



Clarion

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Church Polity and Civil Law₃

By Dr. K. Deddens

Church before the court

Last time I warned against mixing Church Polity and Civil Law. I promised to point to a concrete case in which these two were indeed mixed up. It happened in the Netherlands this year. *Nederlands Dagblad (ND)* of Feb. 11, 1989, reported that a 27-year-old man took the consistory of the "Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk" at Ede to court in Arnhem. In his accusation he complained that he had been wronged by the consistory. He was a baptized member of the church and he had wanted to withdraw from the church. His reproach was that the consistory had not struck out his name from the membership rolls, immediately when he had requested that. After that he had asked the consistory to give him his attestation. The consistory did not comply with this request, but acted according to the rules of the Church Order. Afterwards the consistory let him know that the man could receive a declaration in which it could be mentioned that his name had been removed as a baptized member of the congregation. Indeed, this declaration was provided. The following Sunday the withdrawal was announced to the congregation and the matter was also mentioned in prayer. Shortly after that the man threatened to bring the matter before the court. He enlisted a lawyer's services and demanded corrections in the prayer and in the letter written by the consistory to him personally in connection with his choice. As far as that letter is concerned, he especially took offence at the passage which said that withdrawal was not only a matter of administration, but that it involves contempt of baptism as a sign of God's covenant. Actually three parties were summoned before the court: the congregation, the consistory, and the minister of the church.

Encroachment?

The *ND* of Feb. 17, 1989, reported on the court session held at Arnhem the day before. The plaintiff's lawyer was of the opinion that no condition could be made in the case of withdrawal. He also stated that the prayer of the minister in which the man had been committed to God, was an encroachment on the personal sphere of life and on the right of privacy. The church's lawyer, however, claimed that this was not a civil dispute and that therefore the civil judge was not allowed to pass judgment. In this case, the internal ecclesiastical law is applicable. The defendant's lawyer also said that actually the plaintiff wanted to silence the church. He wanted to forbid the church to say that withdrawal from the church is to be put on a par with disparaging baptism. As far as the prayer in the church is concerned, a civil judge may not pass sentence on that. It is a different matter to have an opinion about it. But prayer has its own place. It is spoken to God. The church may

never be forbidden to pray for someone's conversion, repentance, and return to the church.

Sentence

The *ND* of Feb. 25, 1989, published the sentence of the court of Arnhem. The day before, the judge had condemned the "Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk" at Ede and had ordered the church to place a correction in the church bulletin, because the interests of the baptized member who withdrew himself were not adequately taken into account. The judge did not deem it necessary that the correction of the prayer be announced in a public worship service because of the disturbing effect this would have on the whole of the worship service. But the prayer had to be corrected in the church bulletin. According to the judge, a misleading picture was given by the minister in his prayer. The consistory should have mentioned besides its own point of view also the point of view of the baptized member. This correction in the bulletin had to be made because it was practically impossible for this man to put forward his opinion. If the church did not place the correction, a penalty of 10,000 guilders was to be paid. The defendant also had to pay a sum of 1.500 guilders to the plaintiff as compensation for "immaterially" suffered damage, and finally, both parties had to pay their own costs.

Freedom of religion

What are we to say about this? In the first place: the relation between the church and its members is regulated by ecclesiastical laws, of which the matter of church discipline is a part. Church polity is beyond civil law. That is the consequence of freedom of religion. Those who are not members of the church have nothing to do with church polity. Over against them the church has to stick to the rules of civil law. A withdrawal from the church is a matter of transition from the one situation to the other. But the judge has to acknowledge that in that situation the matter of freedom of religion has still a strong impact.

But the judge came to a different conclusion. He based himself with respect to this on the letter, written at the moment that the man was still a member of the church. The consistory, however, rightly said that the service of God is not to be separated from membership of the church. Therefore the minister could pray for his conversion in connection with the announcement of withdrawal. This minister did not go too far. His office of supervision and discipline implies also his coming to his own conclusion on the basis of someone's confession and conduct. Neither that conclusion of the minister nor the consistory, nor the declaration of the member about himself

lends itself to examination by an outsider, in this case the secular judge. In a comment entitled "Pulpit-prayer" the editor of *ND*, Dr. J.P. de Vries wrote: "The opinion of the consistory about someone's confession and conduct is usually not mentioned in public. The only firm exception is the execution of church discipline in the last phases. He who withdraws himself from the church, himself commits a public deed, about which the church may give its opinion, also in public. The fact that for such a person concrete intercession is made, belongs to



The "father" of the Church Polity of the Doleantie — Dr. F.L. Rutgers

the calling of the church. If a judge is going to judge that prayer on the point whether or not justice is done to the person mentioned in it, then he steps into affairs which do not belong to his competence. The question whether a misleading image was given of the motives of the former baptized member, is a confessional matter and the judge may not judge that. If somebody is of the opinion that he is wronged in a pulpit prayer, then the federation of churches has its own ways of appeal. As long as they are still open, the worldly judge should declare himself incompetent. Only if the federation would declare the complaint inadmissible because he is not a member of the church any more, he can go to the civil judge. But that possibility was not even investigated in this case."¹

Appeal

What was the consistory of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk at Ede to do now? Did it have to give in and place a correction in the bulletin of the church? Or did it have to appeal? A very important matter is here at stake. The court presumed to give an opinion in an ecclesiastical case, a matter of Church Polity. I am of the opinion that the court's judgment was very arrogant and overbearing. It involved itself with prayers, ad-

dressed to God Himself. This would create a precedent, and in this way the church could be hindered by the state in all kinds of affairs. This is what the consistory at Ede also considered. It took several hours before the consistory made a decision.

The minister of the church declared to *ND*: "It was not easy to make a decision. What would best serve the honour of the LORD and the coming of His kingdom? We had to consider that question time and again."² The care for the souls, for the whole congregation stood in the forefront. The consistory considered this a primary responsibility. It may be that a consistory suffers injustice because of it. This consideration was completely in agreement with the attitude of the consistory over against the baptized member and the pulpit prayer. On the other hand, the consistory understood very well that the acceptance of this sentence could have consequences for the future. The whole matter of a precedent is very important. So finally the consistory decided to appeal. It will take some time before this appeal to the higher court of Arnhem leads to a sentence.

Very dangerous

I hope wholeheartedly that the sentence of Arnhem's court will be nullified. Imagine what can happen if this sentence functions as a precedent for other cases. A very dangerous situation could come up. Imagine that a member of the church committed abortion or euthanasia, and that the consistory of the church censures such a person. Then that person would be able to bring the consistory before the court and complain that he or she was wronged and discriminated against. The church still says: this was against the law of the LORD, you shall not kill. But it was allowed by the civil law! Now the church could be condemned and could be forced to stop church discipline and even be compelled to give corrections, because of the supposed discrimination. So I am very happy with the decision of the consistory of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk at Ede to appeal. As soon as more is known about this matter, I hope to inform our readers about it.

¹*Nederlands Dagblad*, Feb. 25, 1989.

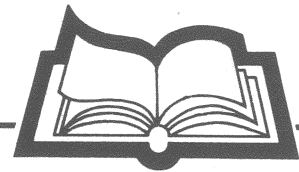
²*Nederlands Dagblad*, March 11, 1989.

Postscript: Appeal cancelled

Nederlands Dagblad of June 17, 1989, reported that the appeal of both parties in the case of a former non-communicant member of the "Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk" of Ede was cancelled. Pending the appeal the consistory did not have to correct the pulpit prayer in which was said that the non-communicant member had turned his back to the church. Now both parties reached an understanding of compromise. According to a special Act, however, both parties maintain in an unabridged way their points of view and their convictions. The agreement means that no correction will be made from the side of the consistory. But judicially the requirement for correction is maintained, although the former non-communicant member no longer demands the execution of the sentence. In a letter to the members of the congregation the consistory hopes and prays that this agreement may lead to peace and unity in the congregation. In the decision the interests of the congregation had been given priority by the consistory.

I think this decision is unsatisfactory. The sentence of the judge is still maintained. Although it is just one sentence of a judge of a lower court, nevertheless it can have consequences. Especially this question is at stake: can secular judges pass sentence on matters concerning the worship services of the church? Now a precedent is not excluded and the whole matter as such is not solved.





“. . . and its lamp is the Lamb.” Rev. 21:23

David's Lamp

When John introduces the *lamp* that will burn continually in the new Jerusalem, he refers to a concept deeply rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures. In the law, the LORD commanded that a lamp be set up to burn continually in the tent of meeting, Ex. 27:20. The light was a symbol of God's presence, and reminded the congregation of God's appearance at the burning bush. This was the first sign of a continuously burning light, and with the institution of the law and its duties, the lamp receives a permanent place among God's people. Keeping the lamp burning was to be a statute forever, throughout the generations, Lev. 24: 2-4.

Scripture returns to the idea of the lamp in David's time. In promising David a perpetual kingship, the LORD says that His servant David would always have a lamp before Him in Jerusalem, His chosen city, 1 Kings 11:36. Later, Scripture indicates the special care of the LORD by which He preserved Judah as a tribe not for its own sake but for the sake of the promise He had given to David. David and his sons would have a lamp before Him forever, 2 Kings 8:19, 2 Chron. 21:7. David and his sons would be the bearers of God's light in the world. God's presence was symbolized in David's kingship.

Through sin's power and the continual attacks of Satan, the tribe of Judah was almost destroyed. It was barely preserved through the exile, and in the ensuing years it becomes a dimly burning wick. But the hour of fulfillment manifests God's truth: David's sons have a lamp forever in Jesus Christ, David's greatest Son! He is the eternal lamp for God's people!

The Revelation to John makes this abundantly clear. The Lamb of God is introduced as a royal King in David's line. God's Lamb is the "Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David," Rev. 5:5,6. David's position and kingship have their source and *raison d'être* in Christ. It was for the sake of Christ and His coming that the LORD gave David and his sons an enduring lamp in Jerusalem.

And the Lamb conquered through obedience to His Father. In Him God's light came into the world, Is. 60:1. But as John says, men loved the darkness rather than the light, Joh 3:19. So He let the light of God's presence be extinguished in Himself when He gave Himself up to be slaughtered, so that in Him the whole world might be judged. For in His death on the cross He exposes the world's sin and guilt, and also extends the gift of life and light to all who believe. So His death proves that God's true light cannot be quenched in the world; for in His death and resurrection He brings life and immortality to light.

So His victory brings the *eternal* light of God's presence among us. David's lamp and the lamp of the temple endures forever in the Lamb. He is called the "root and offspring of David, the bright morning star," Rev. 22:16. With the completion of His work a light dawns upon the world which no one will be able to quench. For the one who died, now lives forever, and will bear God's light eternally in a renewed world.

With the coming of the Lamb who also fulfils God's temple law, we have a Ruler and Prince who surpasses even David's expectations. David expressed the hope that His kingship would endure as long as the sun, Ps. 72:17. But the Revelation to John tells us that with the arrival of the Lamb, sun and moon are no longer needed. In other words, His fame and glory endure *longer* than the sun, and He occupies a glory and honour surpassing the brightness of the sun.

Where is this light to be found? In the church of Christ, where His Word is proclaimed, and where the Spirit of renewal effects His work. We find among God's people today a lamp and light which surpasses the bounds of all created light. David's eternal lamp shines in our hearts through Christ, and we may experience this as the light of the coming age. In Christ we may share the prophetic Word and we may hold to it "as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts," 2 Pet. 1:19.

And we may be assured that the day is already dawning. "The night is far gone, the day is at hand," Rom. 13:12. How much the more should we not then live as children of light, and let our light shine in the world? With the light of the prophetic word the reign of God is manifested in the church, and in the world around us. It represents a rule and kingship in which we seek to honour God's commandments for all of life, and acknowledge the Lamb of God as King and Saviour in every realm. The citizens of His kingdom will then preserve His truth unadulterated and uncompromised in the world and so "shine as lights," holding forth the enduring power of David's lamp, Phil. 2:15.

For it may appear that the darkness wins the day. But history shows how the unrighteous destroy themselves by their own lawlessness. "The lamp of the wicked will be put out," Prov. 13:9; cf. 20:20. But those who live in the light of the Lamb will share the enduring blessings of the bright morning star all their days!

No difference?

By G. Van Dooren

A quotation in a Dutch church paper struck me.¹ Freely translated it reads: "It is of course true that there is no difference in principle between a pre-confession class and the other catechism classes. All classes are 'pre-confession.' The (only) purpose of a special pre-confession class is a kind of repetition and rehearsal."

Is there no difference?

Because I know that some among us are of the same opinion, I would like to submit the following remarks:

1. If this (i.e., "no difference") were true, do we then not accept the "presumptive regeneration of adults?" We may reject (1944!) the presumptive regeneration of infants, when they are baptized, but we do not presuppose that all our children when they grow up (or have grown up) are born again do we? We send them to the catechism class(es) and when they have finished the course, the "graduation" does not follow automatically with public profession and the celebration of the Lord's Supper, does it?
2. It is, of course, true that all catechism classes aim at and will hopefully lead to the public profession of faith by our children who are members of God's covenant with us.
3. It is, however, also true that the only catechism class to which our children are *not* sent by their parents, is the pre-confession class. To the other classes they are indeed sent by us, their parents. We promised that at their baptism: "Do you promise to instruct your child in this doctrine . . . and to have him(her) instructed therein to the utmost of your power?" (Form for Baptism, *Book of Praise*, p. 587).
4. But to the pre-confession class they go by their own choice and desire. Of course, we as parents surround them with our prayers, with our example, with our talks that we have with them about this most important choice in their life. But we cannot "send" them to this pre-confession class! That is: to the profession of their faith. John 3 is still true, also for our children who are covenant

children: "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh. . ." (John 3:6ff.).

I remember how my old friend and colleague in Enschede, the Rev. H. Meulink, asked every now and then: "are their signs of a new life?" He knew the whole congregation, and asked this when the names of candidates for public profession were presented to the consistory by the five sections in which the large congregation was divided.


This text from John 3 is quoted in our Form for Infant Baptism! "We and our children are conceived and born in sin, and are therefore by nature children of wrath, so that we [and they] cannot enter the kingdom of God unless we [they] are born again."

So I am telling our young people nothing new when I say to them: "You are

not allowed to attend the Holy Supper ('which Christ has ordained only for His believers,' Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, *Book of Praise*, p. 596) when you are not born again [or renewed, VD] by the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

We may use a different terminology. "Among us" one does not hear much talk about "being born again." We speak about a covenantal education, about preaching and teaching by which our children grow in the knowledge of scriptural doctrine. Thus they are prepared for public profession. That is a process of years. And of course! But that does not mean:

- a. that they in that way "become aware" of their regeneration which the Holy Spirit already had worked in their hearts when they were born, or shortly before or after birth (1944!), without the Word, the preaching of the gospel!

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- b. nor does it mean, that this “process of years” renders the working of the Holy Spirit in their hearts superfluous! True faith is a personal matter (“one by one,” Psalm 87), and only the Spirit of Christ can work it. We have it all in our Catechism, Lord’s Day 7, answer 21: “not only to others, but also to me.”
5. It would be no luxury, when in our midst these central things received more attention. The minister should not only, at the beginning(!) of the season, inform the consistory of the names of the pre-confession class, so that the elders in visiting the families can (and must) keep that in mind. It would be good, too, that the congregation as a whole, as the body of Christ, knows which young members are preparing for the public profession. We should watch them, in love, how they behave themselves, what their lifestyle is, etc. When their names are announced from the pulpit, we, the whole congregation, are asked if we have any objections against their being admitted to the table of the LORD. This is not a formality, is it?
6. How many have, in the course of the years, “walked away” from their baptism (if they could!), thus showing that there was no depth, no foundation for their “finishing the catechism course”! There are no “rush-courses,” are there, for those who suddenly “have to get married,” because that is the condition for a church wedding . . . ?
7. We know that all children are not alike. Some grow up “smoothly” without rebellion and periods of indifference. Others — especially in this present world — have a hard time to grow up in the Lord. Are we with them, when a small plant of faith starts growing? The one is sooner ready for it than the other. Yet, they all have to come “there,” if they want to enter the kingdom of heaven.
8. Yes, our children are covenant children. What a blessing, what a privilege! Psalm 65 calls that a divine choice: “Blessed is he whom Thou dost choose and bring near, to dwell in Thy courts!” v. 4a. And also verse 4b: “We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, Thy holy temple.” When you look back, where and how your life started, in a Christian home with God-fearing parents, members of the church, then clearly our God took the initiative. Yet, “I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the king-

dom will be thrown into the outer darkness,” Matthew 8:11, 12. John Calvin already warned that there will be many children of the kingdom in hell. Without personal faith a covenant child will not, and cannot be saved.

9. Our children are or have to be members of a church which bears the marks of the true church, Belgic Confession, art. 29, the first part. But, according to that same article, that is *not enough!* They will, in growing up, *not* be saved because they are members of the local true church, here


“John Calvin already warned that there will be many children of the kingdom in hell. Without personal faith a covenant child will not, and cannot be saved.”

and now. Think of the hypocrites, the name — Christians. They must also (same art. 29!) “be recognized by the marks of the *Christians*, believe in Jesus Christ, the only Saviour, flee from sin and pursue righteousness, love the true God and their neighbour without turning to the right or left, and crucify their flesh and its works. Although great weakness remains in them, they fight against it by the Spirit all the days of their life. They appeal constantly to the blood, suffering, death and obedience of Jesus Christ, in whom they have forgiveness of their sins through faith in Him.” These marks prove them to be *true Christians*.

10. We will never sufficiently appraise the enormous impact of belonging to the covenant of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who have “buried” us under their promises, when we were baptized into the Name of . . . (Form for Baptism, *Book of Praise*, p. 584). But these promises, which are further explained in the catechism classes, have to be

embraced, believed and appropriated. “I will live among them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. *Therefore* come out from them, and be separate from them, says the LORD, and touch nothing unclean [like today’s drugs, ‘sex,’ rock ‘n roll, chainsmoking, etc. VD] then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:16-18). Do we set this example for our children? Do they follow in those footsteps? If so, they are candidates for the “pre-confession class.”

11. If someone rejects the main thrust of these remarks, which are based upon Scripture and Confession, does he/she then mean to say, that our children, contrary to the words of Jesus Christ, and the Form for Baptism, do *not* need to be born again, or born anew, or born from above, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven?
12. One more remark, to make the dozen full. This remark comes after some visiting and talking to a Young Couples Bible Study Group, etc. One hears complaints about the lack of enthusiasm among us. We have “the complete list” of societies, organizations, institutions, etc. in our Yearbooks. But that should not tempt us to say, “I am rich, have prospered and I need nothing,” Revelation 3:17. The Lord Jesus did not give a complimentary answer to that. We are talking about our young people, many of them dear treasures! Yet, one wonders about the quality of Young People’s meetings, weekends and conferences (many of which I attended and addressed). Seen from the outside: dressed like the Chinese youngsters of Mao’s days (today, parading for democracy, they are better dressed); bottles in the trunk; rotten music through the ears into their minds and brains, chainsmoking, to mention no more . . . not the style of the Christian as described in Article 29 of the Confession and in 2 Corinthians 6. Thankful for many hopeful signs among the coming generation (do we open channels for their desire to *do* something for the Lord in this world?) — we hope and call and pray for signs for that “new life” that shows itself wherever the Holy Spirit makes room for all the riches of Jesus Christ, filling His body, the church.

¹ *Gereformeerd Kerkblad*, May 13, 1989, in which appeared an article on Public Profession by Rev. J. Strating. 

Unbelief and Revolution

By C. Van Dam

Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer's classic work, *Unbelief and Revolution* is now accessible to the English-speaking world. Surely an event of great importance! Prior to this only parts were available. In June of this year, Professor Harry Van Dyke of Redeemer College was granted the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Free University in Amsterdam for his fine study on this topic. Since it is available under the title *Groen van Prinsterer's Lectures on unbelief and revolution* (Wedge Publishing Foundation, 561 pages), I would like to draw attention to it. (Quotations with page numbers will be from this work.)

Van Dyke's book is divided into two parts. In the first half he places Groen van Prinsterer's work in its historical and religious context and analyses some of the issues which Groen van Prinsterer has raised. In the second half Van Dyke offers an abridged translation of the lectures themselves thus making the contents of this important work readily available for the first time to a wide audience outside the Netherlands.

Importance

What makes these lectures which were first published in 1847 so important that they still merit study today? *Unbelief and Revolution* was "a protest against the increasingly secular spirit of the times, an attack on the prevailing liberalism in Church and State, and a plea for reform in an historically sensitive direction guided by Christian principles" (p.1). It was also a prophetic work with "ominous predictions about the inevitability of future tyranny if contemporary trends continued" (p.1). It is "one of those seminal works which are written only once in a generation and which so capture the central issue emerging from the past that they help set the debate for future generations" (p.2). Indeed it lies behind the rise of the anti-revolutionary movement in the Netherlands which "is essentially an early, Dutch Calvinist manifestation of that multi-faceted phenomenon of modern times known as Christian action, Christian social action, Christian politics, Christian democracy — the conscious, organized resistance of European Christians to modern secularism" (p.2).

The main idea of the lectures

Groen van Prinsterer sought to uncover the secular roots of the French Revolution and the religious atheism and political radicalism which followed it. He argued that the breakdown in his day of religion, morality, state and society in the name of liberty and emancipation was to be attributed to unbelief. Unbelief is the root cause — "unbelief as it was first elaborated into a system and then applied in a wholesale social experiment. . . . The only true and reliable analysis of the French Revolution — and for that matter, of its entire aftermath — was one which laid bare its profoundly religious character" (p.3). Religion, in the broad sense of man's ultimate concern and commitment, was "the underlying, all-determining driving force behind the events that rocked the world in the generation immediately preceding his [i.e. Groen's]" (p.3). But this is not all. Since the secular ideology that gave rise to the revolution was never repudiated, "therefore the same subversive ideas continued to erode the foundations of society and would eventually lead to fresh flare-ups of revolutionary violence" (p.3). Groen concluded that revolution had become a permanent part of European civilization. Van Dyke summarizes Groen thus. "Revolutions are here to stay and will grow much worse in scope and intensity unless men can be

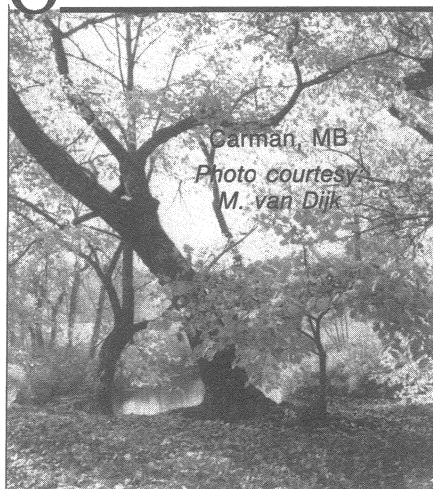
persuaded to return to Christianity, to practise its precepts and to obey the Gospel in its full implications for human life and civilized society. Barring such a revival, the future would belong to socialism and communism, which on this view were but the most consistent sects of the new secular religion" (p.3). With such insight Groen could only conclude that the political choices of his day (the radical left, the liberal centre, and the conservative right) were really no meaningful choices. None represented a valid option for Christians. Therefore, "*Unbelief and Revolution*" ends its historical analysis in a compelling invitation — to resist the Revolution *in whatever form it manifests itself* and to work for a radical alternative in politics, along anti-revolutionary, Christian-historical lines" (p.4). From the above it is clear how relevant Groen van Prinsterer's work is for us today!

Groen's call did not go unheeded. *Unbelief and Revolution* served as a historical catalyst in the alignment of forces for the struggle to maintain some form of Christian civilization in the Netherlands. His work was instrumental in bringing about a renewed involvement of the orthodox Calvinists in the life of the nation. "Groen broke the stranglehold of conservatism on them [i.e. the Calvinists] without delivering them up to the social gospel. His spiritual sons were in the vanguard of those who in the 1870's laid the foundations of a Christian labour movement" (p.4). Politically Groen's work bore fruit "in the popular crusades and electoral victories led by the great emancipator Abraham Kuyper under the anti-Revolutionary standard" (p.4). The founding of the Free University in 1880 and the formation of a distinct school of Calvinist philosophy in the 1930's were further fruits.

Some samples

It is beyond the present scope of this article to comment too much on this book. Professor Van Dyke does an admirable job in summarizing much of Groen's thinking and struggles in a very readable form. In reading about some of the issues that Groen wrestled with one cannot but help think of our present struggle with secularization. For example, in the conflict for

OUR COVER



PSALM 2

Strasbourg, 1539/Lyons, 1548

1. Why do the rest-less hea-then mad-ly rage?
 What haugh-ty schemes are they in vain con-triv-ing?
 The kings and rul-ers of the earth en-gage
 In rash at-tempts to plot their emp-ty striv-ing.
 They stand pre-pared, they all con-spire to-geth-er
 A-against the LORD and His a-noint-ed King.
 "Let us," they say, "tear loose and break their fet-ters,
 Cast off their chains, their shack-les from us fling."

Christian schools, Groen noted that the so-called neutral public schools meant schools without the light of Scripture. If that be so then history could not be taught. Also, moral instruction could not teach true morality if it was not rooted in Christian doctrine. Contrary to the intention of the legislator the public school "degenerated into a place of instruction that was based not on commonly held Christian beliefs but on common unbelief and indifference" (p.58). In the parliamentary debates Groen was forceful and stated:

Parents who . . . are honestly convinced that the character of the instruction in the existing schools is non-Christian, must not, directly or indirectly, be prevented from providing for their children the kind of education for which they believe they can be responsible before God. That compulsion, to put it bluntly, is intolerable and ought to stop. It is a presumption springing from the Revolution doctrine which, disregarding the rights of parents, considers children the property of the state (p.63).

More examples could be given, but let me close with the *Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution*. The translation is abridged, but this should not hinder a good understanding since it has been done very carefully (cf. pp. 207-208).

In Groen's own words the purpose of these lectures was "to prove that the history of the last half century has been but the development of the revolutionary principles which have their root in unbelief and which cannot be effectively combated except by a return to the truth of the gospel" (p.78).

In Lecture IX, Groen van Prinsterer continues his discussion on unbelief and shows how God's sovereignty is denied in favour of the sovereignty of the people. Unbelief only knows human authority. Only through mutual consent therefore will the one bow to the other. Groen then uses Rousseau's *Social Contract* to make clear what the implications for society are of dethroning God. (The references inside the following quotation are from Rousseau, *Du Contract social*.)

What is law? It is the *will of the people*. "The people being subject to the laws, should be the authors of them." (II, vi)

Is the power of this state, the will of the People restricted? *In no wise.*

. . .

What part of his rights has the citizen retained by the social contract? *Not any*. The essence of that contract lies in the complete surrender of one's rights. . . .

What is the relation of the citizen and the state? *Utter subordination.* . . .

When can the state require the life of a citizen? Whenever the state adjudges his death *useful to the state*. "If the Sovereign should say to the Citizen, 'It is expedient for the State that you should die,' then die he must, since it is on this condition alone that he will have lived till then in safety, and since his life will have been no longer merely the gift of nature but a grant, and a conditional one, from the state." (II, v)

A more complete *absolutism* is scarcely conceivable. The citizen's very liberty consists in the surrender of body and soul to the state. — But is there no point at which Rousseau can be convinced of error? Once he has vowed to found the state on convention, no. If his conclusions are terrifying they are nonetheless consistent. (*Lectures*, pp. 206-208)

The ideas of Rousseau's *Social Contract* are still of great influence. When one stops to think Groen's words through and look critically at our present society and the issues that plague us as a nation, then it becomes clear how pertinent Groen's analysis is. In this age of the growing power of the state and the clamour for Mr. Government to solve all our problems and take care of all our needs, Groen's *Lectures* demand a hearing. This is also true for many other crucial issues such as human rights and God's sovereignty, and the unfolding of political and juridical thinking fed by the aggressive unbelief in our day.

Harry van Dyke's study and translation of Groen van Prinsterer's *Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution* deserve a wide reading and invite study of issues of fundamental importance. May much Reformed thinking and action be stimulated by it!

Groen's final lecture ends thus: Faith overcomes the world. If we wish to overcome the world it is needful first of all to cast down in our minds all imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ [2 Cor 10:5]. Let us always remember that the cry, "Help thou mine unbelief!" is preceded by the shout of joy, "Lord, I believe!" [Mark 9:24]. Let us never forget that all activity, also in History and Constitutional Law, is of no value in the estimation of Him who knows the heart if it is not sanctified by the twofold prayer that expresses the common need of philosopher and child alike: "Be merciful to me a sinner," and "My soul cleaves to the dust; quicken thou me according to Thy word" [Luke 18:13; Ps 119:25]. (p. 428)

A reaction

Concerning branches and observers

By J. Visscher

Branches?

I recently received the August 18, 1989, issue of *Clarion* and was both amazed and disturbed with what the Editor, Prof. J. Geertsema, had to say in an article called "Presbyterian and Reformed — two of the branches?" about a few lines in my opening speech at the recently held ICRC.

He scrutinizes my use of the words "branches" and "awesome" to such an extent that the readers may well be left with the impression that I am somehow a World Council of Churches propagandist and/or a Kuyperian pluriformity of churches advocate. Is that a fair inference? I deny both most emphatically! The Editor and I have known each other for many years, served together on many committees and been neighbouring colleagues. The result is that he knows my thoughts on a wide variety of matters. As such he also knows that I have always been opposed to the WCC brand of ecumenism. He knows too that I am no more a promoter and defender of Kuyper's view on pluriformity than he is a defender of Kuyper's view of presumptive regeneration. Needless to say such innuendos and associations troubled me deeply. They are unworthy of him as an honoured friend and an esteemed colleague.

Loaded words

As far as the offending lines are concerned, a few words are in order. In the first place, it should be noted that nowhere in my opening remarks do I speak about "denominations," "visible or invisible churches," the "WCC," "Lutherans," "Pentecostals," "Baptists," "pluriformity," "more or less pure," etc. These terms are brought into the picture by the Editor and not by me.

Apostolic language

In the second place, when I referred to "branches" I had in mind the terminology that the apostle Paul uses in Romans 11. Now, one may quibble about whether or not that particular word should have been used. But the point is this that in that particular chapter the apostle compares

the church to a tree, a tree which previously was composed of only one type of branch, namely, Jewish believers, but which now is composed of both Jewish and Gentile believers. In other words, diversity is introduced by God into that one tree. The NT church was composed of Christians from Jewish and Gentile background. Peoples from different types of backgrounds and history now found a place in God's one family.

In the third place, when the Editor reads "branches" he reads "denominations." That is his re-interpretation but that is not my meaning.

Awesome

In the fourth place, my use of the word "awesome" seems to cause some editorial heartburn as well. But that need not be the case at all. When we are told in Revelation 7:9 that John saw a "great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues" is that not "awesome?" Is it not an "awesome" thing that God calls the Gentiles into the church of our Lord? Is it not an "awesome" thing that the church of Jesus Christ which is one is today already composed of believers who are yellow, black and white, rich and poor, Canadian and Papuan, English-speaking and Afrikaner? Likewise is it not an "awesome" thing that in a forum such as the ICRC believers can come together from so many different countries and churches?

Pluriformity in the true church?

In the fifth place, the Editor quotes Prof. Dr. K. Schilder who in turn quotes Prof. Dr. S. Greijdanus, and I am glad that he does for that is exactly the point that I was attempting to make. Schilder says, "pluriformity of the church, fine, *but then within the true church.*" (With all due respect to Greijdanus/Schilder, I would not even like to use the word "pluriformity" in connection with the true church. "Diversity" is for me a preferable term.) In addressing the member churches of the ICRC I was addressing faithful churches of our Lord from different parts of the world, churches that have either been officially recognized as "true" by our

Synods, or by the Synods of our sister-churches. I was not directing my remarks at a mixed bag of true and false churches, nor to a group of suspect denominations. These churches have fought the fight of faith at great cost in the past and they continue to fight against liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, pentecostalism in the present.

Reading in context

In the sixth place, I urge every reader to examine again the context in which my words were placed. Before the supposedly offending lines, I spoke about the fact that membership in the ICRC is open to churches who accept wholeheartedly the authority of Scripture and Reformed confessions. After the offending lines I pointed out that there is a definite need to speak with each other about differences that still exist. At present there is a great deal of unity between the member churches of the ICRC on a host of biblical teachings, but there are also some areas where more discussion and insight is needed and would be beneficial.

Improper association

In the seventh place, neither my thinking nor speaking is derived from the Westminster Confession (a confession which I esteem as Reformed in spite of my reservations about certain expressions and distinctions) nor from the WCC (an organization whose practices and pronouncements I renounce). I may even ask, "why lump the two together and therefore taint the former with the sins of the latter?" That is improper and not at all in keeping with what you state in your editorial.

Editorial consistency

As a matter of fact, I have my questions in this regard about editorial consistency. When the Rev. Agema questions whether churches having the Westminster Standards can be said to belong to the category of true churches, then the Editor criticizes him, and rightly so, I believe. But when I address faithful churches of our Lord, some of whom have the Three Forms of Unity and some of whom have the Westminster Standards and re-

fer to them as “branches” of the one family of God, then I am accused of “denominationalism.” It just does not fit together. You can not argue both ways.

In short, the interpretation that Prof. J. Geertsema gives to my words and their original intent are two very different things. I regret the misunderstanding and I hope that this clears the air.

Observers?

That in turn brings me to another contribution in the same issue, namely that of the Rev. D.G.J. Agema. As such his article is too long for me to react to everything that he mentions; however, time and time again I was astonished at the way in which my colleague turns matters upside down and inside out. To take his article as an accurate account of the beginnings of the ICRC is to do injustice to the history of that organization. Let me illustrate that with a few examples:

To begin with there is the matter of how the representatives of the Canadian Reformed Churches functioned at the Constituent Assembly in Groningen, 1982. Rev. Agema says, “Now we go to the report. From it we do not receive at all the impression that our delegates acted as observers. On the contrary they participated as full members. Was this in accordance with the mandate? I do not believe so.” (p.351) For your information, and you can find it in the Acts 1983, the representatives alluded to were the Rev. M. van Beveren and myself.

Irresponsible delegates?

Did we act in an irresponsible manner? Hardly! Indeed the irony of the situation is that the Committee of Correspondence, of which we were members, had recommended in its report to Synod 1980 that “observers” be sent to the Constituent Assembly due to its uncertain character. It was the General Synod that rejected our recommendation and instructed us to send delegates instead. It was repeatedly stated on the floor of synod that to send “observers” would be a waste of money. They would only be able to sit on the sidelines and listen. Synod rejected that and instructed our Committee to send delegates, who should participate but then without any prior commitment on the part of the Canadian Reformed Churches seeing as yet the preliminary character of the ICRC.

Hence to state that the Canadian delegates acted improperly is a misinterpretation of Synod’s charge. To assert that these delegates acted as if the Canadian Reformed Churches had already joined the ICRC is an exaggeration seeing that at that time there was still no ICRC to join.

Proper order

Rev. Agema also takes us to task because we “disagreed with the order of procedure” (p.351). He considers that to have been improper on our part. “Did Synod Smithville 1980 ever give this instruction to the delegates? No. Did Synod Smithville object to the original agenda? Again we have to say ‘No.’ These delegates were never instructed to object to this agenda. Their ‘concern’ should have been to fulfill their mandate. And besides, does voicing such an objection agree with

John 15:5:

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

the mandate to be observers? These delegates should have refrained from all this. Instead they went completely outside their mandate.”

Once again I must say that this criticism has no foundation in history or fact. We were sent not as observers but as delegates. (cf. Acts 1980, p. 252, p. 127). In addition, Synod 1980 did not give the delegates a specific mandate besides the general instruction to act as delegates who were to participate in the formation of the ICRC.

Furthermore, the agenda that the Committee received and which was passed on to Synod was very preliminary in nature. Many organizational details were uncertain. Many agenda points were both uncertain and unclear. The only thing that was known for certain was that this Assembly would make an attempt to get some sort of International Reformed forum off the ground.

As for the order of the agenda it is true that we urged that the order be changed. Was this outside of our mandate? Synod gave no instruction to us as regards the order. It sent us to participate in the Assembly and to report back to the churches with recommendations, which we did. Did Synod 1983 later reprimand us for going beyond our mandate? No, it did not.

Now the reason that the Rev. Agema dwells so much on this change of order is that he sees this as producing a very negative result. To quote him, “this change of

procedure was not just a minor change, but a principal change with far-reaching consequences. Originally the order was first the differences, then the constitution. However, now the order became first the constitution and then the differences. This had a two-fold result. In the first place the confessional differences were swept under the carpet. . . .” (p.352). Is this true? Is this a correct conclusion?

Confessional differences

Again it must be denied. The confessional differences were never swept under the carpet at Groningen 1982. We spent days on them, speech after speech, discussion after discussion. Differences with respect to the church, covenant, sabbath, church polity, and so on were all dealt with. The change of order never meant that certain things that were on the original agenda were removed. All of the items on the agenda were dealt with, some even exhaustively. The change of order came about so that sufficient room could be made for the actual formulation and adoption of some sort of constitution and structure for the ICRC. The Rev. van Beveren and I were sent to Groningen, not in the first place to deal with the “divergencies,” to settle them, and only thereafter to give some attention to forming the ICRC. Our Committee for Contact with the OPC was specifically mandated to deal with the “divergencies.” Our principal task related to the formation of a conference. That was why we were sent. That was why the Canadian Churches were spending their money on sending delegates.

As far as the differences between Presbyterian and Reformed Churches are concerned, that not only had the attention of the Assembly, it also continued to have the attention of the Committee for Correspondence. Who recommended to Synod 1983 that the matter of the church be placed on the agenda of the first meeting in Edinburgh? Who recommended that the covenant be dealt with there? Who wanted to delve further into the differences and work towards resolving them? The Committee for Correspondence which included the delegates to Groningen.

I could go on and take issue with numerous other comments made, but then the tale would become too long. Suffice it to say that I deeply regret the effort of the Rev. Agema to re-write the history of the ICRC and to place it in such a totally negative light. No one claims that this infant organization is perfect. Everyone concedes that much more work needs to be done before it can even come close to reaching its potential. Nevertheless, it represents a small step forward in the task that our churches have, namely of promoting true ecumenicity.

Response:

I shall only make some remarks.

Ad "Apostolic Language": Rev. Vischer explains that his use of the word "branch" for a group of churches has its origin in Romans 11, where Paul compares the church with a tree. I understood that. But the question was and is: what is in Romans 11 meant with a branch: is that a person, an individual believer, or is that a group of churches? I showed that speaking about a branch of the church meaning a group of churches cannot correctly be based on Romans 11 since there, as in John 15, "branch" means clearly only the individual believer, a person. The same personal aspect is stressed in Rev. 7:9 when it speaks about the great multitude, consisting not of nations and

peoples and tribes, but of those individual believers chosen FROM the peoples and nations and tribes.

Ad "Improper Association": I regret that my own terminology was lacking, but if a reader from what I wrote got the impression that I accused my colleague of WCC ideas concerning the church and its ecumenical relations or of having a Kuyperian pluriformity concept, or of "denominationalism," this impression is wrong, for I did not do that. What I did was warn against the use of words, the use of a terminology, that can lead those who read them to wrong concepts and can be confusing.

I stated that "the use of the word 'branches' for the different church groups is common in the circles of the World Council of Churches" and I added: "In my

opinion, to use this WCC-coloured terminology in connection with the ICRC is unfortunate and confusing."

Coming to the warning against Kuyperian pluriformity-thinking, I quote again from what I wrote: "Does this [terminology] in practice mean that with the words 'diversity' and 'branches' in this context we are led back to the acceptance of the concept of the so-called pluriformity of the church?" With this I said that, in my opinion, this manner of speaking, this terminology, can lead the reader or hearer to such a pluriformity thinking.

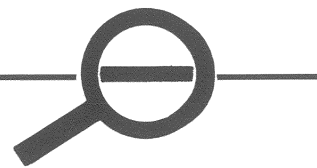
If what I wrote caused misunderstanding, I hope that this response has taken it away.

J. GEERTSEMA



PRESS REVIEW

By C. Van Dam



The Christian Reformed Synod 1989

The annual June synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) has come and gone. Since there is still great interest in the CRC in our circles, let us touch on a few items.

CRC and RCA

As is customary, the meetings were held on the campus of Calvin College. However, this year the synod of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) met there as well at the same time. R.W. Sparks reported in the *Outlook* (July/August) that the first formal meeting involving CRC and RCA delegates was not a common morning devotion (as many thought would take place) but a worship service which included the celebration of the Lord's Supper. There were several things that offended Sparks.

(1) The pre-communion liturgy was led by the Rev. Carol Westphal, a female pastor in the R.C.A., in spite of the fact that the C.R.C. officially teaches, based on the Biblical principle of "headship" that women may not serve in the offices of minister and elder. (2) The elements of the Lord's Supper

were distributed by elders, half of whom were the C.R.C. and R.C.A. The R.C.A. elders included three or four women. (3) The communion service was, in spite of C.R.C. policy to the contrary, an *Open* rather than *Close* service, since it was, for all practical purposes, detached from the life of a local congregation. In essence, it was a grand "private communion" held in public! (4) My chief concern, in the light of the above points, is that the sacrament was administered, not so much in remembrance of our Savior, but to demonstrate how far the R.C.A. has "progressed" beyond the C.R.C. Sparks walked out as the women elders assisted in the distribution of the elements of the Lord's Supper. Several CRC delegates who had gotten wind of what was coming had skipped the service entirely.

Interesting enough, the official publication of the CRC, *The Banner* reported that "the celebrative meetings between the Christian Reformed delegates and the delegates of the Reformed Church in America's General Synod were

important and heartwarming to those who participated. By words and actions we confessed our historical ties, our confessional unity, and our oneness in Christ" (*The Banner*, July 3, 1989, p. 5). Spark's comments give these glowing words a rather hollow ring. Also both *The Banner* and *Outlook* reported that none of the issues on which the CRC and the RCA are divided were formally discussed, nor are there apparently any plans to do so in the future.

All this raises many questions. To restrict ourselves to two. Firstly, does the organization of and participation in such a service not imply a recognition of women office-bearers? Is the CRC in this manner being led into a direction where open debate on the basis of Scripture and Confession has been unable to bring it? Secondly, how can true unity between the CRC and the RCA be possible if important differences such as the ordination of women to the office of minister and elder are not even dealt with? To an outsider it appears that issues like this are also contentious within the CRC and for that reason are not addressed with the RCA.

Let us dwell for a moment on the ordination of women. Mixed signals were coming from the CRC synod. On the one hand, the synod told a Washinton CRC to stop ordaining women elders; on the other hand, in another case, the synod in effect decided that "professors of theology and others who have signed the Form of Subscription may publicly write and speak in favor of women in all church offices without violating their subscription" (*Outlook*, p. 8). The common element in both decisions was that they were treated as matters of Church Order rather than as confessional issues.

Calvin Seminary appointments

Important appointments were made to Calvin Seminary. Rev. Arie Leder was appointed as Assistant Professor of Old Testament. In the interview, he "assured synod that he takes very seriously the historical nature of the book of Genesis and that he rejects the 'kernel-husk' method of interpreting the Bible" (*Outlook*, p. 8). Rev. Carl Bosma was also appointed Assistant Professor of Old Testament. It is interesting to note that both men were missionaries. Both also showed the relevance of the Old Testament to missions and the proclamation of the gospel in the world today. Rev. Sidney Greidanus was appointed to teach homiletics (or preaching). He is well known for his study of the exemplary — redemptive-historical controversy in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in the 1930s and 1940s (*Sola Scriptura. Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* [1970]). "True Reformed preaching, he said [at synod], concentrates on the 'sweep of God's self-revelation' and how that meets the culture of the day. A good sermon, he said, does not use a text to draw out moral examples for day-to-day living, even though many church members prefer such an approach" (*The Banner*, p. 14). "He also sees value in Catechism preaching, and recognizes the legitimacy of 'preaching the Catechism' as a summary of God's Word, and 'using the Catechism' to help explain a text in God's Word" (*Outlook*, p. 8).

Mid-America Reformed Seminary

The Synodical Interim Committee had recommended to the advisory committee that Mid-America Reformed Seminary of Orange City, Iowa be placed on the list of causes recommended to the churches for financial support. The Synodical advisory committee agreed and recommended the same to the synod. Nevertheless, Synod decided not to adopt this recommendation. This was a great disappointment for conservatives in the CRC who were looking for a "gesture that might promote healing in some

damaged relationships" (*Outlook*, p. 9). This negative decision passed in spite of the fact that all criteria for inclusion in such a list were met. Why then the rejection? An important argument was that "by recommending this cause to the churches we will be institutionalizing polarity and dissent" (*Outlook*, p. 9). This refers to the fact that Mid-America was established due to grave concerns about the teaching at Calvin Theological Seminary. The CRC is a house divided against itself. Denying support to Mid-America will probably only deepen the rifts. The CRC in this synodical decision basically indicated that Mid-America Reformed Seminary does not have a place in the CRC. It is telling

“. . . how can true unity between the CRC and the RCA be possible if important differences such as the ordination of women to the office of minister and elder are not even dealt with?”

that conservative churches outside the CRC are giving support to Mid-America. The Reformed Church in the United States does so officially by means of its synodical guidelines (see *The Reformed Herald*, June 1989, p. 6).

The apparent inability of the CRC to come to grips with issues that divide it is also seen in the creation-evolution debate that continues within her walls.

Creation — evolution


The teaching of three Calvin College professors was again debated because of the many appeals and protests that were received over the 1988 synod's handling of the issue. There is a real concern that these professors (C. Menninga, H. Van Till and D.A. Young) are teaching views that contradict the Scriptures. As far as I have been able to judge the matter, these concerns appear to be well-founded. A pastoral committee appointed by a previous synod continues to work with these professors although they have not changed their views and continue to have full freedom to express them. The matter was left with Calvin's board of

trustees and the pastoral committee. Notes Sparks:

Synod passed up a marvelous opportunity to reaffirm publicly its unqualified allegiance to the view of Scripture reflected in Belgic Confession Articles 3-7. That, after all, is the heart of the issue — not so much "creation" and "evolution," but our view of the nature and function of the Bible in all our living. I had hoped that, even if the teaching of the professors were not restricted, that synod would have eagerly made a strong statement on the Bible as the infallible Word of God in all its parts. Not only would this have given glory to the Lord and reassured the members of the C.R.C., but it would have given the study committee dealing with these issues a clear statement: that the leadership of the C.R.C. is fully committed to the full and complete inspiration of the words and message of the Bible.

In closing

Among other decisions, the synod decided to suspend ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Churches in South Africa (Potchefstroom) until 1992. Then synod will look at the situation again. In order to have fellowship restored, the RCSA must declare apartheid to be a sin and give evidence of repentance for complicity in the support of apartheid and the evils it has created. One observer noted: "I do find it strange that our synod dealt with the RCSA more severely than past synods have dealt with the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands (Synodical) over the sin of homosexuality" (*Outlook*, p. 10). It grieves many people both within and outside the CRC that the CRC maintains such a close relationship with the Synodical Churches. What Scripture specifically calls sin, such as homosexuality, is openly tolerated there; yet, there is no suspension of ecclesiastical fellowship with them. On the other hand there are clear indications that the will is there in the RCSA to address the evils occasioned by apartheid. Yet they are "disciplined." Would that the CRC would break off their relationship with the Synodical Churches until they turn from their way of sin. This relationship can only continue to harm the CRC.

Let me close with some of the concluding remarks of delegate R.W. Sparks in his report of this synod. After stating that he realizes that there is much love for the Lord in the CRC, he writes: ". . . there is a nagging question in my heart. It concerns the overall direction the CRC is taking. Are we really committed, as a denomination, to the authority of the Word of God which we confess. . . ?" (*Outlook*, p. 11). 

Grand Valley's first minister: Rev. P. Aasman

By a thankful member

Two years ago, on Sunday July 19, the Canadian Reformed Church at Grand Valley was instituted. By God's blessing, the church's membership has increased, property was purchased, but most momentous, the Lord granted this young church a pastor. With Rev. P. Aasman already actively working in the congregation, we hope you will enjoy this account of the installation, inaugural sermon, and the welcome evening.

Installation

On June 11, 1989, the congregation of Grand Valley gathered to hear God's Word and witness the installation of Rev. P. Aasman. Rev. P.G. Feenstra of Guelph conducted the service under the text, "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety." (Prov. 11:14)

Rev. Feenstra preached concerning leadership, under this theme: "The necessity of wise leadership for the safe landing of God's people." He emphasized, first, that a leader takes the helm of the ship; and, second, that a leader involves a steering committee. One who takes the helm must be wise, trusting in the Lord, a servant, able to speak with authority and display great enthusiasm. Rev. Feenstra added that the minister does not make decisions on his own. Help and advice is available. Rev. Feenstra concluded by saying, "God did not promise an easy passage, but a safe landing. Wise leaders direct us to Him. Let it be said of this congregation, 'Jesus is at the helm.' Then you will arrive at the promised land and be forever safe."

Inaugural sermon

In the afternoon service, Rev. P. Aasman preached his inaugural sermon, with the added privilege of administering the sacrament of baptism.

He began the sermon by saying that this was a special day — a new beginning for congregation and minister alike, and yet, it was a continuation of the proclamation of God's Word. Rev. Aasman related this beginning to the beginning of Christ's



Welcome to the ministerial family

ministry. The sermon's theme on Mark 1:35-39 was, "Christ sets out to declare the kingdom of God in Galilee." He emphasized three points: Christ's preparation in prayer; His departure from Caper-



With music and song . . .

naum; and His urgent mission in Galilee. Christ had declared the kingdom of God in Capernaum. Now in prayer He urgently sought to preach in Galilee. Continuing to relate the then to now, Rev. Aasman concluded with these words: "Let us begin this small new season of preaching. Let us begin it in a way that will please our Father, so that the great new season of preaching which Christ had brought might continue to work powerfully in our midst. For then He will accomplish through us, all that He plans for this world. Than we shall have in perfection all the promises of the Kingdom of God."

The welcome evening

On Tuesday evening, June 13, the congregation gathered together once again — this time to extend their warmest welcome to Rev. Aasman and family. Council chairman br. W. Wildeboer, as master of ceremonies, especially welcomed the Aasman family. While thanking the congregation for all their co-opera-

tion with him as council chairman, br. Wildeboer passed on to Rev. Aasman the official meeting gavel.

During this evening, we enjoyed no less than 7 singing groups (many welcome songs), 3 different skits, poems, a unique painting presentation, a family identification presentation and much more. We only mention two items which were quite unique. For a family identifica-

tion presentation, each family was described and a related gift was given to the Aasmans that left no mistake about who was who. Later, sr. Rene Jaspers presented about thirty watercolours, each depicting a certain aspect of each family. To receive the paintings, each family had to guess which represented them, and give a donation to the church's building fund.

At the close of the evening, Rev. Aasman sincerely thanked everyone for a heartwarming, memorable evening, and he expressed the hope that the Lord would continue to bless this congregation. After the singing of Hymn 63, Rev. Aasman concluded the evening with prayer. It had been a most enjoyable evening.

C

Rev. G. Wieske's farewell at Lincoln

By L. Rozema

On Sunday afternoon July 16, 1989, the Rev. G. Wieske preached his farewell sermon.

In many a heart there was both sadness and joy. Sadness because our minister and his family were leaving for Neerlandia. The Wieske family had quickly become "Lincolnites" and now after four years it was like part of the family was leaving. There was also a feeling of joy and thankfulness because the Lord had provided for us in the last four years. He had given His church a faithful minister in the Rev. Wieske and Lincoln had been blessed with him.

Rev. Wieske had chosen 1 Cor. 2:1-5 as text for his sermon: "When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

Rev. Wieske chose as his theme "Paul's stress on the importance of the true preaching of the gospel" and he explained what the true gospel preaching consists of by stressing its *content*, *result* and *aim*.

Under the content, Rev. Wieske explained that the full gospel was now revealed by God and proclaimed by Paul: Jesus Christ and Him crucified! This makes for unity. Jesus Christ crucified means that we are sinners and that our old nature must be crucified with Him. It

means that each has to humble himself and count others better than the self.

The result of true gospel preaching is that sinners turn into true children of God even today. There is temptation for the preacher such as: wanting to be popular and catering to the people. Only by the grace of God can a sinful, incompetent human being become a true gospel preacher. It is the Spirit of Christ who can turn sinful people into children of God. This Spirit of Christ is called the Spirit of

power. This Spirit of power can make hard hearts repent also in Lincoln.

Blessed is the congregation that is fed on Christ alone. Such a church, such a congregation is indestructible. Men are not important. The preacher is nothing. You in Lincoln are saved by God's Word. Study the Bible and the Confessions. Demand that only this gospel be preached from Lincoln's pulpit. In that way the true unity of the church, the unity of all believers will be preserved.



The Wieske's in the pulpit together, saying, "Thank you to all!"

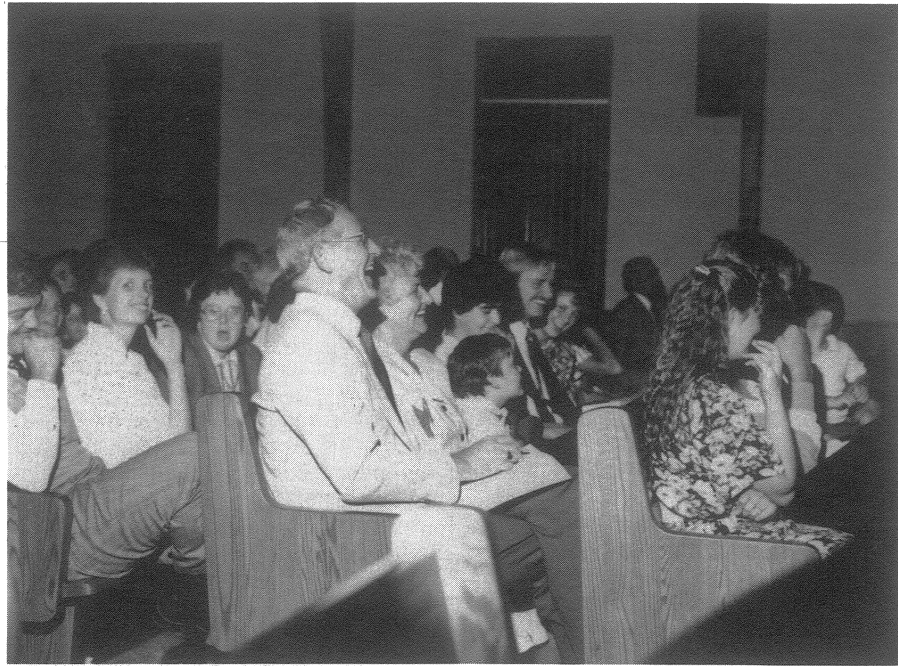
We ended the service by singing about the church's one foundation being Jesus Christ her Lord.

After the blessing the vice chairman of the consistory, br. H. de Vries, read letters from the churches at Ancaster, Hamilton, Chatham, and Smithville.

Last but not least Rev. Agema climbed the pulpit bringing greetings of the church at Attercliffe. His was a dual duty because he also was delegated by Classis Ont. South. He thanked Rev. Wieske for the work done in Lincoln and Attercliffe but especially in the classical region. He reminded all that God is pleased to proclaim His gospel using people, and when we thank Rev. Wieske, we thank God.

The next phase of the farewell came on the evening of July 20. The congregation met together with the Wieske family to bid them farewell.

The chairman of the consistory, br. H. de Vries, opened the evening. He welcomed everyone after which br. Snow took over. We were entertained by the Kindergarten children, the Young People



The evening was entertaining!



Kindergarten children singing to the Wieske family

Society presenting a comedy choir, and the John Calvin School children. The Teen Club had a puppet show. The 1989 Confession Class and all catechism students presented a gold-plated pen and pencil set, while the Women Society had embroidered a table cloth with all the names of the congregation on it for the Wieskes. Br. Bert Hopman and Carl Oosterhoff played and sang a duet. The Couples Club gave their contribution. Br. Ed Jager thanked Rev. Wieske for all the help and the good example of hospitality from which the deacons benefited in their work. Mrs. Lydia Schulenberg presented them with a photo album of the life in the

congregation. Br. P. Schuller, as one of the senior members of the congregation, had the pleasant task of presenting the Wieskes with a gift from the whole congregation: a beautifully carved blue bird made by br. P. Hensen. Br. H. de Vries spoke on behalf of the consistory and the congregation. He said: we became proud of the Wieskes because they became ours. "We will miss Mrs. Wieske's cheerful smile and helping hand in the congregation." "We all know that 'unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.' You have worked and lived with us. This labour has not been in vain." He concluded with "Farewell

and may God give you His indispensable blessing on your work in Neerlandia."

After this Rev. and Mrs. Wieske went to the pulpit together to speak their appreciation. He thanked those who made the evening a memorable one, and named and thanked each of the members of the Anchor band individually. He said "be assured that we leave with a tinge of sadness because we tasted and experienced the communion of saints in Lincoln. He admonished all to serve the Lord with gladness and to serve Him together in unity." C

CHURCH NEWS



ACCEPTED TO:

Watford, ON: Drs. D. Moes of Langley, BC

Bedfordale, Australia: Rev. A. van Delden of Lynden, WA, U.S.A.

DECLINED TO:

Fergus, ON: Rev. J. Mulder of Burlington-West, ON

CALLED TO:

London, ON: Rev. G. Nederveen of Brampton, ON

Winnipeg, MB: Rev. P.G. Feenstra of Guelph, ON

Fraser Valley Annual League Day

By Alice Hoeksema

The twenty-sixth annual Fraser Valley Women's Societies' League Day was held on Wednesday, June 21, 1989. It was hosted this year by the Women's Society of Chilliwack, "The LORD is Our Refuge."

Mrs. J. Bos was the chairlady for the morning.

The meeting was opened with the singing of Psalm 37:1-3, Scripture reading of Psalm 73 and prayer.

In the word of welcome we were made aware that there were some special guests in our midst: Mrs. H. Versteeg, missionary's wife from Irian Jaya, some of the ICRC delegates' wives, as well as guests from various other places, such as Vernon, and Holland.

After the singing of Psalm 128:1,2, Mrs. A. Vanlaar was given the opportunity to present her introduction, titled "Ecclesiastes teaches us to be content." She stressed that we could not be content without the LORD. As Christian women, we should not seek contentment in weight loss, nice homes, clothes, etc. This is what the *world* sees as contentment. We sang Ps. 40:3,4,7.

Opportunity was then given for discussion of the introduction. Many interesting comments and questions were dealt with.

Talked about rather extensively was how we should use our talents and that these should be used to the fullest, even though this sometimes seems impossible. We were rightly reminded to use our abilities in the church, watching at the same time not to become so involved that we become too busy, at the cost of our families. It was noted that even though we have specific talents, sometimes we must be content to accept whatever else the LORD gives us to do, e.g., raise a family rather than make a career for ourselves. To be able to raise a family is the greatest talent.

Proverbs 31:10 was then brought up. This text asks "A good wife, who can find?" It seems to say that women may do more than only housework, since this woman bought fields, sold merchandise, etc. All these activities were done in order that she, as wife and mother, could take care of her household. It was justly told us to remember that in all we do, we are to glorify God.

Another point of discussion dealt with the idea of positive thinking and its many aspects. In this idea, the world says "I can be whatever I want to be." As Christian wives and mothers, how far can we go in being content with ourselves before we become complacent, or gain too high an opinion of ourselves? In conclusion it was said that we must always strive to better ourselves. If we could see our sin and misery then we could never be content with ourselves, although we must be content with the place the LORD has given us. We are who we are, as the LORD has made us. Contentment is a gift of God.

A point which was discussed, but never really resolved, dealt with Ecclesiastes 7:28, where it speaks about wisdom in this way, that the preacher found only one man among a thousand who acted properly with wisdom, but among all these a woman could not be found. It was generally concluded that prophetically speaking, the one man in a thousand refers to the one good Man, our Mediator, Christ. Could the Preacher, in his day, really not find one wise woman?

With this thought in mind, the discussion of the morning's topic was concluded. Mrs. M. de Glint from the Cloverdale society was then given the floor for the free contribution. She read to us a poem entitled "Joyful Purpose!" The poem dealt with how even a handicapped child has a joyful purpose in life.



We also had with us a special guest, Mrs. Houweling, from Australia. She nicely explained to us how it is that she finally came to see that Australia truly is 'Down Under'! You see, during the flight, the passengers were shown the flight path. They would be flying straight up to Japan. From this she could see that Australia was really 'down under.' Mrs. Houweling then read us a letter on behalf of the sisters of the *Free Reformed Bible Study Group*, wishing us all a fruitful discussion and a pleasant day together in the LORD.

The chairlady heartily thanked all those who participated in, or contributed to the making of a pleasant and fruitful morning, especially Mrs. Vanlaar for her excellent introduction. In closing the morning session we were requested to rise and sing the League song.

Mrs. K. Jagersma led us in reading (Eph. 6,10-17) and prayer, and split us into two groups for lunch, with one group eating downstairs and the other eating in the educational building across the parking lot.

It took quite some prodding to get the ladies re-assembled to start the afternoon session. Mrs. Henry Veldman from the Lynden Women's Society chaired the afternoon. She had us sing Psalm 93:1,4 after which she introduced Dr. W.D. Meester of Lynden, Washington. He was well-qualified to speak on the subject "Christian Ethics and Medical Problems." He made us aware that his speech wouldn't be too lengthy seeing that the 'Men's washroom' had not been available for him. The main theme of Dr. Meester's speech was that we should practice good stewardship. He summed this up in four parts: we were to:

- 1) Work in this creation,
- 2) Protect this creation,
- 3) Preserve this creation,
- 4) Heal in this creation,

doing all this in covenantal love.

In our discussion on this subject, we touched upon many interesting topics.

It was asked whether our daughters should be encouraged to become nurses. "Well, this would be difficult, due to unions, the abortion issue, etc., but there is a great demand for Christian nurses especially in private care facilities."

Human in vitro fertilization was quite extensively discussed. It was basically

concluded that when all the embryos are used and no freezing is involved, this method may be used by Christian couples.

On the topics of euthanasia and abortion, it was rightly acknowledged that as Christians we could not allow these procedures to be carried out.

Many other areas of the medical field were discussed, including scientific research. About this it was said that we may use the knowledge that God has given us, but we may not use it where it goes against God's will, (e.g., tampering with human embryos).

In conclusion, Dr. Meester pointed out that, although we have healing, we haven't overcome sickness and death, due to sin, but that Christ has overcome

death for us, and that we are on our way to a perfect world.

Dr. Meester was heartily thanked and applause was given. Thereafter we sang Hymn 48:1-4.

The entertainment provided by the women's society of Surrey was called "Women in History." There were women who had influenced important men in our church history. These women were portrayed by the ladies of the society, who were appropriately dressed in the style of that particular time. As the women came forward, the life of the woman portrayed was narrated to us. Some of these women were:

Monica, the mother of Augustine,
Catherine Von Bora, wife of Martin Luther,

Idellette Van Buren, wife of John Calvin,
Juliana Van Stolberg, mother of
William of Orange,
Frouwe Venema, Hendrick de Cock's wife,
Pietje Baltus, spiritual mother
of Abraham Kuyper,
and

Professor K. Schilder's wife.

After some general business matters were taken care of, hearty thanks were given to the Chilliwack society for a nice day and a good meal. We concluded the day with prayer and the singing of Hymn 46:1,2.

A day like this is long remembered not only for the topics and discussions, but also for the communion of saints which was in full evidence that day. ☪

The Women's Society Annual League Day — Manitoba

On June 22, 1989, the Annual League Day of the women's societies in Manitoba was held. Approximately 70 women from Winnipeg and Carman attended.

Our day began with a fresh cup of coffee. At 10:00 Mrs. Henrietta Raap, the vice president of the Winnipeg society "God's Word as Our Guide" called the meeting to order. We sang together of Psalm 68:8&12 after which Mrs. Raap led us in prayer. Scripture reading was from Romans 8:18-39. Words of welcome were extended to all those present but especially to our guest from Alberta. The minutes of the previous League Day were adopted as read.

Our chairman then gave a warm welcome to our morning speaker, Rev. den Hollander, whose topic was "Pastoral Care and Psychiatry."

He began by showing us that an office-bearer has a great task and that because of the brokenness of life, there are many situations in the members' lives which can cause confusion and depression. Since one does not hesitate to ask the advice of a medical doctor should the need arise, also on the same level should a psychiatrist be placed.

Situations must be assessed properly and the pastor must decipher between sin and sickness. Often organic abnormalities cause sinful behaviour.

A wrong behaviour may also have a history which needs to be considered before it can be changed. Faith cannot heal nearsightedness nor can it heal all

syndromes and complexes. At times such as these, pastoral care is insufficient. Psychiatry gives us more insight into ourselves and makes us aware of what is in our heart and mind. It searches out and removes those obstacles blocking the life of a believer.

But through all this we must not forget about grace and the healing power of the gospel. Many problems such as with relationships and lifestyles, can be avoided by living an obedient life to God.

Rev. den Hollander was thanked for his speech. We sang of Psalm 23:1&2. Our discussion dealt with some of the following questions;

1. Are elders adequately prepared for their task?
2. How does one find a Christian psychiatrist?
3. How can we help other members with mental problems?

After closing our discussion the chairman gave to sing Psalm 23:3 after which she presented our speaker with a book in appreciation for the work he put into his speech. The Reverend read of Psalm 130 after which he asked for a blessing over our noonday meal.

In a buffet style, the ladies enjoyed a lunch consisting of various refreshing salads and a fruit plate for dessert.

After giving thanks, we joined in singing the League Day Song. We read of Hebrews 1&2 and sang of Psalm 34:3.

Mrs. Ardis Kuik was welcomed to the floor and began her speech on "Angels."

Angels were created before the foundation of the earth. There are two types of angels — those who are steadfast to God and those who have fallen from grace.

The words cherubim, messenger, sons of God, and living creatures are also used in place of angels. We read of them many times carrying out their various tasks of judgment, mercy guidance, bringing good tidings, and God's message, protection, and glorifying God.

They appeared in many forms in the old and new testament but also today — though we do not see them — we may believe they are still performing their tasks of guiding and protecting God's children to the end when we may sing with the angels "Glory to God."

After singing Psalm 91:4, question period was opened.

1. Where in Revelation does it say the four living creatures were angels?
2. Are there such things as guardian angels?
3. Do angels carry our souls to heaven when we die?

Mrs. Ardis Kuik was presented with a gift certificate in thanks of a job well done.

The Carman Society thanked Winnipeg for an educational and enjoyable day.

We ended by praising our Lord with the singing of Hymn 59:1,2&3. Mrs. Henrietta Raap closed the meeting in prayer. ☪

PRESS RELEASE

A report of a meeting of "Anchor" Canadian Reformed Association for the handicapped, on August 18, 1989.

The chairman, br. G. Lodder opened the meeting with Scripture reading; we sang Ps. 89:1; after this he led us in prayer. The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted. Various reports from the committees were then tabled and commented upon.

The Director's Report — The director reports that the construction of the addition is almost finalized, it looks great! Derek Kok has moved in (August 18th) and Janine Smid is expected on the 28th of August. Miss Stya Hofsink and Miss Lucie Hekman have been hired as additional staff. At the home, everything is fine with staff and residents.

The Property Committee Report — The construction at Anchor Home is in its final stages. Considering the tight schedule the project has run very smoothly with good cooperation all around.

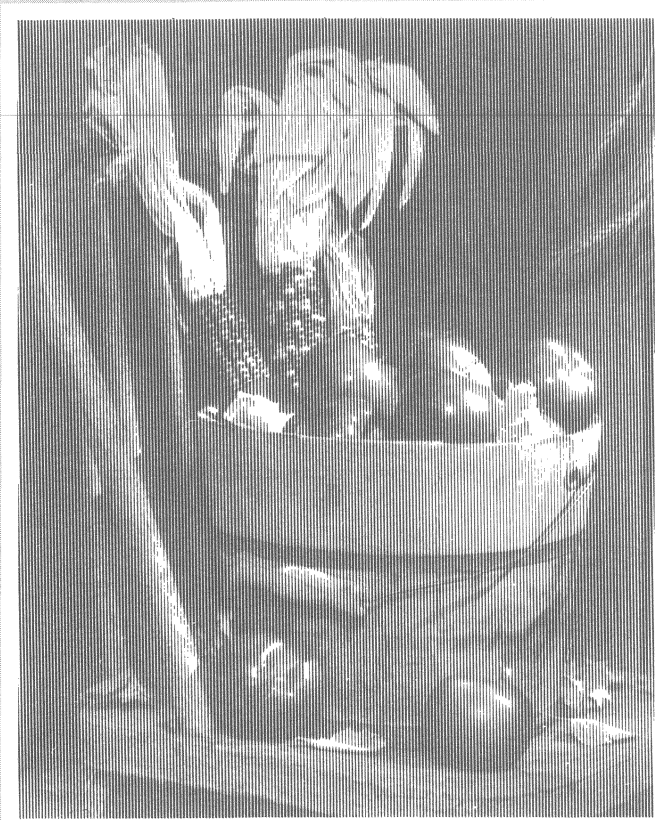
The P.R. Committee Report — A new slide presentation is being made. These slides will deal with the new addition and the Anchor Camp, and will be available for use by all the schools and local congregations. A letter from br. H. DeJonge announces a baseball tournament to be held on September 22 and 23, 1989, the raindate September 29 and 30, 1989. Proceeds will go to the Anchor summer camp. Concession stands at the ball diamond will serve food and drinks and "Anchor" is urged to promote and support this tournament. The Board supports this idea and the board members are told to be at Milgrove Park on September 22 and 23, 1989.

The Summer Camp Committee Report — A report from sr. R. Beijes states that the Anchor camp this year was a success and that the participants really enjoyed themselves.

The Treasurer's Report — It reports that he is looking at all possibilities for loaning money due to the disappointing result of the building drive.

After the press release was read, corrected and approved, the meeting was closed with the singing of Ps. 89:3 and prayer.

On behalf of the Board,
K. Jager



PSALM 136

Geneva, 1562

1. O give thanks un-to the LORD,
God of gods, with one ac-cord,
For His stead-fast love is sure;
It shall ev-er-more en-dure.

12. He *remembered all our woes*
And *redeemed us* from our foes,
For His *steadfast love is sure*;
It shall *evermore endure*.

13. Food to *all does He supply*.
Praise our *God, enthroned on high*,
For His *steadfast love is sure*;
It shall *evermore endure*.

By Rev. W.W.J. VanOene

The regeneration is a work of God and not of man. With a work of man we may speak of a "judgment of charity," because man can be untrue. With God's work, with regard to God we are not allowed to speak of a "judgment of charity." This sounds then very kind and sweet, but it is dishonouring God, sacrilegious. Also for this reason already this Conclusion of Utrecht is to be condemned. What we are permitted to say with respect to man we are not yet allowed to say with respect to God.

Further it is true, of course, that not all who are natural descendants of Israel are also spiritual Israelites. Not all natural seed of the believers is spiritual seed of Abraham. We are not to lose sight of this nor should this be overlooked in preaching and other work by the office-bearers. This has to be taken into account.

Now, however, there comes the question: when it is to be conceded that this required presupposition of regeneration is not in all cases correct, and we do not know in which cases it is correct, and when this incorrectness in some or in many cases has to be taken into account, and when we have to count with its possible incorrectness in each individual case, *what practical value* does then that presupposition or that "holding to be regenerated until" of the beginning of the Conclusion of Utrecht have? What's the use of this "hold to be until," what can be done with it in practice? If baptism is based on the presumptive regeneration, then this "hold to be until" has real, great, practical value, for in that case the administration of baptism depends upon that presupposition, upon that "hold to be until." But when one does not want to let that "hold to be regenerated until" count as ground for the administration of baptism, then this "hold to be regenerated until," that presupposition of regeneration lacks all real, practical value. In that case it is merely an idle, empty, meaningless expression.

Not Empty

We now come to the quotation from our Confession. The Conclusion says: "Moreover, Synod in agreement with our Confession maintains that 'the Sacraments are not empty or meaningless signs, so as to deceive us, but visible signs and seals of an invisible thing, by means of which God works in us by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Art. 33), and that more particularly baptism is called 'the washing of regeneration' and 'the washing away of sins,' because God would 'assure us by this divine pledge and sign that we are spiritually cleansed from our sins as really as we are outwardly washed with water.'"

Thus far for the time being.

What purpose are these quotations supposed to serve? Neither in 1905 nor in the present time is there anyone in our Reformed Churches who denies or opposes this.

In these quotations it is said and set forth what the sacraments are and what they do when they are received in faith and when one works in faith with his having received them. But this does not say a thing about the point whether the infants of believers are or are not already regenerated at their baptism. This is something which is not mentioned in these quotations with even one word. However, *that was now precisely the issue in the conflict*

then and now: Are these children to be held to be regenerated from their early youth on, at least when they were baptized? That's what it says in the beginning of the Conclusion of Utrecht 1905. That is supposed to be according to the Confession of our Churches. That was therefore to be demonstrated. And now they produce quotations *which do not refer to that with one word.* It is clear that it was the intention with these quotations to give the impression *as if* our Confession with these words did teach indeed such a presumptive regeneration of the children of believers, whereas, however, these Confessional Formulas do not do that in reality with even one word, not in these quotations either.

If, *in this connection*, they wanted to derive any proof from these quotations, it should rather be that the regeneration and the washing away of sins are done by baptism (as Rome teaches), or at least are coupled with it (as the Lutherans state), and that therefore all baptized children are indeed regenerated and have been cleansed from their sins, but . . . as both Rome and the Lutherans assert: with the possibility that these gifts are lost again.

One comes to such perversity when one quotes at random in order to make a certain impression without checking seriously what one quotes and to what purpose specific words are quoted. This is very suitable for browbeating people but not for serving the truth and to cause it to be known clearly and well, as it ought to be in the Church of the Lord.

The Prayer

A further quotation reads: "Wherefore our Church in the prayer after baptism 'thanks and praises God that He has forgiven us and our children all our sins, through the blood of His beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through His Holy Spirit as members of His only begotten Son, and so adopted us to be His children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism.'"

However, does this contain even one word saying that we are to hold the children of the believers to already have been regenerated? For that, and that alone was the issue in 1905. That's what this first part of the Conclusion of Utrecht 1905 says. For this, therefore, proof ought to be adduced. Is that indeed being done here with these words? If one wishes to take the words from the prayer of thanksgiving in this vein, it is stated thereby that at least when they are being or have been baptized all the children of the believers do have the forgiveness of sins and by the Holy Spirit have been adopted as members of Christ and children of God. But in that case it is not becoming when on our part we "hold them to be until." This qualified, restrictive, provisional conditional provision indicated by the "until" must be dropped, does not have a right to be there at all. The matter is, however, that in the prayer of thanksgiving no mention whatever is made of the real, already-having-taken-place regeneration of the then baptized child, but that it only stated which benefits of salvation God has given to His congregation, the believers and their children and of which each of them becomes a partaker and which he can enjoy through faith alone. But whether this benefaction with respect to a specific person

and in the case of those particular children *is already a realized benefaction, one that has indeed been executed*, or is still only a gift in promise coupled with the demand of faith and conversion is not decided by these words. That question is not the point in those words of this prayer. And for this reason nothing is being proved by that quotation from this passage of the prayer of thanksgiving regarding the assertion in the beginning of this Conclusion; and that would have been required.

When, therefore, it now follows in that Conclusion as a triumphant exclamation: ‘so that our Confessional Standards clearly teach that the sacrament of baptism signifies and seals the washing away of our sins by the blood and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that is, the justification and the renewal by the Holy Spirit as benefits which God has bestowed upon our seed,’ this exclamation is wholly improper. For that was not at stake at all in 1905. That was neither then nor is now the point at issue. This is merely a cry of victory over an imaginary scoring, while one has left the real adversary untouched. They make a show as if, while they ignored the matter which was at stake. They wanted to give the impression as if they had proved that the quotations taken from Confession, Catechism and Form for the Baptism teach that we are to hold the seed of the covenant to be actually regenerated, whereas all those quotations have not done so with even one letter.

Has Given

It is also said here: “which God has given to our seed.” Of course. But this “giving” can be in the promise or in its realization. The latter is the point in the beginning of the Conclusion of 1905. But whether the latter is also meant with this “has given” is not revealed here in these last words of this victory-shout.

Lindeboom’s Addition

Finally, the last statement follows in the Conclusion of Utrecht 1905. It reads: “Synod is of the opinion that the representation that every elect child is on that account already in fact regenerated even before baptism can be proved neither on Scriptural nor on confessional grounds, seeing that God fulfills His promise sovereignly in His own time, whether before, during or after baptism. It is hence imperative to be circumspect in one’s utterances on this matter, so as not to desire to be wise beyond that which God has revealed.”

This is a part which was added to the preceding upon the insistence of Prof. Lindeboom. He was not prepared to accept what preceded it and to co-sign it if this was not added to it. That was done then. But this contradicts the beginning of this Conclusion. For in that beginning it is said that according to the Confession of our churches we are bound to hold the seed of the covenant to be regenerated until . . . and therefore as having already been regenerated, also at baptism.

However, in the last paragraph it is declared: God has not revealed to us at what time the elect seed is regenerated. Neither the Holy Scripture nor the Confession inform us about that moment or declare anything about it. Thus one cannot, at the same time, accept both the beginning and the end of this Conclusion. These two are in conflict with each other. If the one is correct, the other is incorrect, and the other way around. Without twisting and turning — as should not be necessary nor

is permitted to happen in the case of a confessional or ecclesiastical declaration about the doctrine, — one cannot at the same time truly take both the beginning and the end of this Conclusion of Utrecht 1905 for one’s account and express one’s agreement with it.

Overview

When, after having considered the various parts of this Conclusion, we overlook the whole of it, we notice that there is no logical coherent unity. It is a loose conglomerate of various pieces which not only lack a true logical mutual connection, but are even in conflict with each other. This Conclusion is a bit of a jumble in its parts. It is obvious: two different thoughts have been combined here somehow or other, without asking whether there was a good, logical structure, in order to keep the advocates of both together, and to make an end to the preceding disputes. The one who drew up this Conclusion, Dr. H. H. Kuyper, did see that he could not maintain the assertion of his father, Dr. A. Kuyper Sr., regarding presumptive regeneration as ground for baptism. But he did his best to hold on to it as much as possible, and did this with the words at the beginning of this Conclusion and by speaking of “less correct.”

And others, such as Prof. M. Noordzij and others, were happy already that the presumptive regeneration as ground for baptism was let go of, be it not completely, and that in this Conclusion serious self-examination was urged in the preaching. Prof. Lindeboom acquiesced in this Conclusion if the piece that he wanted in was added.

But thus this whole declaration regarding the point of presumptive regeneration is a compromise, with all the drawbacks that come with it, regarding lack of mutual logical coherence of the parts, putting beside each other what intrinsically does not harmonize, rather conflicts with each other, assertions without proofs, show without substance.

However, the unity of the churches was preserved, and the rest could return as it did for years indeed.

Thus far the evaluation and analysis by Dr. S. Greijdanus.

Binding

Were the churches bound by this synodical decision?

Of course they were bound by it as they are by every decision of which they cannot prove that it is contrary to God’s Word.

What was done later on, however, in 1942, was completely wrong. Then this Conclusion was elevated to the rank of a confessional statement. It was even declared that nothing should be taught in the churches which was not in complete accordance with it.

It is a riddle how one cannot teach anything which is not in full accordance with a self-contradictory statement.

In 1905 it was not the intention at all to issue a doctrinal pronouncement by which all were bound.

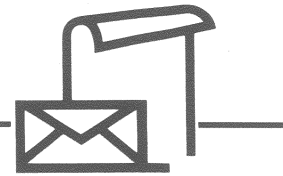
The Synod of 1905 endeavoured to bring peace in the churches by raising a warning hand in the direction of Dr. A. Kuyper Sr. and his pupils, although it did not issue an outright condemning statement.

Understandably, one of the strongest opponents of the theory of presumptive regeneration wrote: “Decisions have been made by which from now on all will have to abide.”

We may ask how men such as Prof. Lindeboom could go along with a sentence such as that we are to “hold the children to be regenerated.”

— *To be continued*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Dear Editor:

Anarchy on the organ bench with the blessing of Synod

It is gratifying to know that also in the twentieth century the Genevan Psalter continues to occupy an honourable place in many churches. After all, of all that Calvinism has given us in the area of culture, this treasury of melodies is without question most beautiful. These melodies form a wonderful unity and are characterized by both simplicity and majesty. Therefore, they are worthy vehicles for the Psalms, which throughout the ages have been loved by Christians for their theological riches and literary beauty.

This Psalter, in whole or in part, is used in the worship services of Christian congregations not only in Europe (Switzerland, France, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the Netherlands) but also on other continents. Quite recently a new Malayan version was published for the churches in Indonesia. A complete English-language Psalter is also available in the *Book of Praise: the Anglo-Genevan Psalter* of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

It is also gratifying to know that this English Psalter has followed the example of the *Liedboek voor de Kerken* in the Netherlands for its music notation. Present-day musicologists were faced with some difficult problems in restoring the original version of 1562. As musicologist I am convinced that the problems of notation have been admirably solved, so that one may and can speak of it as one of the very best notations for the Genevan melodies available today.

Thus, all the more it is to be regretted that the General Synod of Winnipeg recently decided, "to confirm that the above decision — to us the *Liedboek voor de Kerken* notation — does not compel consistories, organists, and congregations of the Canadian Reformed Churches to change the traditional practice of singing certain psalms with the use of chromatically altered notes since it is not in the province of Synod to make such a decision."

With this, Synod in fact contradicts itself. It says that, "it is not in the province of Synod to make such a decision," yet it does make a decision in this regard by saying that everyone must do what is

good in his own eyes. In this way, this precious treasure is handed over to the arbitrariness of people.

I have learned from friends that, in making the decision, Synod did not seek the advice of musical experts. Had it done so, I am sure that the decision would have been: "Follow the notation in the *Book of Praise* as much as possible and educate the congregation in it, so that she learns to honour the treasures which the Reformation has bequeathed us."

I hope with all my heart that Synod will return from this error, and that in the meantime the Canadian Reformed organists are wiser than their ecclesiastical authorities by playing the melodies according to the notation in the *Book of Praise*, thus teaching them to the congregations. In this way, the generation of our time may grow up having learned to treat their heritage of history with respect, making correct use of the indestructible melodies in the highest function to which we have been called on earth: the service of the Lord.

Dr. Bernard Smilde

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty

Hello Busy Beavers,

Did you ever wonder why Our Little Magazine has that name?

I'll tell you.

Before "*Clarion*" was called "*Clarion*," it had the name *Canadian Reformed Magazine*.

Someone decided that children should have their share in this magazine. And so the children's section was called *Our Little Magazine*. And that's what it has been ever since.

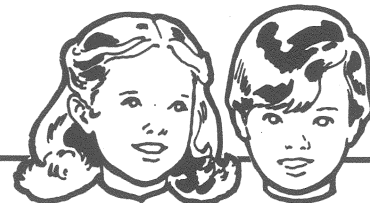
"Magazine" comes from a word meaning "storehouse." A magazine is like a storehouse of pictures, stories, puzzles, articles, etc., don't you think?

That's what *Our Little Magazine* is again today! With thanks to all the Busy Beavers who sent in the goodies to share with the others!

FALL

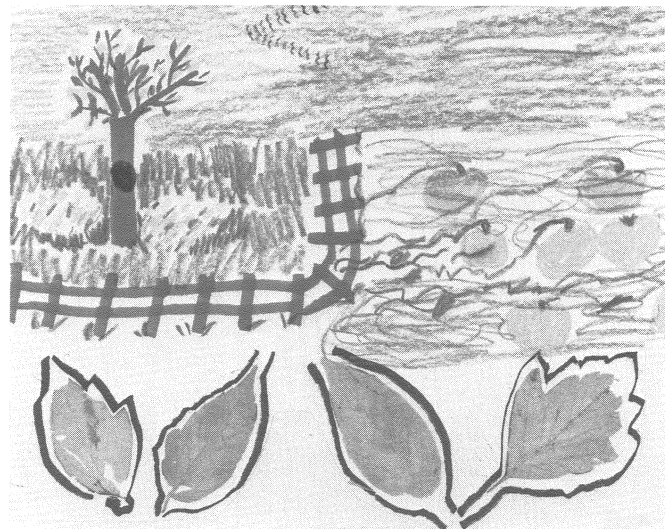
by Busy Beaver Hannah Helder

Summer is over and fall has come,
The new season will bring lots of fun.
You can jump around, or play in the leaves —
Afterwards rake them, if you please!



FALL PICTURE

by Busy Beaver Jennifer Siebenga



We all join in wishing the Busy Beavers who have an October birthday a very happy and thankful day with their family and friends. May you all have lots of laughter, fun and good times. Above all, we wish for you the blessing and guidance of our heavenly Father in the year ahead of you.

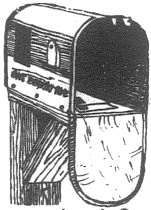
October

Agnes Timmerman	1	Will VanOene	20
Robert Van Middelkoop	1	Laura Aasman	21
Laura Harsevoort	2	Cheryl Vande Burgt	21
Arlene Winkelaar	3	Mary-Lynn Lof	23
Karissa Veldman	5	Sharon Devries	26
Vanessa DeJong	6	Bryan Eelhart	28
Kim Vis	7	Henry Moesker	29
Erin Siebenga	17	Tonya Beintema	30
Yvonne Van Egmond	17	Denise Elliott	31
Anne Van Laar	18		

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do you read comic books?
 Do you read other books?
 Which do you like reading better?
 Can you think of reasons why you like reading comic books?
 Do you think they are a good way to spend your time?
 Tell us what YOU think.

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



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Jeremy Vandenbos*. We are happy to have you join us. Can you tell us why your dog is called "Dizzy," Jeremy? What do you do to help look after all those animals?

Congratulations on doing so well in your swimming lessons, *Leanne Beukema*. What did you like best about your camping holiday, Leanne? And how do you feel about being in school again?

Hello, *Jenny Stroop*. How did you enjoy your summer? Have you sent in your answers to the Summer Quiz Contest? Tell me when you get a pen pal, all right, Jenny?

I'm glad you had such a good time meeting your friend again, *Deborah Verhoeff*. I think you must have learned something doing those quizzes, don't you think?

Thank you for the poem, *Laura and Nicole Aasman*. I think the Busy Beavers will like it, too. How does it feel to be back in school, girls?

You are lucky to be able to watch your niece grow up, *Wendy Jansen*. She probably loves it when you teach her a new word. What part of the lunar eclipse did you think was the most impressive, Wendy?

Busy Beavers, we need a pen pal for:
 Jenny Stroop (Age 10)
 193 Dianne Dr.
 Orangeville, Ontario
 L9W 3W3

Quiz Time!

MIRACLES

Match the miracle with the person.

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 1. devils were cast out of him | a. Elisha |
| 2. survived a snake bite | b. John |
| 3. walked on water | c. Noah |
| 4. increased the widow's oil | d. Legion |
| 5. saw a burning bush | e. Zechariah |
| 6. had a vision of an angel measuring Jerusalem | f. Moses |
| 7. journeyed to heaven on a whirlwind | g. Paul |
| 8. wrote about a vision of heaven | h. Peter |
| 9. turned water into wine | i. Elijah |
| 10. survived a flood on a boat he built | j. Jesus |
- (answers below)

MIND BOGLERS!

A Crowd of Cows

If you saw a cow in front of two cows, a cow behind two cows, and a cow between two cows, how many cows would you see altogether?

Mike and Mark

Mark is now the same age that Mike was four years ago. Four years ago, Mike was twice as old as Mark. Mike is now twelve. How old is Mark?

Answers below

WORDSEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Lee-Ann Beintema*

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

Look for:

- cat
- cow
- ape
- bat
- brush
- name
- dish
- bird
- cane
- soap

Answers

Miracles:

1. d; 2. g; 3. h; 4. a; 5. f; 6. e; 7. i; 8. b; 9. j; 10. c.

A crowd of cows

You would see three cows standing in a line!

Mike and Mark

Mike is now twelve. Four years ago, he was eight. If Mark is now the same age Mike was four years ago, Mark is now eight.

Bye for now, Busy Beavers.

Keep busy!

Let's hear from you!

Love from your
Aunt Betty