The first Sunday we attended the services in Johannesburg, and heard



Part of the congregation of Capetown

This relationship forms an obstacle on the way to contact for our sister churches in the Netherlands. This matter of church relationship with a "third party" has caused more trouble. When after World War II the South African "Gereformeerde Kerk" recognized the synodical churches in the Netherlands, they prevented contact with the churches of the Liberation. The suspension of membership in the RES took away this obstacle, even though there still remain other problems. The many ministers (and also professors) in the "Gereformeerde Kerk" whom I met during my visit are thinking in a good Reformed way. It is my hope that our visit, our discussions and our lectures have been a means through which our image as "vrijgemaakten" has improved.

However, this relationship of the South African Gereformeerde Kerk with the syn-

20 degrees by day. On the first of September spring started. The students do not have their vacation during this part of the year; they have their summer holidays in December and January. When we arrived the land looked dry, but it became green after some vernal rain. South Africa's population is almost the same as that of Canada (about 25 million), even though Canada is more than eight times larger. South Africa has many students. The University of Pretoria alone has more than 100,000 students.

Altogether I gave 26 lectures. They were held for students (black, coloured and white), for professors and ministers, as well as for church organists. In Potchefstroom a so-called *Liturgics Seminar* was held which lasted almost a whole week. The lectures were further delivered in Pretoria, Hammanskraal, Kemptonpark, Johan-

the Rev. W. Boessenkool (as a student he was of the same year as Dr. J. Faber, Dr. C. Trimp, and myself). After the evening service a congregational meeting was held in which I showed the slides of our brotherhood behind the Iron Curtain. The situation there was unknown to our brothers and sisters in South Africa. The same was done on the congregational meetings in Capetown and Pretoria. In Capetown we heard sermons of the Rev. F.J. van Hulst. Also there I played the organ during the service as well as in Pretoria where a beautiful pipe organ was placed in the front of the church. Two members of the congregation (one of them a former catechism student from my first congregation) worked six and a half years on that project! In Pretoria we visited also the Rev. F.J. Bijzet and the principal of the Reformed school, br. J.W. Meijer (former teacher in the mission field of Irian Jaya). I had also the opportunity to tell something about mission work in Curaçao and Brazil at a congregational meeting in Pretoria. In the near future Pretoria will become the mission church for the mission work north of the city, namely, Mamelodi, where the Rev. J.G. Agema (now retired and still living in Pretoria) worked for many years as a missionary. Now the Rev. T. de Boer (sent by the church of Drachten-Zuid/Oost) is working in Mamelodi. Pretoria called already several times a second minister, but so far the ministers of the Netherlands declined. As soon as a minister accepts the call, the church will be split into two congregations.

Mission work

This brings us to the point of the mission work in South Africa by our sister



After the celebration of the Lord's Supper at the mission post of Belhar near Capetown

churches. The mission work in Mamelodi (a city of black people) is blessed by the LORD. Every Sunday there are now two services, one in Mamelodi-East and one in Mamelodi-West. Both services are attended by quite a number of black people (old and young!) and were conducted by an evangelist who is involved in the work. He preached in the language of the people of Mamelodi, one of the so-called Zulu languages. The text was I Peter 3:13-17. Of course we could not understand the sermon but the missionary, the Rev. T. de Boer, told us that he had read the sermon beforehand and considered it to be a good Reformed sermon. After the service Rev. T. de Boer announced to the congregation that the future missionary

A.J. de Visser had passed his final classical exam in Drachten (the congregation applauded!) and he introduced us. I had the opportunity to tell the two mission congregations something about the Canadian Reformed Churches in general and about the Theological College at Hamilton in particular. It was done in English and most of the people in Mamelodi could understand it. The evangelist told me that he was interested in good theological books and I promised to send him some. He will receive what is possible.

The church of Capetown started mission work, especially among the coloured people, north of the city, in Belhar. After the morning service of Capetown the Rev. F.J. van Hulst went there with us. Some elders of the church at Capetown, the so-called mission elders, were there too. The Lord's Supper was celebrated. It was a rich experience to enjoy the communion of saints in this mission congregation with its racially mixed character of both coloured and white people, sixteen altogether! The following week, the Rev. F.J. van Hulst was to go to the Netherlands to try to get a missionary for the mission work at Belhar, because it is very hard for the elders to continue the increasing work by themselves besides their daily work. Also in Belhar we clearly noticed the blessing of the LORD!

Hospital work

For almost two days we were in Zululand. This country, still a part of South Africa, is more or less independent. It has its own Zulu king and I was told that most of the Reformed people would not have any objections when, e.g., his minister-president would become the new president of South Africa, because he is a Christian



After the Sunday morning service of the mission post at Mamelodi (North of Pretoria)



Hospital at Hlabisa, Zululand

and the white people would survive . . .

In Hlabisa, about a six hour drive from Johannesburg, is a hospital for the native people. Long ago this hospital was established by the Lutheran church, but it is taken over by the government. Lutheran mission work is not done any more, but there is still a small Lutheran church.

In the hospital two doctors are working who are members of the sister church at Johannesburg. The reason of our visit was the fact that one of them, Dr. W.O. Glas, is a nephew of my wife. The people of Zululand are very poor. The two doctors try to do some mission work and to get the people involved in the gospel. This is not easy because they are very busy in the hospital. They have to do several kinds of operations for which they had no previous experience.

There is a shortage of doctors in South Africa. The hospital of Hlabisa has three hundred beds, but the number of patients is sometimes 500 or even 600 . . . Dr. Glas told us that when he was on vacation for a couple of days in another place in Zululand, he noticed that the hospital there had 200 beds but no doctor at all!

In Hlabisa a small library was started for the natives who are able to understand English. They were very happy that we brought them some popular commentaries on the Bible and some books of which we had two copies in the library of our Theological College.

They were also very happy with the fact that a hospital in Leeuwarden (the Netherlands) had donated to them 300 beds, several incubators, lots of medicine, etc. They were informed that no im-

port duties were to be charged because it was a gift and (although in very good shape) was secondhand. However, the people in Hlabisa were very disappointed when they heard in Durban that they had to pay about \$3,000 import duties. They did not have the money for that!

Later on in Capetown, when we had lunch with some ministers of the state, I told them about it. Then one of them said to me that there must have been a misunderstanding. A telephone conversation with the authorities in Durban cleared things up. Before we left South Africa, we heard that everything was arranged beautifully for the hospital in Hlabisa. The authorities in Durban even promised to share in the transportation costs to Hlabisa

We were very thankful with the people of Hlabisa that they could receive all the equipment for their hospital without much expense.

Farewell

After more than three weeks we had to leave South Africa. Within a few days the new course year at the Theological College in Hamilton was to start. We had met lots of people, also of our sister churches, and we had a great time in South Africa. We experienced something of the problems of the country, the bad image they have, but also the willingness of many of them to solve the problems in the right way, not via revolution, but according to the teaching of the Bible, as br. J.W. Meijer wrote in his brochure *Kruisocht tegen Apartheid?*, published this year.

We are thankful that we could see something of the worldwide work of Jesus Christ in that far country!

K. DEDDENS

BATTLE HYMN

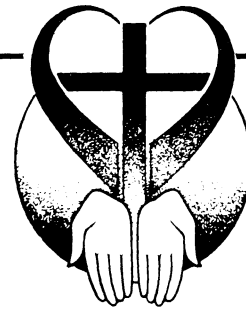
GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS, 1630 ~ Translated by Catherine Winkworth

*Fear not, O little flock! the foe
Who madly seeks your overthrow;
Dread not his rage and power:
What though your courage sometimes faints?
His seeming triumph o'er God's saints
Lasts but an hour.*

*Be of good cheer; your cause belongs
To him who can avenge your wrongs;
Leave it to him, our Lord.
Though hidden now from all our eyes,
He sees the Gideon who shall rise
To save us, and his word.*

*As true as God's own word is true,
Not earth or hell with all their crew
Against us shall prevail.
A jest and byword are they grown;
God is with us, we are his own,
Our victory cannot fail.*

*Amen, Lord Jesus; grant our prayer!
Great captain, now thine arm make bare;
Fight for us once again!
So shall the saints and martyrs raise
A mighty chorus to thy praise
World without end! Amen.*



Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund

Refugee life

Life for Vietnamese, Kampuchean and Laotian refugees living in Thailand's crowded camps continues much the same way it has for the past decade. Unwilling to return to repressive regimes, unable to work outside the camps, unskilled in areas some sponsors require, the future of these people remains dim. And the numbers are growing

In fact, for political and economic reasons, an exodus from Vietnam is a reality once more and places such as Phanat Nikhom, 100 km southeast of Bangkok, must deal with a considerable influx of new refugees. Phanat Nikhom is actually a transit camp where refugees prepare for their departure to a western country. So this particular camp acts as a springboard to freedom, a door to a new future.

However, it has once again become primarily a holding centre for refugees as more and more Vietnamese seek a better life elsewhere. Huts which were designed for no more than seventeen people are now crowded with thirty or more. Twenty-four thousand people are locked up behind barbed wire fences. At the entrance gates and barriers, guards maintain watch, punishing any who break out with imprisonment, a fine, and loss of opportunity for sponsorship.

The Thai government continues to negotiate with its neighbours, hoping for conditions which will make voluntary repatriation a real possibility and thus relieve the country of its refugee population. In the meantime, weary of playing host to tens of thousands of foreigners for so long, authorities are taking stronger measures. Boat refugees who have drifted ashore have been sent back and fishing boats patrol the waters searching for more "illegal immigrants." (Hong Kong goes one step farther. It absolutely refuses to add to the numbers now languishing in detention camps. Those who arrive by boat are given a choice: face internment or head back to sea. The choice is a harsh one.)

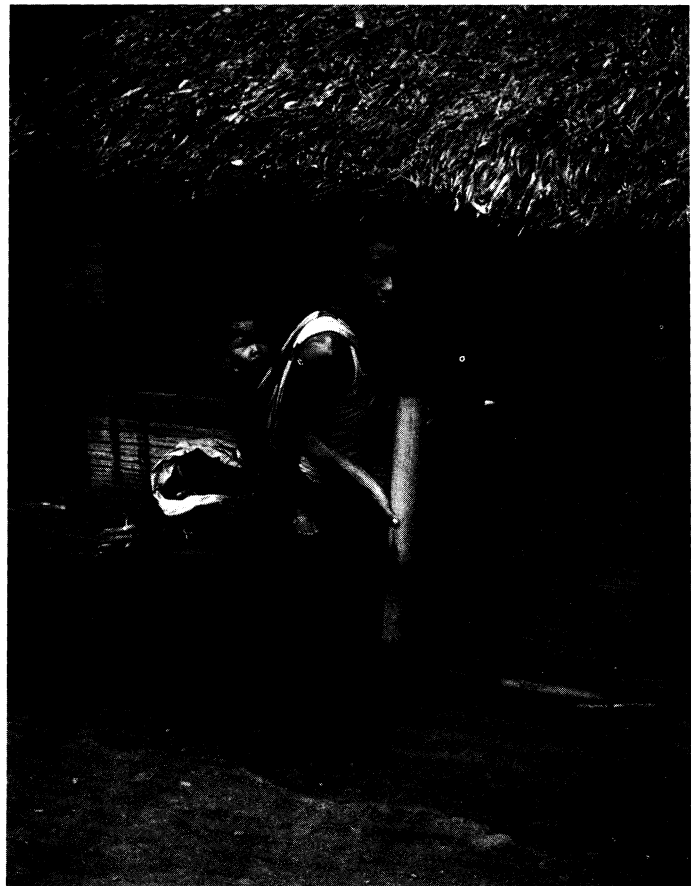
In seeking ways to dissuade more people from seeking refuge within its

borders, Thailand adopted a "humane deterrence" policy last year. Since January, 1987, all agencies have been forbidden to offer any wages to refugee workers within the camps. Motivation has consequently dropped. In the ZOA program, cleaners, watchmen, and midwives in particular have given up their positions. Among other workers absenteeism is high. Sanitation in camp and in the hospital area suffered accordingly. In February, for example, ZOA staff notified authorities of their fear of outbreak of disease due to poor sanitation. Volags (voluntary agencies) throughout the country are experiencing similar problems, complaining of

low morale among the refugee staff, high absenteeism, and difficulty in recruiting new workers.

To address the problem, ZOA staff have tried to educate workers and encourage Hmong leaders to boost morale among their people. There are still many workers willing to do a good job without reimbursement, but ZOA hopes the government will ease this restriction. ZOA staff do agree with the theory that refugees should take care of their own needs without payment, but payment allowed for over ten years must be gradually phased out, not suddenly disallowed.

Other restrictions imposed of late in-



*A Hmong man with
his children at Ban
Vinai camp*

clude a 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew and no permission to leave camp. National medics, for example, who were scheduled to train in a provincial hospital, have long awaited the decision as to whether they

will be allowed to go or not. Expatriates are required to show their passes almost every day and may not enter the camps without an I.D. card.

In contrast to the growing numbers

elsewhere, Ban Vinai is actually a little quieter of late since almost 10,000 people have left over the past year for another camp, camp Chiang Khan. These so-called "illegals" were people who had entered Ban Vinai over the past few years, bypassing the screening procedures for new arrivals. Such arrivals are considered illegal immigrants rather than asylum seekers.

Signing up with the authorities and moving to Chiang Kham has afforded most of these refugees the opportunity to receive the status of asylum seekers. Many folks are happy with this opportunity to acquire official refugee status after screening, for without that there is no possibility of sponsorship in the West. On the other hand, this move brought sadness also since many families which had just been reunited a few months ago, had to split up again.

Your gifts to support ZOA's medical program at Ban Vinai are, as always, necessary and greatly appreciated. (We sent \$3,000 this year to support this work of mercy.) However, there is another important but more demanding way in which you may be able to help — sponsorship. Repatriation in a different culture is not without attendant difficulties and problems, yet to thousands who have spent long years in the camps, it is the only glimmer of hope.

Last year, the Canadian government sponsored 3,000 people from Indo-China. Private sponsors accounted for 2,700 more, often managing to bring in "hard-to-sponsor" cases. The numbers are small, especially when one thinks of the tens of thousands existing month after month in closed refugee camps. Could you perhaps help?

Sponsorship involves commitment and work, but if it is undertaken by a group, the work is minimized, and we at CRWRF will be very happy to provide information, advice, and other assistance if necessary. Please prayerfully consider whether you should be involved and then contact us at the address below. Every sponsorship brings new hope to a person or family who has perhaps given up all hope. May God bless all of our efforts to reach out to others in His Name.

12 years old Vang Cher in Ban Vinai: I have never been outside the camp

In the camp of Ban Vinai there live thousands of children who have lived as "refugees" since they were born. One of them is Vang Cher. He was born during the flight of his parents to Thailand. On arrival in the refugee camp he was 3 months and 5 days old. Then too young to remember anything of freedom. Now too old just to accept the fact that he is a refugee.

Vang Cher, can you tell us something about your family?

I have a father, mother, two sisters and five brothers. On 6 April 1975 I was born as fourth in our family. My youngest brother died last month. He had a lung disease.

How old were you, when your family arrived in Thailand?

I was only a baby and do not know anything of it. Sometimes my parents talk about it, how difficult it was to cross the Mekong river. When we arrived in Thailand we were immediately taken to the camp of Ban Vinai.

Do you know much about Laos and life there?

Not much, only what older people tell about it. I have not seen it, so it is difficult to picture it myself.

As long as you can remember you have been called "a refugee." How do you feel about that?

I do not know the difference between life as a refugee and life in freedom, but sometimes it makes me very angry and sad. There is nothing of ourselves here. It is just as if we were prisoners. I do not even know how I should work on the land or look after the livestock. When I would return to Laos, I should still have to learn that all.

Do you know from where your food comes every day?

No, I only know that "someone" pays for it, but we do not.

What do you think of life in a camp like that of Ban Vinai?

Rather rigid! It is very difficult to get out of the camp.

Have you ever been outside of the gate?

Never. I do not even know what an ordinary village looks like. I would like very much to experience that; it would be wonderful to go out by car or something.

Do you go to school every day?

Only in the morning. I am now in the fourth class and am learning some Laotian, Hmong, Thai and also some English. We are learning the "a, b, c." I would love to study the whole day, for I think that it is good for later to know much.

Do you think it is important to be able to speak Laotian?

Yes! (Very decidedly) For that is the language of my country.

What do you do after school?

I look after my little brother, help my mother carrying water, and towards the evening I go to the market to sell kerosene. I have not much time for playing, but that does not matter. When there is nothing left for me to be done, I like to read. We can get books from school.

A difficult question, but what do you think of the future?

(After thinking long.) It is very difficult! We cannot yet return to Laos. I think that Thailand is not willing to help us for ever and the United States is not our own country either. It is difficult. I do not know. My parents are talking of going to the United States. Then I have to go with them, for I would not like to stay here alone.

What kind of job would you like to have later?

I would like to be a soldier! Back to Laos to fight for my country. I do not know much about the war etc., but I am sure that Laos will be free one day. Sometimes I dream of it. I also dream of studying quite a lot, just like people in the west.

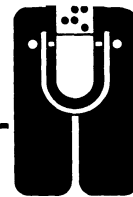
ELS TOUW

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Gifts for the work of CRWRF may be directed to:

CRWRF
PO BOX 793
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y3

All gifts are gladly received. For donations of \$10.00 or more a receipt for tax deduction will be issued.



At the recently held meeting of the editorial committee of our periodical the news medley, too, was part of the topics discussed. No, rest assured, dear readers, we did not have an expensive party. Just a few donuts was the only luxury we were allowed besides the coffee. But then, what would a meeting be without coffee!

What were the comments made on our beloved column? A few brothers said that they received "quite some flak" because of it. However, there was no letter with concrete evidence. Some, it was said, discontinued their subscription because of disenchantment with our way of dealing with things. Of at least one of these, however, I have since seen evidence that he does read *Clarion*. Must get it free from someone else.

Once again I offered to withdraw completely if I appeared to be in the way of a considerable number of subscribers, as I have offered several times in the past; and once again I was assured that this was certainly not the intention.

During the past weeks I pondered the question whether I should not discontinue my writing anyway, something which would also enable me to work towards a real retirement, and to let others take over. It is due to these ponderings that I did not sit down earlier to write another medley. Honestly, I did not feel like writing one either.

Recalling, however, that also during the recent stay in Ontario various brothers and sisters told me to continue — and I did not solicit their comments in any way — and realizing that our column is an important tool in passing on news from the one to the other whereby the bond is strengthened, I worked through the stack of bulletins and gathered particulars which appeared worthy of receiving wider acknowledgment. I could not disappoint the brothers and sisters who so faithfully mail their church's publications.

Due to the rather long period which lies between this medley and the previous one some of the news may be somewhat "elderly," but you will understand this.

Another time I mentioned that sometimes some personal notes are enclosed with the official publication and this is greatly appreciated. At times there are notes scribbled on the bulletins which apparently originally were not intended for other eyes.

What about the following one: "To Mom: Could you please check my clothes? P. S. Beside my bed. Thank You." A very polite note!

Another one was intended for my eyes: "It is always fun to pass on good, positive news, especially in the days when we have so much gloom." What was passed on with it was a piece from the *Hamilton Spectator* about the Ancaster Church receiving "a unanimous nod of approval from council recently to locate on Shaver Road, south of Highway 53, despite a negative report from the town's planning department that recommended denying an official plan amendment."

We cannot say anything else than that the Lord directed the hearts of the officials who had to decide on the application.

"I'm quite ready to support the church," said Mayor Bob Wade. "I always thought it was a good site to locate a church." Mayor Wade said he hoped the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food would not take a strong stand against the application.

"Any official plan that doesn't allow a church to be built on agricultural land is silly," said Deputy Mayor Ann Sloat. "They are trying to put in a church in a family town where we're trying to instill family values."

It certainly is a pleasant thing that we can pass such utterances on to our readers.

This brings us to the topic of building and/or expansion. Scanning the various bulletins I was amazed at the enormous amounts which are spent or budgeted for building purposes. I recall that the whole yearly budget of the New Westminster Church in the early fifties was below ten thousand dollars. Now it seems that twenty times that amount does not even raise one eyebrow.

In Brampton the offer to purchase additional property was accepted. "The offer was for \$182,000, which is a 'steal' as far as land prices go in our area."

In Smithville authorization was given to borrow up to \$200,000 for the expansion. It is reported that the building is progressing.

Burlington East reports that "Brother A. entered the meeting to bring a report and proposal from the Building Committee. He presented council with a comprehensive drawing for a proposed addition to our present facilities. It featured three large meeting rooms, new consistory room and babysitting facilities and additional washrooms. Total cost is estimated at \$245,000. Based on funds already set aside for this purpose and current budget provisions this addition can be realized without an increase in current contributions.

"After several questions and suggestions had been dealt with council unanimously decided to accept this proposal and present it to the congregation in a meeting as soon as possible."

In Burlington South the mortgage on the parsonage was paid off from the building fund. What is saved on interest on a mortgage is undoubtedly more than would have been received as interest on funds in the bank. Double benefit, I should say.

Burlington South informed us further that "preliminary work has been done on a parcel of land which would be suitable for a church building. The committee is encouraged to follow up on this and work towards formulating an offer to purchase."

Grand Valley is pondering — or was pondering — the question whether to buy a house-with-property, or property-with-house, whichever way one looks at it. Future bulletins will contain more information.

Although we have to jump quite a distance, we relate that the Providence Church in Edmonton received a letter "from the Committee of Administration with a proposal to procure an elevator system for handicapped persons. The Consistory decided to instruct the Committee of Administration to proceed with the procurement of an elevator system according to their proposal for a total installed cost of \$23,340.00."

The Church at Vernon reports that "the purchase of the Church Property is now finalized and documented. Proper receipts and declarations for the loans are signed."

Rev. VanSpronsen elaborated on it and told us that "It is a parcel of land within city limits of 2.47 acres, . . . zoned for residential/institutional use. The purchase price was \$36,000 to which our savings from the building fund were applied while the rest could be financed through personal loans to the Church as well as a loan from a financial institution."

While all this activity brings joy to the heart and thankfulness towards the Lord who renders all this possible, it is a sad thing when we read in various bulletins that the contributions by the members remain far below what was expected and needed. It is no exception when a Church is ten or fifteen thousand dollars short after three quarters of the year have gone by. There are still too many members who leave it up to others to carry the financial burdens or who wait till the end of the year with giving their donation.

Once, in a sermon, I put it very bluntly when stating that some had not even paid for the little piece of bread that they received at the Lord's table that very morning. If others had not been faithful in their voluntary contributions, there would have been nothing at all on the table. It is to be hoped that every one will wake up to his and her obligation and become faithful in fulfilling it.

As for the verb "to hope," quite a while ago I pointed to the wrong use of it, a superficial use in many instances. Now I read that even inanimate things are "hoping": "Catechism classes hope to start again this week." It is a riddle to me how catechism classes are able to "hope."

Let's go and visit Church by Church.

"Last Tuesday evening," we read in Chatham's bulletin, "a number of members of our congregation met to discuss the possibility to come to a regional Canadian Reformed High School. Regional, that is in the region of Chatham, London and Watford. From this meeting it became clear that this is not a matter which can easily be decided upon. More meetings will be needed to come to full grips on the situation. At the meeting it became also clear that we need to come to a strong conviction that there indeed is a mandate for us to aim for secondary Canadian Reformed education."

On a different note, "Brother A. will be released from office . . . because of an earlier planned extended sea cruise on his own boat by him and his wife."

In Watford "new bulletin covers are being designed and will be ready for the press shortly." We are waiting with anticipation.

"As some may know, we have the custom in Watford that an office-bearer prays before the morning service and after the afternoon service in the consistory room. This tradition has been abolished in some congregations but we have decided to continue."

"Signing the subscription form for office-bearers has been done after the installation procedure. The church visitors pointed to the Church Order which indicates that this form should be signed before the ordination. More thought on the issue will take place before any changes are made."

Upon reading the above statement, I consulted Article 26 of our Church Order, but was unable to find in there what the church visitors apparently read in it, that "this form *should* be signed before the ordination." There won't be many churches, I think, in which the signing takes place before the ordination and I am not convinced at all that all the other churches act contrary to what has been provided in Article 26 C.O. We'll see what conclusion the Watford consistory arrives at.

An interesting development in Hamilton drew our attention.

"Brother J. Kroeze presented a proposal of the church at Sackville, Nova Scotia, to 'borrow' br. Kroeze in the interim period from the time he is installed as minister (missionary) until he and his family are able to go to Brazil.

"The Mission Board advises the Consistory on the request of the Church at Sackville, NS, that Cand. Kroeze assists the Church at Sackville while awaiting approval to move to Brazil.

"In principle the Consistory approves of the request of Sackville."

The one hand still washes the other.

From the Fergus bulletin we quote some information regarding the "ministry-at-large" project of Grand Rapids. "We have now been informed that Grand Rapids has decided to continue the ministry-at-large project in the way it has been done, namely, by sending out our own minister at times and by trying to establish new contacts, as far as his pastoral duties will allow him."

Moving on to Brampton, it is noted that "A matter of liturgy is discussed once again and a decision is made, namely: after the baptism of a covenant child the parents return to their

places and the congregation will rise to confess God's covenant faithfulness."

What other children are allowed to be baptized than "covenant children"?

During the question period at Ottawa's consistory meeting "it is mentioned that on Jan. 4, 1989, the Canadian Reformed Church at Ottawa will have existed under God's grace for 30 years. After some discussion it is decided that an initiative will be proposed to the congregation to celebrate this event."

We conclude our Canadian journey close to (our) home.

Cloverdale's part of the *Church News* reveals that a "phone call has been received from a neighbour of the church regarding certain people who use the parking lot as a dragstrip late at night. Committee of Administration will be requested to look into this complaint."

Unless these "certain people" are members of the Church — but I do not think so, seeing the consistory's reaction to the call — the neighbour would have done better by phoning the police while the racing was going on. Still it is to be appreciated when concern is shown by those living near the church building.

In Chilliwack "It is reported that an effort will be made to improve the sound system."

I do not know whether this is for the benefit of brothers or sisters who have a hearing aid or for the "general membership."

What I do know is that several of my colleagues depend too much on the sound system and speak from the pulpit as they would speak to someone who is sitting across from them in their study. Having had the privilege of sitting in the pew many a Sunday during the last two years, I more than once harboured the secret wish that sound systems had not been invented, something which would compel the preacher to speak up.

Don't forget, brothers, that there are two or perhaps even four hundred people sitting facing you, all in need of the comfort and exhortation, the admonition and encouragement which the Lord gives to His children! The Lord will hear you, even when you talk softly; it is His people to whom you are speaking in the delivery of the sermon and for whom you are speaking in prayer. They have to know also what you are praying in their name.

What we do not need, of course, is a "singing" tone as we find with so many of the "sweeties" around us. Nor do we need a constant stentorian bombardment. I know that it is hard to find the right way of addressing the congregation, but we are there for their sakes!

And: speak slowly and distinctly. Not every one can keep up with you when your mind races ahead and your tongue tries to keep pace with it. Let everything be dignified as befits the service of our Lord and Saviour.

The bonds with the Australian continent and the brotherhood there become stronger all the time. They appreciate it when they hear from us, and our people appreciate it when they are being kept informed about what's going on under the Southern Cross.

The C. Bosch family had to go to Ottawa for medical examination, but I have not seen any results made known. It is expected that it will still take two or three months before they get their visa.

Meanwhile, the Kelmscott Church, eagerly awaiting the coming of their ministerial family, has decided to build a new manse. It will be tried to arrange a swap of a piece of property with the School Society, which won't be all that difficult, I presume, seeing that the church building and the school building are found on adjacent properties.

The young people try to raise funds for this new manse by selling bricks for \$ 2.00 a piece. Will that ever be an expensive house when we add all those bricks!

The Bedforddale Church is still looking for property.

"A proposal to discuss the desirability of singing the Apostles' Creed in the Holy Supper service is tabled. This is seen to be a matter to be best decided when we have our own minister."

"From the Church of Launceston a letter seeking 'classis church' consent in the matter of the proposed institution of a church in the West Tamar area. Based on the information supplied with this letter, consistory can thankfully approve of the proposal."

For the information of our readers in Canada we mention that the Church at Launceston is located on the Island of Tasmania, some 5000 kilometers towards the Southeast. For quite a while already there was talk of instituting a second church there. Now the plans will be realized.

As for the expression "classis church," since our Australian sister churches do not have classes, but only an assembly where all the churches are represented, and since it is too costly to have such an assembly twice a year or even every year, they have provided that for some matters which require the advice of a classis the advice of a certain church appointed for that purpose shall be sought. Such a church is called a "classis-church."

We gratefully take note of the fact that the Australian federation will number seven churches once the institution is a fact. Will Rockingham in Western Australia be next?

Armadale's consistory discussed the "collection at the Lord's Supper table. The practice of collections at the Lord's Supper Table is a symbolic one; namely, the origin of the collections for the needy. Because it is so often and easily misunderstood, it is decided not to implement this practice."

At the Kelmscott consistory meeting the brothers discussed "A letter from the Church at Armadale suggesting the purchase, by the Australian Bond of Churches, of a communion set (for Lord's Supper and Baptism) as a gift to the congregation in Port Moresby. This is agreed to." What better present could be given than one which expresses the unity at the table of the Lord?

Also for the instruction of some of our Canadian congregations we pass on what the Armadale Organ Committee wrote about the singing of the Credo.

"A year ago we started singing Hymn 1A in the service, and after some practising that goes rather well. That is, up to the line where it says: 'He ascended into heaven.'

"That line starts similar to the one 'He descended into hell,' but, as you will see when you look up the Hymn in your *Book of Praise*, the last line (He descended into hell) starts with two quick notes — the notes with the tails. The line 'He ascended into heaven' however, starts with two slower notes, double the value of the quicker ones.

"But, unfortunately, most people sing those two notes as fast as the previous ones, and then the singing becomes quite messy and irreverent."

Let's take good notice of the above.

To my great joy I read that there are still copies of the Acts of 1987 available. May I put in a request? My previous request went unnoticed, apparently. I hope for better result this time.

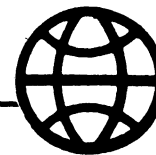
That's it for this time.

Till next time, the Lord willing.

Faithfully yours

VO

INTERNATIONAL



ABORTION DEBATE HEATS UP; MORE CHURCHES JOIN OPPOSITION (WASHINGTON, ATLANTA)

Opposition to abortion by American Christians has intensified in recent months, with Christians engaged in civil disobedience and being jailed for obstructing abortion clinics. At least four mainline Protestant denominations, whose previous positions had been for individual freedom, moved to the right to recognize the evils of abortion.

Some liberal churches have also withdrawn from their near absolute support of the desire of the pregnant woman. The Episcopal Church in the U.S. has indicated that abortion as a means of birth control is not acceptable. The American Baptist Church has noted that abortion is a personal decision, but advised women to try to avoid abortion if at all possible. The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. is preparing to modify its position The United Methodist Church has also expressed opposition to abortion as a means of birth control. (REC NE)

ISLAM GOES TO COLLEGE

Over the past ten years, several British universities have established departments of Islamic or Middle Eastern studies that are heavily financed by Islamic nations or individuals. According to a report from People International, an outreach ministry to Muslims, the university centres "promote Islam" while giving it "academic credibility."

Contributions from Persian Gulf states to Oxford University's Centre for Islamic Studies have been estimated at close to \$10 million. Other British universities receiving similar aid are Exeter and Cornwall. (CT)

CHINA SEEKS CHURCH HELP

Faced with corruption in government and moral decay in Society, Chinese Communist leaders may be turning to the church for help, says a report from Hong Kong-based Chinese Church Research Centre. The report referred to conversations between premier Li Peng and American evangelist Billy Graham, when Peng suggested Christianity could play a role in China's effort to fight moral and social problems. (CT)

When Peng suggested Christianity could play a role in China's effort to fight moral and social problems. (CT)

LONDON (RNS)

Scientists believe the Shroud of Turin is a 14th Century forgery, according to reports that have surfaced in British publications.

Since the Middle Ages, millions of Christians throughout the world have venerated the 14-foot linen sheet as the burial cloth of Christ. The apparently blood-stained relic bears the clear imprint of a young man's face and thorn-crowned head.

However, on August 26 Cambridge University professor Richard Lockett, an expert on the history of the shroud, wrote in the London Evening Standard that "1350 A. D. looks likely" as the year the shroud was forged. (CN)

VO



ILPB with the Administration Committee, Oct. 1, 1988, Hamilton, ON

The chairman, Mr. P. Torenvliet, opened the meeting in the usual Christian manner.

The Men's, Women's, and Young People's Leagues were all represented, with one guest as observer, Mr. G. Helder. Mr. G. Bos was welcomed as the new Y.P.L. rep. As well, all Administration Committee members were present.

Since the last meeting, *Ecclesiastes*

by M.J.C. Blok was published. Marketing Committee is actively advertising. To be published next: *Revelation*, Part 1, Rev. L. Selles; *Minor Prophets*, Rev. P. Lok.

Books to be published in 1989: *Revelation*, Part 2, Rev. L. Selles; *Romans*, Rev. J. Francke; *Believe and Confess*, Vol. 1, Rev. C. Bos; *Luke*, Vol. 1, Rev. Hagens.

These are still in the editing stage, some nearer to completion than others. Future projects include *Believe and Confess*, Vol. 2, and *Luke*, Vol. 2 and 3,

possibly *Apostolic Church Order* by Rev. Van Rongen.

Sales and Financial Statements are discussed. A Reciprocal Agreement with the Publication Committee of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia was discussed. Draft Guidelines for Translators and Editors to be discussed at next meeting. Draft Constitution was perused and discussed.

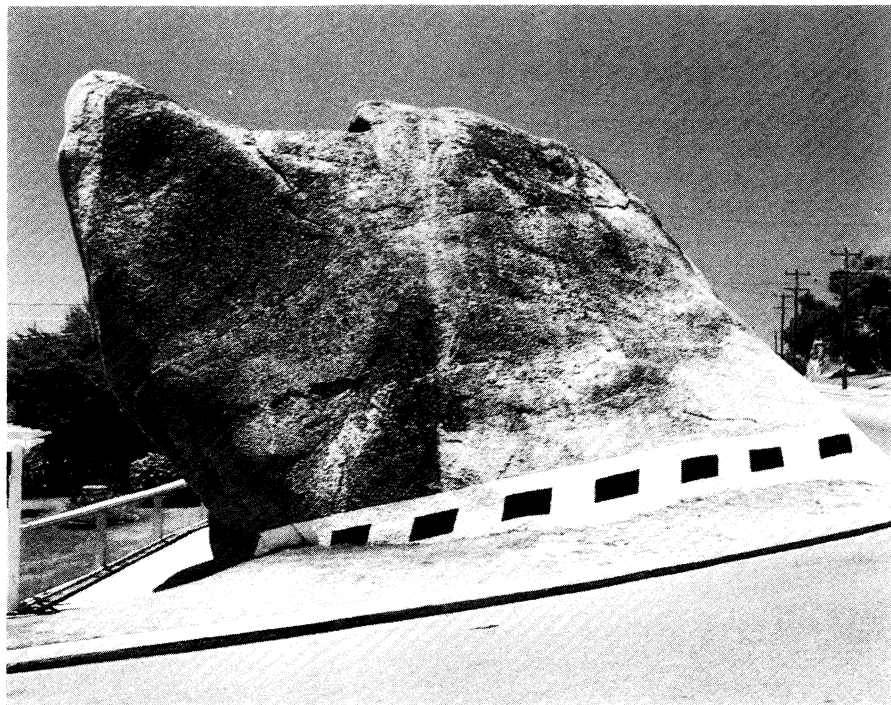
Mr. R. VanAndel closed the meeting with prayer and a delicious lunch was enjoyed.

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE



Hello Busy Beavers,

Busy Beaver *Alice Plug* has sent us this picture and story about Australia. Fun way to learn about a faraway place, right? Thank you, Alice!



LEGEND OF DOG ROCK

Under a truly Australian heading of "While the Billy Boils" the story is told in these words.

Apart from its striking resemblance to the head of a hound, much interest is attached to the Dog Rock by reason of a quaint legend associated with this rock.

The story is that Betty, the little daughter of one of the early settlers, had a dog, Victor, for her sole playmate. One day the child's parents returned home to find the little girl surrounded by naked savages, who were looking at her in delighted curiosity — the first white child they had ever seen. They meant no ill, but the child's mother was alarmed and Victor sharing her apprehension, darted at the natives barking furiously. As the natives ran away they turned and threw spears at the dog, killing him. Victor was buried that night on the slope of the mount, and during the night a terrific storm arose. In the morning the dog's grave had disappeared and in its place the rock had risen through the soil — an everlasting monument to the dog's devotion.

So realistic, natural and lifelike is its resemblance to the head of a hound that one is almost led to believe that some eccentric sculptor had carved it from solid granite, in never-to-be-forgotten remembrance of a beloved canine pal. The rock, during the years that Albany has featured as a major tourist resort, has always been a leading subject for the amateur and professional photographer.

Very best wishes to all the Busy Beavers who have (had) a November birthday. May the Lord bless and keep you all in the year ahead. And here's hoping you have (had, again) a very happy and thankful day celebrating with your family and friends.

"Many happy returns of the day!"

~ NOVEMBER ~

Jennifer Stam	2	Wesley Werkman	13
Michelle Medemblik	5	David De Bruin	14
Randy Dijkstra	7	Kerri-Anne Wierenga	14
Josh Rosa	10	Sheryl Linde	15
Theresa Bredenhof	11	Peter John Sikkema	15
Alex Meerstra	11	Karen Heres	16
Julia Jonker	12	Shawn Veenendaal	16
Ken Stam	12	Margaret de Witt	17
Juanita Wildeboer	12	Karen Vandergaag	21
Aimee Jagt	13	Rachel Pruijm	24
Michael Schouten	13	Christie Bultje	25

HERE ARE SOME TONGUE TWISTERS

from Busy Beaver *Rachel VanderPol*

How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

He would chuck as much wood as a woodchuck could if a woodchuck could chuck wood.

How much hedge would a hedgehog hog if a hedgehog could hog hedge?

He would hog as much hedge as a hedgehog could if a hedgehog could hog hedge.

Quiz Time!

WHERE DID I LIVE?

This is a Reformation Day quiz. Can you match the name of the Reformer to the name of his country? The first one's easy!

Martin Luther	England
John Calvin	Switzerland
John Knox	Germany
Ulrich Zwingli	Germany
Philipp Melanchthon	Scotland
Guillaume Farel	France
Thomas Cranmer	France

WATER

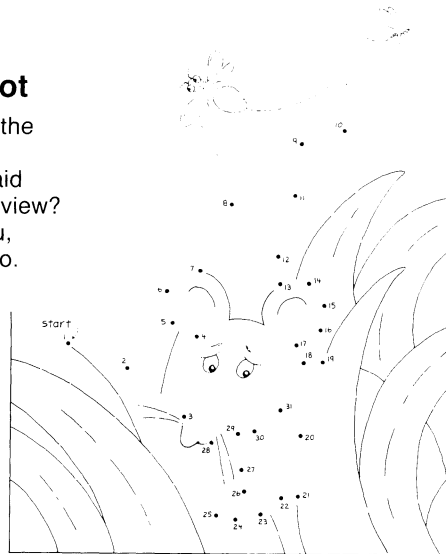
Without water no living thing can exist. Fill in the blanks with the name of the person involved with water.

- _____ and _____ turned water to blood. Exodus 7:20
- _____ baptized with water. Matthew 3:11.
- _____ moved upon the face of the waters. Genesis 1:2.

- _____ said to "let judgment run down as waters." Amos 5:24.
- _____ commanded his chariot to stop so he could be baptized in water. Acts 8:36.
- _____ said one had to be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God. John 3:5.
- _____ drew water from a rock. Exodus 17:5,6.
- _____ lay beside a pool waiting for the moving of the water. John 5:7.
- _____ had water poured over his sacrifice until it filled the trench around the altar. I Kings 18:30,35.
- _____ lived on a boat many months because of a flood. Genesis 7:1,24.

Dot to Dot

Let me see the
Rest of you.
Are you afraid
To come in view?
If I were you,
I'd worry, too.



from Busy Beaver *Kent Van Vliet*

Send the Reformation Day quiz, "Where Did I Live?" to me. I will let you know in Our Little Magazine if you got it right! Bye for now, Busy Beavers.

Love,
Aunt Betty

CHURCH NEWS



CALLED by Chilliwack, BC, and by the Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Tasmania, Australia

REV. R. AASMAN

of Ancaster, ON

* * *

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