

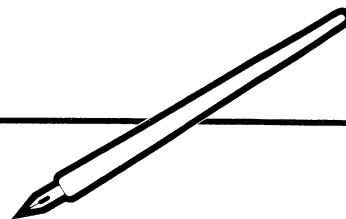


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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February 2, 1990



Two Letters to the Editor

The letters are directed against a "School Crossing" written by Mr. A. Witten. Since they deal with matters about which I had in mind to write for some time already, I take the freedom to enter the discussion.

The first letter reads as follows:

Dear Editor

The editor of the "School Crossing" column is quite right when he claims that parents, teachers, and students do reflect on the purpose of Reformed Education, but his excerpt choice, "Reformed Education — Necessary" (October 27, 1989) is less than helpful in describing our purpose.

To justify the existence of our Reformed schools by commenting on other groups in negative terms does not help our cause. It cannot be denied that one has to be aware of teachings by people such as Howard VanTil. However, the author makes quite a generalization when he claims that VanTil's views are rampant in these "no longer Christian schools" — schools which the author claims are making way "for the realm of the anti-christ." Instead we should be thankful that there are still many schools that can justly claim to be Christian schools.

If we claim to be worthy of the term "Reformed" (as outlined by the author) let's go on with our discussion on the purpose of Reformed Education, but not by means of unprovable allegations about people outside our Canadian Reformed community.

Yours sincerely
Cobie VanEerden

The second letter is from Mr. Ben Harsevoort. Mr. Witten had written about the closing of the Reformed elementary school in Watford and said that with it there was now no Reformed education available anymore in the Watford area. Mr. Harsevoort reacts that he, too, regrets the fact that this school had to close, but he points out that

There is still a Reformed school in the Watford area.

This is the (Christian Reformed) school in Strathroy.

Ms. VanEerden has a valid point when she states that the cause of Reformed education is not served by "commenting on other groups in negative terms." As a general statement I can agree with it. The fundamental reason for Reformed education in Reformed schools is not, as such, that the public school and the Roman Catholic school and other Christian schools are so bad. The fundamental reason is the unity of life in connection with the antithesis put by God in paradise and maintained since that moment.

With this unity of life I mean that for a Reformed Christian his whole life is service of God in accordance with God's Word as confessed in the Reformed confession. For God is the Creator of all of life, and Christ is the Redeemer for all of life, sanctifying it for God through the Holy Spirit. The unity of life means also that therefore the education about all aspects of life is to be in agreement with Scripture and confession.

And it means unity between church, home, and school. As we do not build up our churches by preaching how bad other churches are (although wrong doctrines are to be exposed) but by positively proclaiming the truth, so we seek Reformed education on the basis of this principle.

However, there is here a concrete and practical aspect as well, in my opinion. Br. Harsevoort writes that there is still Reformed education in the Watford area, and we are aware of the Christian school in Strathroy. Sr. VanEerden writes that we should not build the cause of Reformed education "by means of unprovable allegations about people outside our Canadian Reformed community." She writes this in connection with br. Witten's speaking about Dr. Howard VanTil and his evolutionistic ideas having their impact in Christian (Reformed) schools, so that they lose their Christian character and pave the way for the anti-christ.

Such words are generalizing, indeed. I have read them in this way. And in what I shall say now, I am also speaking in general. Is it not so that in, anyway a number of (originally) Christian Reformed schools the evolutionistic ideas, as VanTil and others have them, entered and are influencing the teaching? Is it not so that there are (originally) CRC schools where the Three Forms of Unity as basis have been exchanged for a sort of school creed? Is it not true that in (some of) these schools the teachers do not have to be of Reformed confession, but can be, e.g., Baptist and, perhaps, Arminian? Is it not so that a number of CRC people did not want their children taught at these schools anymore because the historical reality and factuality of the speaking of the serpent in Gen. 3:1-5 and of the donkey of Balaam in Numbers 22:28 was not maintained in the teaching? Is it not true that there are Reformed CRC parents who object to evolutionistic creationism, not only in Calvin College, but also in their local Christian school?

When in the same CRC institution of learning (as in this church in general) the one teacher holds on to the Reformed confession and the Reformed confessional view of Scripture and teaches so, while the other, beside him, deviates from this doctrine in his teaching, following the new approach, then, of course, both continue as Christians, but the one abides by the truth and the other deviates from it. I am sharp now in what I am saying, but must we not be sharp sometimes because the Word of God is sharp? Besides, we do not help our Reformed brothers in the CRC who struggle to remain Reformed, by not being sharp, where they themselves are sharp in their warning publications (as in *Christian Renewal*). Is it truly Christian, truly Reformed when the one teacher, who may even have a somewhat difficult character so that he comes across as not such a nice man, but stands for what is true, and the other, who may be a very nice Christian person, but serves apostasy, are both maintained in the same school (or church)? I deny that this is Reformed or Scriptural. In my opinion, Scripture calls this "limping with two

different opinions" (1 Kings 18:21). Our Lord does not want "yes" and "no," truth and lie, beside each other. He wants us to maintain the antithesis, and to be faithful to His revealed Word of truth.

We have before our eyes the horrible example of the synodical (once) Reformed Church and schools: they deviated from God's Word and the Confessions based on it. They accepted, some twenty years ago, the new hermeneutics, the liberal approach to Scripture, the evolutionistic world view, a broad ecumenism, the rejection of the doctrine of predestination in election and reprobation. Within one generation this Dutch church (I generalize) has become a prey of Satan, leading its members on the way of pure disobedient, modern unbelief. It started with little steps. Today the very same steps are taken, and allowed and promoted in the Christian Reformed Church and schools. Holwerda warned: when things go wrong in the church, they go wrong in every organization connected with the church.

Now I considered for a moment to take the phone and to try to find out the situation with regard to the Christian Reformed school in the Watford area, in Strathroy. But I did not do so, because then I would come to a judgment regarding this particular school. I do not want to do that. It is possible that there are Reformed schools supported by Christian Reformed people on this continent. But I want to remain general, although specific in this sense that I am not dealing with Christian schools in general, but with the situation in the Christian Reformed schools, because Dr. Howard VanTil,

member of this church and teacher at Calvin College, is mentioned, and we have the same historical background.

It is not a matter of nice Christian people, but of faithfulness to God's Word and the confession of the Reformed Churches. So, although I agree with much of what sr. VanEerden says, I think it necessary to add this "negative" aspect.

I would like to add one remark. When we realize what is going on in the Christian Reformed Church, how Reformed people there fight a hard struggle against many things in doctrine and in life which deviate from and are contrary to Scripture, I fear, yes: fear, for those who continue this struggle there: will it go as in the Netherlands? Will they continue to be concerned till they, and especially their families, are devoured by this onslaught of liberalism? Or will they find a way of escape? I also fear for ourselves, when there is, for instance, co-operation in the matter of school education. Sometimes an "own" school is not (yet) possible. Then, if parents prefer Christian education above the secular education of the public school, they have no alternative (yet), while working for it. But, especially when there is a Reformed school available and the other Christian school is preferred, will such co-operation mean that what is going on in the CRC will enter our churches via this co-operation? Our schools (and churches) are already so much under attack of modern life! I hope that what is truly Reformed will find each other. We need each other. I also hope that which is truly Reformed will separate from what deviates from it and continues on the liberal, destructive, track. C

Completely trustworthy⁶ (final)

By C. Trimp

The Gospel legitimized in the death and resurrection of Christ

The Gospel is indeed completely trustworthy, but this should not give us the notion as if the certainties of faith present themselves as self-evident and rationally explicit. This much should be apparent from the previous articles. Merely referring to the suffering in the world will call forth within ourselves a great number of contradictory emotions. Continuously we have to wrestle ourselves free from the grip of temptations, if we are to find rest in faith through the love of God revealed in Christ. This certainty of faith does not bear the mark of being naturally self-evident, as though anyone who is in possession of some of his mental faculties has to concur with it. To be sure, our hearts long for those handy, manageable formulas, but that is not the way it works in the school of the Holy Spirit. Surely, the Lord Himself knew that for people like us it is not easy, yes even impossible to make

room in our hearts for His Word. In fact, no one knows this better than He. We know our own misery only to a very limited degree. It is also because of this that Christ, while proclaiming the salvation of God's kingdom, has accompanied His message with *signs* and *miracles*. These accompanying activities turned into compelling proofs for both friend and foe: the new world of God is breaking through in the proclamation of the kingdom. The miracles were, indeed, specifically focused on the restoration of life: the healing of illnesses, the feeding of the hungry masses, the deliverance from madness, the rescuing out of dangers, and the resurrection from the dead. One by one these activities made it clear that God had arisen¹ to rescue the life of mankind from being caught in a tight corner and from anxieties: illness, misery, starvation, the power of the grave — all these *have* to make way for His power, because the guilt and the power of sin are going to be expelled!

These miracles had, therefore, a strong *referential* character. They referred to the glorious reality of God's new world. Because of this referential character Scripture is calling the miracle a *sign*. In this manner Christ has demonstrated His glory as the Only-begotten of the Father, and thus legitimized the Father Him [and His authority] to the people. It was "the works which the Father has given Me to finish" declares Christ Himself (John 5:36) in the context of giving evidence about His authority. Wherever people are saved from their sins (Matthew 1:21), illness, starvation and other miseries can no longer hold out. It is evident, then, that all those who heard Christ's preaching and saw Him actively engaged doing His works were confronted with the decisive choice of faith. Both the words and the deeds of Christ put these people under the obligation to listen to God's call for conversion. One cannot as an interested onlooker observe Christ's work without committing one-

self. Christ does not accept that attitude (cf. Luke 13:26,27). It is for this reason that Christ, at a certain moment, says to the skeptics and those that contradict Him: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you . . . He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:28, 30).

Those who even after the words and works described for us in Matthew 12 still continue in their skepticism, pedantry and slander, are committing an unforgivable sin as we hear Christ say a little later in verses 31 and 32. Such a person pertinently refuses to accept the irrefutable miracle as a sign of Christ's glory and trustworthiness. Also in John 6, we can read something similar: a person may have eaten of the bread that Christ had multiplied and yet fail to discern therein the manifestation of Christ's glory (John 6:36).

The situation in Matthew 12 is of the same kind. Here the tension between Christ and the Pharisees has increased to a feverish pitch (cf. vs. 24). Next, the experts, the scribes arrive to reinforce the ranks and they together with the Pharisees are then demanding that Christ should legitimize Himself by means of showing them a *sign* (vs. 38), thus enabling them to verify His claims.

After the *miracle* of vs. 22 and its explanation (vs. 25 to 30) they "would like to see a *sign*" (vs. 38).

At this point Christ tasted in their request the venom of the wickedness and waywardness of the Jewish opponents who wanted a messiah according to their own preferences and concepts. In this request He tasted their resistance against his Person and their contempt for the supreme gift of God's love. The relationship between God and these leaders is apparently thoroughly spoiled. As a concession, they are giving Christ the opportunity to earn the love of His people by giving a sign; a sign, namely, that the pedantic scribes would appraise and verify. Christ is permitted to submit to an examination so that He, after successful result, may be awarded the diploma of certified rabbi. His credibility will consist of a label which the experts, after the successful examination will attach to His public appearances. It is, as it were, as if we were overhearing the philosophers and disputants of all ages (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:20).

The answer Christ gives to this challenge plainly settles the question and is conclusive for all centuries to come.

Christ replies: you will be given the *sign of the prophet Jonah*; and that sign should be sufficient for you (cf. Matthew 16:4).

What does this riddle mean?

It is about Jonah, the *prophet* — the man who has *spoken* to the Ninevites (cf. Matthew 12:41). The reader is acquainted with the story: Jonah has



Dr. C. Trimp

proclaimed the judgment of God, urged repentance and promised salvation. It was a most incisive sermon, and it was listened to!

Suppose those Ninevites had asked Jonah to identify himself (after all, who does that little Jewish chap think he is in this mighty city of the Assyrians?), Jonah could have demonstrated overwhelming proof of his authorization. He could have told them the powerful story of his calling, and such a story even the Ninevites had never heard before. Jonah's route from Gath-hepher in Canaan (2 Kings 14:25) to Nineveh had for him gone through the depths of the Mediterranean Sea. What manifestation

of the power of God who had sent him! What judgment! What salvation! Never yet had any prophet been able to produce such proof of identity and authorization.

In fact, it is so unique that to a human mind it appears to border on the absurd — right up to our own days. Imagine: a story about running away from God, and then being plunged into a tumultuous sea, and having to stay inside a sea monster for three full days and nights; this is, to put it briefly, the story of an unimaginable humiliation and an even more inconceivable exaltation through the mighty hand of God. To prove his identity Jonah could have told his story. He could have said: as truly as I'm standing here all this has happened to me. Otherwise I wouldn't be here, and you would never have had the opportunity to listen to my sermon.

But the curious fact is that the prophet's legitimation cannot be had all by itself, or separately. The 'sign' begins and ends with the trustworthiness of the man himself, through the word he is proclaiming. The sign that has to support the word is transmitted to the hearers only *via* that word. It is not some 'objective' sign existing independently of Jonah, to be examined in a laboratory and verified by experts who can handle the objective, generally accepted standards of man. The sign is, so to speak, in the prophet himself: the very fact that *he* was standing there was the greatest miracle a man could ever think of.

The 'sign of Jonah' is, therefore, a sign which is Jonah himself. Jonah (himself) has become for the Ninevites a sign, as we read in Luke 11:30. It is an incredible sign: you'll never get to the end of thinking about it, or else you'll find it so absurd you don't even want to think about it. It is, consequently, a sign that does not replace the demand for coming to a decision of faith, nor does it make this demand redundant; instead, it makes the claim the more stringent. It is not a substituting sign but a radicalizing sign. We are to glorify God and say: today we have heard and seen strange things (cf. Luke 5:26), or else say: this nonsense isn't worth talking about (cf. Acts 26:8, 24).

What does Christ, therefore, say about Himself in Matthew 12? He is going to be swallowed up, just like Jonah, by the monster of death and thereafter He will be returned in a measureless miracle to the human community where He will present Himself to the people in the proclamation of the Word. He, Himself, will be the personification

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of God's mighty wrath and all-surpassing quickening power. Soon, 'on that third day,' there will be God's great judgment among the people.

Whoever entrusts himself to Christ will, on that day, be permanently founded in his faith as well as in his expectations of life.

He who does not entrust himself, will neither give in at that time; Matthew 28:11-15 tells us this sad story. Continuously requesting legitimation and verification, they resorted to hiring soldiers in order to lock up, beforehand, that crucial legitimation in the tomb. Even today there are many theologians and other scholars acting as busybodies in their attempt to station crafty guards in front of the tomb. Reasons aplenty, does it not, to declare Jonah's great sign of the Easter morning to be impotent. For how could the like of that ever be possible? Being rational creatures, we know the laws of nature and of reason, don't we?

Unbelievers will not be able to ignore that word about those three days (cf. Matthew 27:62-66), but they are saving it up to do battle with the good tidings. Even on the very day of Easter unbelief cannot be silenced, although it happens to make itself look utterly ridiculous.

Faith, however, shall find its solid foundation in that word. Throughout the centuries the church will joyfully confess the great event of that third day in the articles of her undoubted Christian faith. That is the way it is for the Son of Man when He reveals His identity in the presence of an onlooking, distrustful world.

Therefore, Christ's death and resurrection should be sufficient for us whenever we feel challenged by provocative questions about the verification of the Gospel. Our God has guaranteed the message of Christ, who died because of our sins and was resurrected because of our justification. That is God's grand answer to the many problems people throw at Him because of their anxieties or fault-finding. The Christ who died and was resurrected is the sign which God grants to this generation and all generations. God did this even before we were able to ask Him for a sign. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper have documented these essential moments for us all.

The church stands in a world that is filled with questions and contradictions. Seemingly defenseless, she stands there with her sermons, her font for baptism, and her table for the Lord's Supper. And much like the church standing there is our own situation, with all kinds

of questions and problems that are left behind in our hearts and lives.

We better become very humble at this point. For we were born as partakers of the debt. We have been called out from the power of sin, but are still

"It is unmistakably that incredible news about the arrival of the Son that is making the Gospel so trustworthy."

lacking the perception to have insight into the work of the Lord. We do not nearly grasp the extent of our own misery. If we do not rightly know ourselves, how can we expect to have insight into God's majesty?

We are unable to conceive of or reason out our own salvation, because we are still far removed from seeing all things in their proper relationships. True, we are often so busy and are acting so important, but actually we can't pull any strings. Only that which the Father has initially given to us, will we be able to put before Him. The only thing we know to be absolutely sure is the reliable word of the love of God in

Christ Jesus. There is, therefore, ultimately not one area in our life that does not compel us to take it to Jesus. This way, we are, indeed, taking our refuge in the Son, who died for us and rose again.

And being with Him we are no longer able to assume the role of the plaintiff before God. Man can only do this when he has not yet seen the great love of God. But whoever celebrates the Lord's Supper is proclaiming the death of Christ as the supreme good news in his life. There, in particular, man gets broken of his habit of wanting to be the plaintiff.

There, man is learning, slowly but surely, to find refuge in and to take delight in the communion with God through His Son and the Holy Spirit. There he learns to expect the day on which he together with all God's people will praise God for His governing of history.

Thus, it is apparent that faith in God's reliable Word does not remain unchallenged. It is at the same time apparent, however, that it is invincible. It is unmistakably that incredible news about the arrival of the Son that is making the Gospel so trustworthy.

¹ "arisen" in the sense of, for instance, Psalm 12:5 which has: "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord." (R.K.)



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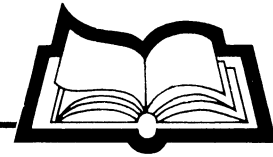
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By J. De Jong

And at the end of eight days, when He was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

Luke 2:21

From Law to Gospel

In the formulation of the description concerning the naming of Jesus, His circumcision appears as an incidental event. All emphasis falls on the name that was given to Him and on the divine origin of this name. And the circumcision is described as an attending circumstance surrounding the name-giving.

All this does not mean to state that the circumcision of the Lord Jesus is not important for us. Circumcision was an important sign for every Israelite son, and here the Lord Jesus is included in the number of the sons of Israel. It served as a sign that He was enrolled among the elect people of God, and that He was set apart for service in the kingdom of God. As baptism is today, circumcision was a sign of being ingrafted into the Church, the family of God.

The shedding of blood in the sign also had a special significance. It showed that the sins of the child were paid for, and that he so enjoyed the forgiveness of sins and the entrance into eternal fellowship with God. For the child it served as a kind of *receipt*. It said to him: it is now as if you have paid in full, and you are now qualified for service in God's kingdom. In the shedding of blood the Israelites were to attach the same significance as they were called to attach to the sacrifices. It pointed to a greater sacrifice that was coming, through which atonement would be given to God for the sins of all His children.

Yet this latter significance could not apply to the Lord Jesus and His circumcision. For He was without sin! Although born out of Adam, He did not share Adam's guilt and corruption. So the sacrament of circumcision has a different significance for the Lord Jesus. He willingly submits to being circumcised. But this does not show His sins are forgiven; rather, it shows that He who *knew* no sin was *made* to be sin for us, 2 Corinthians 5, 21. In submitting to circumcision, the Lord Jesus, who remained without sin, fully takes on the likeness of sinful flesh in order to condemn sin in the flesh, Romans 8, 3. For others circumcision was a receipt; for Him it was an *account*. God says to Him: you must pay this bill in full. The shedding of blood in this case demanded His *own* blood!

This special significance of Christ's circumcision is brought out in His name-giving, and this is why the name-giving has all the emphasis in this passage. Literally the text says: "When the days were fulfilled for circumcising Him, then He was called Jesus . . ." This means that with the fulfillment of the law, the gospel

comes to light! For the name Jesus means *Saviour*. And this was a name not given Him by man, but by God Himself, Matthew 1:21.

The accent on the name-giving also makes clear the character of the Son's obedience. The more He submits to the law, the more He is exalted in the word of prophecy. Therefore, the name-giving is also a prophetic and proleptic exaltation. He may now have no honour in human eyes; but God honours Him from heaven! The LORD shows from heaven that the self-offering of the Son is accepted at God's throne!

For the name Jesus proclaims to us the deliverance from the just requirements of the law. Where we could not pay, God provides a way! He becomes the victim and sin offering which makes full payment for our sins. And He becomes the faithful High Priest who imparts the blessing of His sacrifice to us!

Still today the name *Jesus* appears as nothing in the eyes of the world and our natural hearts. But we know the results of His circumcision! We know that He fully completed His task and calling on earth, and He was exalted to heaven where He still serves as our Saviour and Highpriest today. We do not yet see His full glory on earth. We do not yet see all things subjected to Him. "But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for every one," Hebrews 2,9.

From law to grace! When the law is fulfilled the gospel is ushered in. Just as the just demands of the law are met, our Saviour is revealed! As the law comes to completion, the gospel comes to light! Here the law is the lesser, and the gospel is the greater. There is only one way for us to meet the just requirements of God's law: to cling in faith to Jesus! We are to hold fast to Him as the only true offering for sin, and as the only faithful Highpriest in God's house. And this will also bring forth from us a thankoffering of obedience that permeates our whole existence. For all the riches of God come to us in Him. He was *circumcised*; therefore, we may be *baptized*. He was circumcised, therefore we may share His body and blood at the Lord's Supper. He was circumcised, and placed under the full bondage of the law, in order that we might be set free from the law and live all our days in joyful thanksgiving to our Creator. Let our lives be thankofferings in praise of Him!



Mid-America Reformed Seminary

By C. Van Dam

On November 8 and 9, yours truly gave three lectures on Old Testament sacrifice in Orange City, Iowa, as well as a popular speech for the general public on Genesis 1 in Sioux Centre, also in Iowa. The lectures were the result of an invitation by Mid-America Reformed Seminary. It was good to be there and to make a first acquaintance with the faculty and others.

Since many readers of *Clarion* may have heard of this school and know about it, I would like to use this opportunity to pass on to you some more information as well as some of my own initial impressions of this institution.

Mid-America Reformed Seminary is found in the western part of the state of Iowa, an area containing literally hundreds of churches rooted in the Reformed tradition. Its origin in 1982 is to be understood in the light of the increasing number of difficulties which more and more Christian Reformed churches experienced with the direction of Calvin Theological Seminary, the official school for the training of the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. Concerned members (both office-bearers and those not in any special office) in the Christian Reformed Church eventually decided to establish a new seminary in order to provide an alternative to theological students and in this way to stimulate and encourage a Reformed revitalization of the pulpit. It is hoped that in this way the Biblical truths, summarized in the Reformed confessions may more and more be heard proclaimed. Not surprisingly an information leaflet on the Seminary stresses their commitment to the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture, their subscription to the Three Forms of Unity, their desire to promote Reformed worship (rejecting man-centered forms) and preaching. Other commitments that are specifically



Professors Grossmann, Kloosterman, and Vander Hart



Dr. C.P. Venema was appointed as Associate Professor of Dogmatics in 1988

mentioned, and which give some indication of the reason for the Seminary's existence, are the commitment to the creation of heaven and earth in six days and the desire to resist all kinds of modern ideas, such as the women's liberation movement, in the explaining of Scripture.

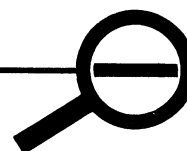
The Seminary has a somewhat awkward place in the Christian Reformed Church. The last synod of that church did not want to include this school in a list of approved causes which congregations are recommended to support. In itself, such an action is understandable enough when there is already an official school. Of course the underlying issues concerning why the official school is no longer considered adequate by more and more Christian Reformed people should be but are not being adequately addressed. In spite of the negative action of Synod, Mid-America wants to continue serving the Christian Reformed Church and to work for renewal within these churches. However, this desire does not prevent them from cooperating closely with others of like conviction who are not necessarily Christian Reformed. One of the professors is from the Reformed Church in the United States (the so-called German Reformed Church) and one of the trustees is from the Reformed Church in America.

The present faculty consists of Rev. R.E. Grossmann, Assistant Professor of Church History and Ministerial Studies,

Rev. N.D. Kloosterman, Associate Professor of Ethics and New Testament Studies, Rev. M. Vander Hart, Assistant Professor of Old Testament Studies, and Dr. C.P. Venema, Associate Professor of Doctrinal Studies. They have fifteen students and publish their own *Mid-America Journal of Theology*.

By establishing Mid-America Reformed Seminary, the founders of this school have obviously not chosen the way of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches in seeking a solution to liberalism in the Christian Reformed Church. The Board and Faculty of Mid-America are committed by their Constitution and By-Laws to provide sound ministerial training primarily (although not exclusively) for men desiring to become ministers in the Christian Reformed Church. Whether the establishing of this Seminary will be the long-term solution for difficulties within the Christian Reformed Church remains to be seen, but we can only applaud their present labours and commitment. It is a difficult matter to be in a church that tolerates liberalism with respect to the Word of God and the Reformed doctrine. The solution is not always easy to find, particularly when so many in that church do everything possible to steer matters at Synod in such a way that confrontation is avoided as much as possible. We wish this Seminary and its witness in the Christian Reformed Church well. May it lead to true reformation.

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Opportunities and threats in Eastern Europe and Russia

The increased democratization of East bloc countries has mixed results for Protestants. On the one hand, new opportunities can be seized in Hungary which has a rich history with respect to the Reformed faith, but new difficulties appear on the horizon for a Roman Catholic country like Poland. There are new prospects in Romania, although the situation is not yet completely clear. In any case systematic state-sponsored oppression of Christians seems to be over. The situation in the Soviet Union gives reason for concern, but also hope.

Hungary

According to *Nederlands Dagblad* (6 September 1989), on which the following report is based, the democratization of Hungarian society has led to the organization of more and more new Christian organizations within the 2.5 million member Hungarian Reformed Church. Also, at a meeting of 250 Reformed ministers (about a third of the total number) in Budapest, an organization to renew the church was founded. Its goal is no less than "to free the church from the Stalinist spirit and from the current church leadership which for forty years have imposed their authority on the church by fire and sword." Complete freedom to express one's opinions in church is also demanded, as well as the relinquishing of the total control that local church leaders (in cooperation with the communists) have always exercised over the congregation. Furthermore, the need for state approval for new church leaders must be eradicated.

Another, more broadly based, organization that has recently been established is the new Bible Federation which draws members from conservative Lutheran and Reformed backgrounds, although the board is made up entirely of Reformed ministers. The roots of this organization lie in the Bethany Movement which sought revival in the Reformed Church, but was forbidden shortly after World War II. The ideas of this movement have, however, persist-

ed through the years. Important is their opposition to Bible criticism which has made headway in the Reformed Church. The new Bible Federation unites its members on the basis of a common statement of faith in which the inspiration and authority of Scripture are the main points. Their agenda includes publishing books and magazines, and organizing Bible schools and conferences. Although the organization wants to retain its independence, it wants to maintain good relations with the Lutheran and Reformed church leadership



Rev. Tökes

who are also quite positive over against them. The Bible Federation has now been registered with the state and its membership in September stood at eighty ministers and four hundred congregation members.

Efforts are also underway in the Hungarian Reformed Church to resurrect the Reformed Youth Federation. However, first local youth societies need to be set up so that in this way one can gradually come to a national organization.

Other organizations that are being set up include a Hungarian Protestant Cultural Society, an organization of Christian doctors, a Reformed organization for mission work among gypsies and a Sunday School Federation (to evangelize among children).

Poland

From a report in *The Banner* (4 December 1989) it is clear that the situation in Poland is not so rosy for Protestants. Ninety-five per cent of this country is Roman Catholic. That means that also hardened communists are communicant members. With only about one hundred thousand of a total population of thirty-eight million, Polish Protestants are a small minority. Ironically, the crackdown in the 1970s by the Soviet Union and imposition of martial law "ushered in a period of religious tolerance for Protestants. As one layman explained, 'The government has no special love for Protestants . . . but because of the power of the [Roman] Catholic church as a democratic opposition, they have tried to encourage everything that's not [Roman] Catholic'" (*The Banner*, p.19). Democratic reforms may not help the Protestants. They fear that "Roman Catholics will try to persuade the Polish government to establish one national church, and that all non-Catholic churches will be treated as 'religious societies' instead of as churches." It is also very difficult to get involved in Solidarity because of the Roman Catholic influence there. Provision is only made for Roman Catholic religious observance and members of Solidarity "are expected to participate in Roman Catholic ceremonies" (*The Banner*, p. 19).

Romania

The great relief felt with the demise of the dictator Ceausescu can hardly be exaggerated. To appreciate the current euphoria, it may be good to get a glimpse of the sort of oppression that was going on. *Nederlands Dagblad* of 21 October, 1989 reported that ministers have been found missing or killed in strange accidents that it seems evident that the secret police had been involved. When Christians or congregations protested, they could be sure of reprisals at their own doorstep. Cases have been documented of ministers or

elders who after their arrest were either killed or so mistreated that they died days later. For example, a missing elder, E. Ujvarossy, of the Reformed Church of Temesvar was found dead in a forest. This murder office-bearer had protested to the authorities about the fact that they had been trying to transfer his minister, Rev. L. Tökes to a small isolated village.

On the pretence that their church was built with stolen materials, a minister and three members of a Baptist congregation in Comanesti were put in jail and the church building was completely destroyed. The minister was eventually released but the fate of the other three was unclear. The real reason for the actions of the state seem to have been that it could not tolerate the rapid growth of this church.

What the future will bring is uncertain. However, it seems fairly clear that the type of oppression given in these two examples will now be a thing of the past.

Russia

Christianity Today (December 15,

1989) published a very interesting interview of E.S. Vaughn with Irina Ratushinskaya who endured much suffering in the infamous gulag for the sake of her faith. She and her husband Igor have since been able to leave the Soviet Union. When interviewed they gave a view on Gorbachev and events in Russia not often heard in the Western Press. While acknowledging that he is a very clever man, they know from bitter experience that he is also deceptive, apparently having denied Irina's existence in the gulag. According to them, he is very flexible and reasonable now because he desperately needs money from the West because of the current disastrous state of the Russian economy. According to them, the economy is so bad that it is "collapsing to such a degree that people just cannot cope with it anymore." Hunger is coming to their country. This fact, coupled with the widespread unrest in the republics, make both Irina and Igor fear that the end result will be civil war. The situation is so volatile that such a conflict could come within a year but in no more than

two years from now. According to them, the Communists will never consent to sharing power and the only way out will be a bloody civil strife. However, they look forward to going back eventually. Irina said, "I believe that in our lifetime Russia will be a free country. After the coming collapse, almost everything will be destroyed, including the economy. It will be our duty to go back and to start to rebuild."

It is a comfort to know that Jesus Christ is Lord, also over Russia. He uses also the momentous events in that country with a view to those who love Him. It is telling that the tremendous demand for Bibles continues in that officially atheistic country. Indeed, according to the United Bible Societies which has received considerable freedom to try to meet the need, the demand would not even slow down until at least 20 million Bibles have been handed out in the Soviet Union. May the seed of the Word that is being sown bear rich fruit!



The I.C.R.C. — a response

By D.G.J. Agema

In the August 18 issue of *Clarion* my article on the ICRC was published. In the same issue the editor commented on this article in his editorial article and in editorial comments (page 356). I would like to respond to both.

Prof. Geertsema begins his editorial article with summarizing in his words the main thrust of my article. This summary reads as follows: "The main thrust of the Rev. Agema's criticism is, in my opinion, the point that Reformed Churches with the Three Forms of Unity cannot truly have a sister-church relationship with Presbyterian churches which have and adhere to the Westminster Standards. His reason is that the divergencies are in fact 'contradictions' which do not and should not allow us to place the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards beside each other as basis for a shared international organization of Reformed Churches." (334)

I do not believe that this is a true summary of what I tried to show in my article. Neither is it true that the "other

arguments simply are adduced to support this main point." I did not make a general statement that Reformed Churches cannot have a sister-church relationship with Presbyterian Churches. I analyzed the ICRC, and in this context *objected* to putting these two sets of Standards on one line in the Constitution *WITHOUT* proper evaluation. "Proper" means: in the light of God's Word.

If I may run ahead for a moment, Prof. Geertsema says in his editorial comments on page 356 that this evaluation was given when Synod Burlington 1986 received the report of the Committee for Contact with the OPC about the divergencies. In answer to this I would like to point out that Burlington 1986 "received" this report. Receiving is in my opinion still different from adopting. If Prof. Geertsema is right, would that mean that this report has ecclesiastical status among the churches? In addition, the formulation of Burlington 1986 shows that Synod did not really know what to do with it. Here they were faced with something that should have been

dealt with in 1977. In other words, we still have the horse behind the cart.

In his summary of my article Prof. Geertsema speaks of sister-church relationship between Reformed and Presbyterian Churches. In my article I do not deal with that. I dealt with this one attempt at international contact, the ICRC. I hope that Prof. Geertsema realizes that when we talk about sister churches that then we have as churches rules for correspondence. In my opinion these rules, as we have them now, indeed make a sister-church relation between Reformed and Presbyterian churches impossible. That is why Synod 1977 had to come up with a new form of contact, which was unknown to us before. Personally I would not mind going back to these rules for correspondence, and deal with other churches from that perspective. The way it is now, we have the one set of rules for contact with churches who have the same confessions, but we have a different, more nebulous form of contact with Presbyterians.

One more point yet about this summary. I want to point out that the word "contradiction" with regard to the divergencies between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards is *not my word* but was used by the Synod of Amersfoort of 1948. I quoted that word only in that context.

Prof. Geertsema does not feel that the irregular history of the ICRC is a problem. "If it is the rule that always all things which have been started in an irregular, unordered way should be (have been) rejected, quite a number of good things would have had to be abandoned." I did not state such a general rule. I pointed out in the history of the ICRC some very disturbing irregularities, and stated that these irregularities contribute to the confusion and ambiguity of what the ICRC now really is. What I said in a particular case Prof. Geertsema makes into an absolute rule.

Also I do not find this reasoning of Prof. Geertsema a strong argumentation against the evidence which I brought forward. It is in the first place logically weak, because it already includes the conclusion in the argumentation. The ICRC is a good thing and therefore above discussion. But more importantly, in my opinion, this way of reasoning seems to lead to the rule that the end justifies the means. Certainly Prof. Geertsema does not want to go that way.

In response to my argument that the Church Order does not provide for joining the ICRC, Prof. Geertsema refers to Art. 30 C.O. Could it not be dealt with as a matter of the churches in common? I have my questions here. For who determines what belongs to the churches in common? Is that not the C.O. itself? Otherwise a Synod could deal with anything, also non-ecclesiastical matters, which affect the churches in common.

The only solution then would be that Art. 50 C.O. allows a Synod to deal with this. However, in my opinion, Art. 50 deals with sister churches abroad. It should be noted that the first sentence of Art. 50 is something new. Art. 50 in the current C.O. is the replacement of old Art. 51 and 85. It is interesting to find that old Art. 51 was not published in the English edition of the C.O. printed in the Acts of Synod 1968, the reason being that old Art. 51 dealt with the churches in Indonesia. And if you want to go further back yet in history, in the time of the Synod of Dordt it dealt with Dutch- and French-speaking churches in the Netherlands and Belgium. In light of its history our recent Art. 50 applies then

also to sister churches and not to a conference. Besides this, my question remains: Can a Synod decide to join a conference?

Prof. Geertsema writes that neither the ICRC nor the churches want the conference to become a Synod. I will gladly accept that, but it does not take my problems away. The member churches at this moment may not wish to make it a "super-synod," but what

That is not formalistic, that is not legalistic, that is maintaining the command of our Lord that all things be done decently and in good order.

This brings me to the last page of the editorial article. There Prof. Geertsema deals with point 4 of my conclusion, and connects this point 4 with point 6. This can be seen in the very last lines of the article, "the present ICRC with the two different sets of confessions 'does



The ICRC was constituted in the city of Groningen on October 25, 1982

about the future? If the description of the character of this conference was clear, then I would not be afraid of the future either. But now that it is confusing and ambiguous, and the Constitution itself allows for making the ICRC into a synod, I have great concerns.

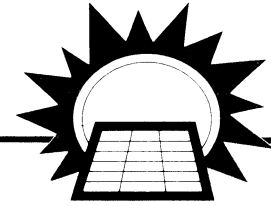
As Scriptural evidence for an international gathering, Prof. Geertsema points to Acts 15. However, he right away says that this was "kind of international." Indeed, Acts 15 is, in my opinion, not a very convincing proof. For can that meeting in Jerusalem not be seen as a meeting of the consistory of Jerusalem with some delegates from Antioch, who came to ask advice from their neighbouring church? I am not convinced that this text can be used to prove that we should have an international gathering.

In the discussion of my arguments Prof. Geertsema several times uses the terms, formalistic or legalistic. I believe that such labeling obscures a proper discussion. It can also be an easy way out of a problem. I believe it is detrimental to the churches when the Church Order is bypassed or changed after the facts. Let us then go the proper route.

not promote unity in the proper way." I object to this combination of my points 4 and 6. To start with the last, my point 6 is based on Evaluation point 4. There I noted that according to the Constitution, the member churches of the ICRC accept each other as HAVING the unity of faith. Constitution Art. III sub 1 states that the purpose of the Conference is "to express and promote the unity of faith that the member Churches have in Christ." I emphasize this HAVING of the unity of faith. It does not say that we seek it, but we have it. Now it happens that around the table of the ICRC there are churches who live within one nation, but who are not united as churches. Can we have the unity of the true faith while not having organizational unity? Would that not constitute disobedience toward the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we then not on the international level go ahead of the national? For internationally they already have the unity of faith, and express and promote it, but nationally they are not so far yet. That is what I call "not promoting unity in the proper way" and has as such nothing to do with the two sets of standards.

— *To be continued*





By Mrs. J. Mulder

"One thing is needful" Luke 10:42

Dear brothers and sisters,

We all know the story from which these words are taken.

Martha was very busy to prepare a meal and make her guests comfortable. She had invited the Lord Jesus to stay at her place. Perhaps there were also some of Christ's disciples with Him. No wonder that Martha was busy; she wanted to be a good hostess.

Mary was quietly sitting down and listening to the teaching of the Lord Jesus. And taken in by His words, she did not pay attention to anything else. When Mary never came back to help her, Martha became somewhat irritated. Why did she have to do all the work? She also became a little annoyed with the Lord Jesus. Did He not notice how busy she was? Finally she cannot take it any longer: "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?"

However, it is Martha and not Mary, whom the Lord Jesus reprimands. "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion which shall not be taken away from her."

What did the Lord Jesus mean with these words?

Did He disapprove of Martha's work? Did she not have to look after her guests and be a good hostess?

We are inclined to take Martha's side. It's not fair when your sister lets you do all the work, is it? What Martha did was also done "for the Lord," was it not? And does the Lord not want us to be faithful in our daily work? Is listening to the Lord Jesus, or reading and studying the Bible as such more sacred than preparing the food and cleaning the house? No.

What is the difference between Martha and Mary?

Both love the Lord and wish to serve Him. But Mary understood better HOW the Lord wants to be served. Also Martha knew who Jesus was, the Christ, the Son of God [John 11:27]. She also could have known that when Christ is teaching, only one thing is good: to listen and to take in His words of salvation. What happened in Martha's home, did not happen every day! Christ was bringing salvation to Martha's home. He brought release from the bondage of sin. He is redeeming their life from destruction and crowning it with God's lovingkindness. When He does that, then only one thing is needful: to receive His grace; to eat of the bread of life. In order so to be able to do your work as a child of God to His honour.

Mary served her Lord at this moment by listening and letting her life be transferred from death to life through the grace of God. That is the good portion which will not be taken from her.

Martha wanted to honour the Lord by giving Him the best she had.

Mary was honouring the Lord by receiving everything He had.

Martha wanted to be a good hostess at the moment she should have been a thankful guest at Jesus' feet.

Our salvation and well-being does not depend on many things.

Only one thing is needful. God's redeeming grace in Christ Jesus.

Today this comes to us through His Word and sacraments. Whenever it comes, we may and must receive it in faith.

We do not have to give; we just receive! God's renewing grace in Jesus Christ.

That is the one thing we need in order to be a good servant of the Lord at home and in the hospital, in health and sickness, in church and in our daily work.

From the Mailbox:

I received a letter from Mrs. Hennie Lieuwen in Langley. She wishes to thank all who sent a card or letter and especially the brothers and sisters in the Fraser Valley for their help and support in so many ways. As you perhaps remember, Mrs. Lieuwen has been seriously ill. However, after a special treatment for cancer she is now free of pain and she can do all her work again.

May our heavenly Father continue to comfort and strengthen the Lieuwen family.

Our birthday calendar for March:

TREVOR HOF SINK

1426 Bulkley Dr., Box 411, Smithers, BC V0J 2N0
Trevor will be 12 years old March 3.

RUTH VANDERPOL

19471-72 Ave., Surrey, BC V3S 4P1
Ruth hopes to celebrate her 8th birthday, also on March 3.

GERRY EELHART

"Rehoboth," Box 1089, Stony Plain, AB T0E 2G0
Gerry's birthday is on March 12. He will be 28.

JIM VANDERHEIDEN

P.O., St. Ann's, ON LOR 1Y0
Jim celebrates his 31st birthday on March 15.

ROSELYN KUIK

Box 93, Carman, MB ROG 0J0
Roselyn will turn 16 on March 18.

To all of you, a very happy birthday!

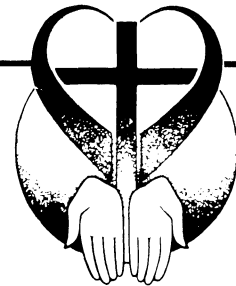
Although my flesh and heart may fail,
God is my strength, I shall prevail,
For He, whose steadfast love is sure,
Will be my portion evermore.

Greetings and, please, send your requests to

MRS. J. MULDER
1225 Highway 5, RR #1,
Burlington, ON
L7R 3X4



Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund



C.W.R.W.F.

It is never too early to teach our children compassion for others and Christian stewardship. The following list of activities will provide opportunities for such learning, and will help children understand what life is like for many who live in developing countries.

We encourage you to have your children try one activity a day for five days, or spread them out over several

weeks. Everything you need for these activities can be found around the home.

And why not include C.R.W.R.F.'s work in your regular family prayer times. Our efforts need to be undergirded with prayer or they will accomplish little. You could decide to focus specifically on C.R.W.R.F. once a week (e.g., every Tuesday or Wednesday), upholding one

or more projects each time before the heavenly throne. (See our Annual Report which appeared in the Christmas issue of *Clarion* for a short description of each project.) Also, encourage your child(ren) to do extra jobs around the home (or for others) to raise money to help poor or hungry children. We'd love to hear about your efforts!

Kids care

Day One: Take a clear glass and fill it half full with water. Add two or three spoonfuls of colourful foods to the glass. Choose foods that you wouldn't normally drink (ketchup, soya sauce, mustard). Stir the solution. How does it look? Would you want to drink it? What would you do if it was the only thing available to drink? List all the uses for water.

Application: In many developing countries, clean water is not readily available. The vast majority of diseases in the third world are related to the lack of clean water.

Day Two: Count the number of shoes in your home. Try walking in a pair of shoes that are obviously too large or small for you.

Application: Many children in the third world lack adequate clothing, especially shoes. In war-torn areas, like Mozambique, it is not uncommon for children to have no clothing at all.

Day Three: Try reading your favourite book or magazine upside down. (Children who are too young to read can try identifying pictures that are upside down). If you saw the important message below, would you be able to read it?

Esta agua no es potable!

Application: One third of the world's population is illiterate. In urban areas, the ability to read or write can bring an immediate increase in income.

Day Four: After serving the food at a meal, hand each person a thick magazine or colouring book. Ask them to complete it before eating. Notice how difficult it is to concentrate on the task when you're hungry. After the meal, make a list of the foods you've eaten that day.

Compare your list with the typical diet in the Bukedi district of Uganda:

Morning meal: 200g plantain.

Snack: 100g plantain, 112g mango.

Main meal: 300g plantain, 30g ground peanuts, 40g sundried termites.

This diet contains approximately 900 kilocalories and 27 grams of protein. A five-year-old child should consume 1600 kilocalories and 30 grams of protein. Intakes below this result in chronic malnutrition.

Application: Malnutrition is a widespread problem in the third world, even in areas where food is available. Malnourished students often suffer from a shortened attention span. Many young children are forced to skip school in order to earn enough to eat.

Day Five: Have everyone gather whatever coins they have. Count the coins together and establish individual and family totals. Consult the following chart to determine the difference your total could make in the life of a child.

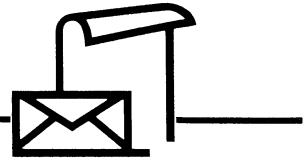
- 50¢ will feed a child in Mozambique for a day.
- \$2.50 will provide clothing for a child in Brazil.
- \$3.00 will provide school supplies for a child in Malawi.
- \$14.00 will provide vaccination against the six major childhood diseases.

Application: It doesn't take a lot of money to make a significant difference in the life of a child in the developing world. By combining our efforts, we can have a larger impact.

* We are indebted to Chris Redner, Managing Editor of *Childview* for the main body of this article.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear Editor:

Re: *Clarion* Volume 38, No. 23, page 502.

With regard to "Letters to the Editor," an answer or something is required regarding the wisdom of entering J.D. Wielenga's article.

It is with sadness and consternation and absolute amazement that I read this article, in view of today's pending decision in our Government regarding "Abortion." Wielenga quotes Article 54 of the C.O. as a solid reason for *not* having a "Day of Prayer" as requested by ARPA. Now here we have a fundamental difference of opinion as well as a fundamental difference (I believe) of not being personally involved in the "Abortion Issue." Personally, I consider today's "Abortion on Demand" as a national and global calamity. And you should be aware, that we do *not*, maybe in your eyes have "severe persecutions," but certainly our Pro Life doctors and nurses are persecuted — either with harassment, or unfavourable shift work, or lack of promotions, etc., etc.

When you mention that an issue — in order to warrant a "Day of Prayer" must occupy the minds and thoughts of the people and dominate their conversations at home and in public, sadly it does *not* for most of our Canadian Reformed members — but there are those who are very involved and who do qualify for the above. To me, *that* and precisely that, constitutes neglect from a Christian viewpoint, or possibly a lack of leadership.

You also mentioned that at the classis in Alberta and Manitoba, it was mentioned that just at the end the chairman had a small prayer — does that indicate a lack of calamity? The fact that it "did not occupy the minds and thoughts of delegates," makes this less of a calamity?

The tragedy of today's "abortion on demand" situation is beautifully carried by this type of attitude. Mr. Jongeling (from Holland, now deceased) once spoke to us approximately 10 years ago, about how we as Christians must arm ourselves not only with the Bible — but with the scientific knowledge or technical knowledge, to combat effectively in a secular world.

Is it too late now to arm ourselves adequately to stop this evil? After 20

years of abortions, can we still remain immobile and not be *allowed* a "Day of Prayer" on a Scriptural basis?

We reap the benefits of our harvest.
A. VEENMAN

Mrs. Veenman reproaches people who are not in favour of a Day of Prayer (Article 54 C.O.) with lack of Christian concern for this "national and global" calamity. I thought that I made it clear in my letter that not the seriousness of the calamity is at stake, but the nature of the calamity. Not every serious calamity is necessarily an occasion for a Day of Prayer as meant by the Church Order.

It struck me that last year those who requested a Day of Prayer, and those who proclaimed it, emphatically linked the abortion-issue to the general moral decline of national life. Apparently, they saw the evil of abortion in the broader context of increasing secularization, as a symptom of it, and I agree. But therefore I disagree with the use of Art. 54 C.O. in the situation, going by the interpretation of that Article by Synod Rotterdam 1887, which I believe is the correct interpretation.

Mrs. Veenman herself speaks of the abortion-issue as a "twenty years"-drama. But Art. 54 has in mind an "acute" and not a "chronic" ill (Synod 1887). She also confirms my own observations when she writes that the abortion-issue does not occupy the minds and the conversations of "most of our Canadian Reformed members." To be sure, that does not make it any less a calamity, but the particular calamities of which Art. 54 speaks are of such a nature that their presence is felt throughout the churches. Her reference to "most" members is an admission that such is not the case here.

I would not blame the majority of the members and their leaders so quickly as Mrs. Veenman does. In my letter I mentioned the chairman of a classis AB/MB who only briefly touched on the abortion-issue, in his final prayer. The implication of the remark was, that according to me, he would not have done so, not even briefly, had not a Day of Prayer been proclaimed for the next Sunday. The Day of Prayer, not the issue, prompted the prayer. That would have been different in the case of an occasion for which Art. 54 makes provi-

sions. However, I am convinced that he, like "most Canadian Reformed members," is deeply concerned and troubled about the matter, and will bring it together with them before the throne of God, in the public prayers of the congregation for the nation and its government, at the proper time and the proper place.

Mrs. Veenman asks if "we cannot be allowed a 'Day of Prayer' on Scriptural basis." If she means: 'if it cannot be done on church-orderly basis, at least it can be done on Scriptural basis!', I would say: what church-orderly is agreed upon, is agreed upon on Scriptural basis. If not, the C.O. must be changed. Or one must say: we have a matter here where the C.O. does not apply, for which it made no provisions. But in that case one must not base the action on the C.O., as was done: Day of Prayer according to Art. 54. One cannot do something un-church-orderly on the basis of the Church Order. I do not think, though, that we have here a case for which the C.O. did not make provision, nor do I think that Art. 54 needs revision. The abortion-issue simply falls outside its limits. Maybe it would not, if we all were forced by law to have our children aborted. As it is, I believe, the limits set by Art. 54 are Scriptural: they keep the Day of Prayer from undervaluation by over-use, and the Sunday Worship from devaluation by under-use.

If Mrs. Veenman asks: "can . . . we not be allowed a Day of Prayer," my question is: who are those "we"? Does she mean the minority which is personally involved by profession and activism? But what do they want it for? Is it "to bring a prayer which attracts extra attention, next to the weekly prayers of the congregation"? Synod 1887 considered this against the intent of Art. 54 and warned against it, for above mentioned reasons. For myself, I would feel the "extra attention"-motive as almost a lobbying-effort at the highest level of political power, the throne of God.

Moreover, if it is true, as Mrs. Veenman contends, that "most Canadian Reformed members" are not so involved and occupied with the issue as they ought to be according to her, shouldn't we ask ourselves then if a Day of Prayer would be pleasing to God? On such a Day the whole church as one man lies

prostrate before the throne of God, with contrite hearts and in penitence, with supplications and fasting (essential, if no longer physically, at least like physically!! We must not do Days of Prayer on the cheap, making them rather half-hearted and unconvincing affairs). We plead with God to intervene in behalf of the unborn. If "most Canadian Reformed members" have not even lifted a pen or the telephone to put pressure on the politicians, would such a Day of Prayer not be kind of a farce? Would God not say: you plead with Me to intervene in something for which you yourselves have done so little while you could do so much? How serious are your tears of contrition, how sincere are your loud lamentations? Is your Day of Prayer not slightly hypocritical?

We must not bring the churches into such an embarrassing predicament, which I think we easily do when we go beyond the limits of Art. 54 and proclaim Days of Prayer for calamities which are not acute and whose presence is not felt throughout the churches.

Once again, we do not differ about the seriousness of the calamity, but about its nature. Nor do we differ about the need for prayer, but about its time and place. I trust that we have the same Christian concern about this great evil, together with most Canadian Reformed members, each in their own way and on their own place, according to the nature of this serious calamity.

J.D. WIELENGA

Dear Editor:

I also am one of the readers of *Clarion* who follow the articles on the ICRC with great interest. By calling the OPC a True Church in 1977 according to Article 28 and 29 of our Belgic Confession without working out all the differences, we put ourselves in great danger, namely of becoming ecumenical in the wrong sense. We should always strive for unity, but not at the cost of the Truth!

If the Westminster Confession is a completely Reformed doctrine, the rules for Ecclesiastical Contact are superfluous. Is it then a wonder that members of the ICRC who adhere to the Westminster Confession want pulpit exchange, and Lord's Supper communion with us? Let us be honest with the ICRC and tell them that there is a difference between the Westminster Confession and our Three Forms of Unity. Let us reform ourselves before it is too late!

Yours in Christ,
GARY VANIPEREN
Beamsville, ON

Dear Editor:

In the article on "Unsuitable Melodies?" Volume 38 - No. 23, the Rev. VanOene made an uninformed conclusion by implying that Pope Gregory the Great enlarged the number of scales used in our Psalm tunes. It raised my eyebrows. After all, the Hypoionian mode (used in e.g. Psalms

ARTICLE 54 Days of Prayer

In time of war, general calamities, and other great afflictions the presence of which is felt throughout the Churches, a day of prayer may be proclaimed by the Churches appointed for that purpose by general synod.

25, 42, 43, 79, 89) is a derivative of the Ionian mode (Major key). These were used in songs of the 9th to the 12th century. In the 16th Century theorists added these two with the two Aeolian modes (pure Minor key) to the existing eight ecclesiastical scales, categorized by the music theorist Guido d'Arezzo (1020 A.D.) (Since those days every composer in the Western civilization has used these scales as building blocks of compositions). In addition, Pope Gregory I, the Great, assembled more than 600 existing songs and assigned these to his great liturgical design and ecclesiastical calendar.

In his article, the Rev. VanOene also mentioned to be disturbed about a consistory's judgment that Hymn 1A is unsuitable "for it contains Gregorian elements." I waited until I could read the

Acts and indeed, for me it raised the question: what *are* Gregorian elements?

I only have an inexpensive encyclopedia by Funk & Wagnalls, but others will no doubt show a similar explanation. A quote: "Gregorian chant (is) a variety of plain song which has been used for liturgical purposes . . . since early Christian times, and which has taken its name from a notable collection of over six hundred examples of such music assembled by Pope Gregory the Great in the 6th century. . . ."

Furthermore, "the Gregorian chant consists of melody sung in unison (as our Psalms, D.T.); the melody is not combined with any other melody as in counterpoint (as our Psalms, D.T.); nor does it have any harmonic accompaniment (as our Psalms, D.T.). The Gregorian chant is not divided into bars in the manner of modern music (as our Psalms, D.T.) and its rhythm is not indicated by time signature such as 4/4 and 6/8 (as our Psalms, D.T.); the chant has a flexible and irregular rhythm closely following that of the texts, usually Biblical, for which it is composed (our Psalms have a free, dignified pulslike rhythm based on poetical form of only Scriptural passages, D.T.)."

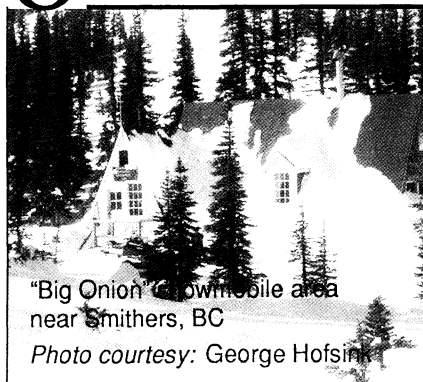
The encyclopedia goes on to state that the Gregorian Chant "employs any one of the *eight* church modes (as most of our Psalms, D.T.)."

The Gregorian chant grew out of the Ambrosian hymns under the influence of Gallic (French) and Antique (Greek) music. The Ambrosian hymns find their roots in the Jewish Synagogical songs and Syrian music. The new order of church songs, hierarchically imposed by Gregory I, was opposed in Milan (Ambrose, Augustine) until the present time (c.f. Dr. K. Ph. Bernet Kempers, *Muziekgeschiedenis*, Rotterdam, 1947).

This hopefully does enlighten some aspects of our beautiful Genevan tunes.

DENNIS TEITSMA

OUR COVER

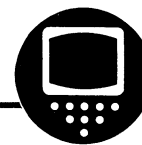


"Big Onion" Crownmobile area
near Smithers, BC

Photo courtesy: George Hofstink

P.S. "Plagaal" means plagal, i.e., authentic modes show the 'finalis' at the beginning and the end of the scale, while it is in the centre of the plagal modes. Plagal modes can be 'hypo' (lower) or 'hyper' (upper) modes. Therefore, the hypo modes consist of a fifth upward (bovenquint) and a fourth downward (onderquart) from the finalis.

Gregorian songs are syllabic (generally one note for each syllable), but also melic (many notes on one syllable, "melismatisch"). All our songs are syllabic. Hymn 1A only differs in form. It is not a poem or verse. C



Press Release of the Committee for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

1. The 56th General Assembly of the OPC, held June 9-16, 1989 at Geneva College, Beaver Falls, PA.

Rev. D.G.J. Agema was delegated to attend the 56th General Assembly of the OPC and was properly enrolled as a corresponding member of the Assembly. In his report submitted to the Committee for Contact with the OPC (CCOPC), Rev. Agema indicated that the agenda of the Assembly was filled mainly with reports from various committees. There were several overtures with regard to the *Directory for Public Worship of God*, and there was one complaint which concerned the issue of women in office.

The report of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the OPC (CEIR) expressed disappointment with the manner in which the Presbyterian Church in America dealt with communications from the OPC. More enthusiasm was expressed over the contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA). The proposal placed before and adopted by the Assembly was to work towards organic unity between the OPC and the RPCNA. Neither the relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches nor the Christian Reformed Church came into discussion.

Rev. Agema was allowed to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. He elaborated on the decisions of Synod Winnipeg, 1989, regarding contact with the OPC. He pointed out that the fraternal relationship has given cause for some encouragement, especially with respect to the OPC's witness within the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. Nevertheless there is also cause for concern with respect to the divergencies mentioned by recent Synods, as well as the OPC's continued contact with the Christian Reformed Church. Thus Rev. Agema called for an intensification in our discussions as two true churches. Only by discussing the confessional divergencies which are issues of mutual concern and by resolving them can the present temporary ecclesiastical contact make substantial progress towards real unity.

2. The meeting of February 27, 1990.

On February 27, 1990 the Committee for Contact with the OPC and the OPC's Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations hope to meet together in the Burlington-West church building. One matter on the agenda will be a discussion on how to make our churches better known to each other at the local level. It will also be suggested that a report be drawn up at this meeting which will evaluate the progress made in the relationship between the two churches. If such a report is drawn up, it will be published for the edification of all church members.

In order to facilitate discussion on matters of mutual concern, the committees are drawing up and presenting position papers. Our committee has submitted two position papers to CEIR: "The task of the presbyter with respect to the supervision of the Lord's Supper" and "Relations with the Christian Reformed Church." CEIR is also submitting a paper to us on the topic, "The task of the presbyter with respect to the supervision of the Lord's Supper." Furthermore it is responding to our comments at last year's combined meeting



to their paper on "Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church."

Obviously the agenda of the combined meeting between CCOPC and CEIR promises to cover much ground. It is gratifying to note that CEIR has expressed a real willingness to sit down together and discuss these matters. Hopefully we will be able to talk openly with one another and listen to one another, and in all our discussions and decisions submit to the absolute authority of God's Word. Thus by the grace of our God we may be instrumental in the church-gathering work of the only Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the Committee for Contact with the OPC,
R. Aasman

Meeting of the Canadian Reformed Association for the Handicapped "Anchor" — November 17, 1989

The Board is in the process of forming a committee to look into the feasibility of a supervised Independent Living program. This program would allow some of our handicapped brothers and sisters to live on their own or with one or two others in the community, receiving help and supervision where needed. Several of our handicapped brothers and sisters would likely qualify for this program. The committee will also investigate whether any funding from the government would be available for this program.

Some problems and delays have meant that the new addition is still not totally completed. Executive Board members are in constant touch with the builder to try to rectify this problem.

A new slide presentation, ready for use as an informational tool, shows the activities at Anchor summer camp.

The treasurer reported that both our membership as well as income according to budget are substantially below target. All local board members were urged to promote the work of Anchor in all ways possible.

Several new requests have come in for help in specific situations. The advisory committee will deal with these requests and come with recommendations to the Board.

M. DeGelder





By W.W.J. VanOene

HUNGARY

Hungarian Prime Minister Miklos Nemeth has apologized to church leaders for the past policies of his government. He insisted that the churches now have complete religious freedom. He strongly criticized the state's intervention in church life the last three decades.

Nemeth's comments came at the founding meeting of a new National Council for Religious Affairs. The Council is to be an advisory and consultative body whose main task is to correct grievances, many of them over property disputes. (REC NE)

CHINA

Recent reports from China reveal a predictable increase in control of Christian activity since the June 4 massacre in Beijing. A report from Shaanxi Province revealed that a church there has been limited to two baptismal services per year, that no more than 100 may be baptized at each service. This

arbitrary restriction has created a long waiting list. (CNCR REC NE)

One million Bibles have been brought to China since 1979 by the World Home Bible League. All of the Bibles were carried into China by travellers. In spite of the many Bibles being printed in China itself, the league reports that demand remains high. (REC NE)

CANADIAN SCENE

According to Statistics Canada, more than 98 percent of Canadian homes have telephones, and more than half of these have two or more phones. And they are not gathering dust.

In 1986, Canadians made almost 37 billion phone calls. That averages out to almost four calls per person per day.

To keep the system running, the major phone companies employed over 99,000 people full-time and pulled in revenues of almost 11 billion dollars. Most of that comes from the phone bills Canadians pay each month, which is

the way things will stay. At least until someone invents a machine that will give us all we want for free.

According to Statistics Canada, Canadians are travelling now more than ever before. In 1988, 71 percent of the population travelled to a destination in Canada, the United States, or overseas.

One of the most notable changes throughout the 80s has been the change in the age of the travelling population. An increase in travel by older Canadians and the corresponding decline of the number of young travellers, is yet another new trend that reflects the aging of the Canadian population.

In 1988, travellers aged 65 and over took almost 5 million overnight trips within Canada, a 56 percent jump over 1980. During the same time, young people travelled on over 12 million outings, a decline of 23 percent from 1980.

©

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Hello Busy Beavers,

Here is a winter poem for you from Busy Beaver Jessica Beintema.

Do you remember last fall one of our Busy Beavers, Donald Van Leeuwen had an accident, and you were asked to send him a card?

Now Donald writes,

Dear Aunt Betty and Busy Beavers,
Thank you for the cards that I got after my accident.

My leg is good again, but I still have 2 little dimples in it from the pin.

I have a little game for you to put in *Our Little Magazine*.

Love,
Donald Van Leeuwen

Winter

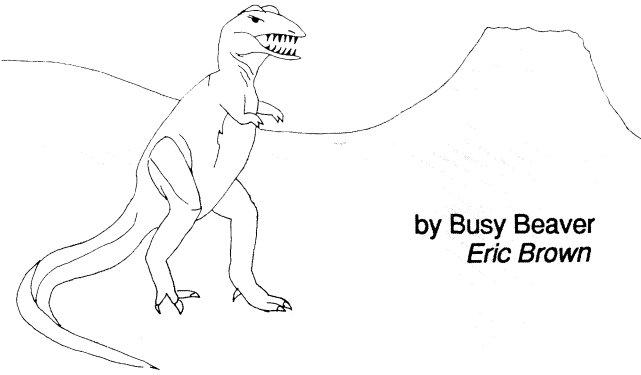
Winter has a lot of snow
So that we have to shovel.
And we have to wait and wait
Until it's just the right level.
Then when the time is right
We go outside to play
And when we get outside
We say, "The snow is here to stay!"

"Happy Birthday" and "Many happy returns of the day" to all the Busy Beavers who celebrate a February birthday. We hope you have a joyful and thankful day with your family and friends. And above all may our heavenly Father bless and guide you all in the year ahead.

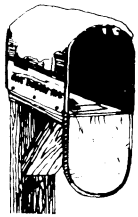
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DINOSAURS



by Busy Beaver
Eric Brown



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Brenda Grim*. We are happy to have you join us. I'm looking forward to getting that puzzle from you, Brenda.

Welcome to the Club, *Ivan Sikkema*.

How did you like playing your new game from Santa, Ivan? Will you write and tell us?

Hello, *Netty Sikkema*. I see you were busy trying to get the Busy Beavers to puzzle. Keep up the good work! Are you enjoying winter, Netty?

I see you are a good puzzler, *Lydia Viersen*. Keep up the good work. You're right, Lydia. Winter is a cosy time — as long as you're inside! Do you enjoy outside fun in winter, too?

Is a new bedroom easy to keep tidy, *Jeffrey Vandergaag*? You are lucky to have a room to yourself, I think. Thank you for the puzzle, Jeffrey. Write again soon.

You are a good writer already, *Francine Van Woudenberg*. Keep up the good work! How did you do playing your recorder at the Christmas concert, Francine? I do hope you get a penpal soon, Francine.

Hello, *Cecilia Barendregt*. It was nice to hear from you again. Thank you for the Christmas puzzle. Think it will keep, Cecilia? Bye for now.

Does it keep you busy, *Steven Vandavelde*, looking after all those animals? Have you been able to go snowmobiling yet, Steven? Thank you for your card and good wishes!

Have you made up a song for us, *Margaret De Witt*? I see you are a good puzzler. Keep up the good work! I think the Busy Beavers will enjoy your game, Margaret. And thank you for your card and good wishes.

How did you enjoy your trip, *Kristi Viher*? Will you write and tell us about the sights and the good things you enjoyed? What badges are you working for now, Kristi? Write again soon.

We are thankful you are better, *Donald Van Leeuwen*! Did you have therapy when you started walking again? And are you enjoying the winter? Thank you for the puzzle, Donald. It's a tricky one! The Busy Beavers will enjoy it, I'm sure.

Quiz Time!

KIND DEEDS

The Bible has many examples of kindness. Fill in each blank with the deed of kindness shown.

1. Abraham let Lot have first choice of _____.
2. Jesus was presented with _____, _____ and by the Wise Men.
3. The good Samaritan helped a man who was robbed by _____ up his wounds.
4. Jesus praised a widow because she gave _____.
5. Simon, Cyrenian, carried Jesus' _____.
6. Mary anointed Jesus' feet with _____.
7. Boaz rewarded Ruth because of her kindness to her _____.
8. David allowed Mephibosheth to _____ for Jonathan's sake.
9. Rahab aided the spies by letting them down _____ through a window.
10. Jonathan gave David a _____, _____, _____ and _____.
11. Dorcas made _____ and _____ for widows.

(Answers below)

REWARD for a list of kind deeds (5 or more) YOU can do at home and at school.

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

HIDDEN ANIMALS

Find the name of the animal hidden in each of the sentences below. Write it on the blank.

EXAMPLE: Long ago a tiger roared.

1. The Arab bit into the bread.
2. Nobody came late to school.
3. I enjoy every trip I go on.
4. Will I only need two pieces?
5. Bring a pet to the show.
6. He will not be around long.
7. Everyone played on key.
8. Where has Waldo gone?
9. Grab at the first thing you see.

(Answers below)