

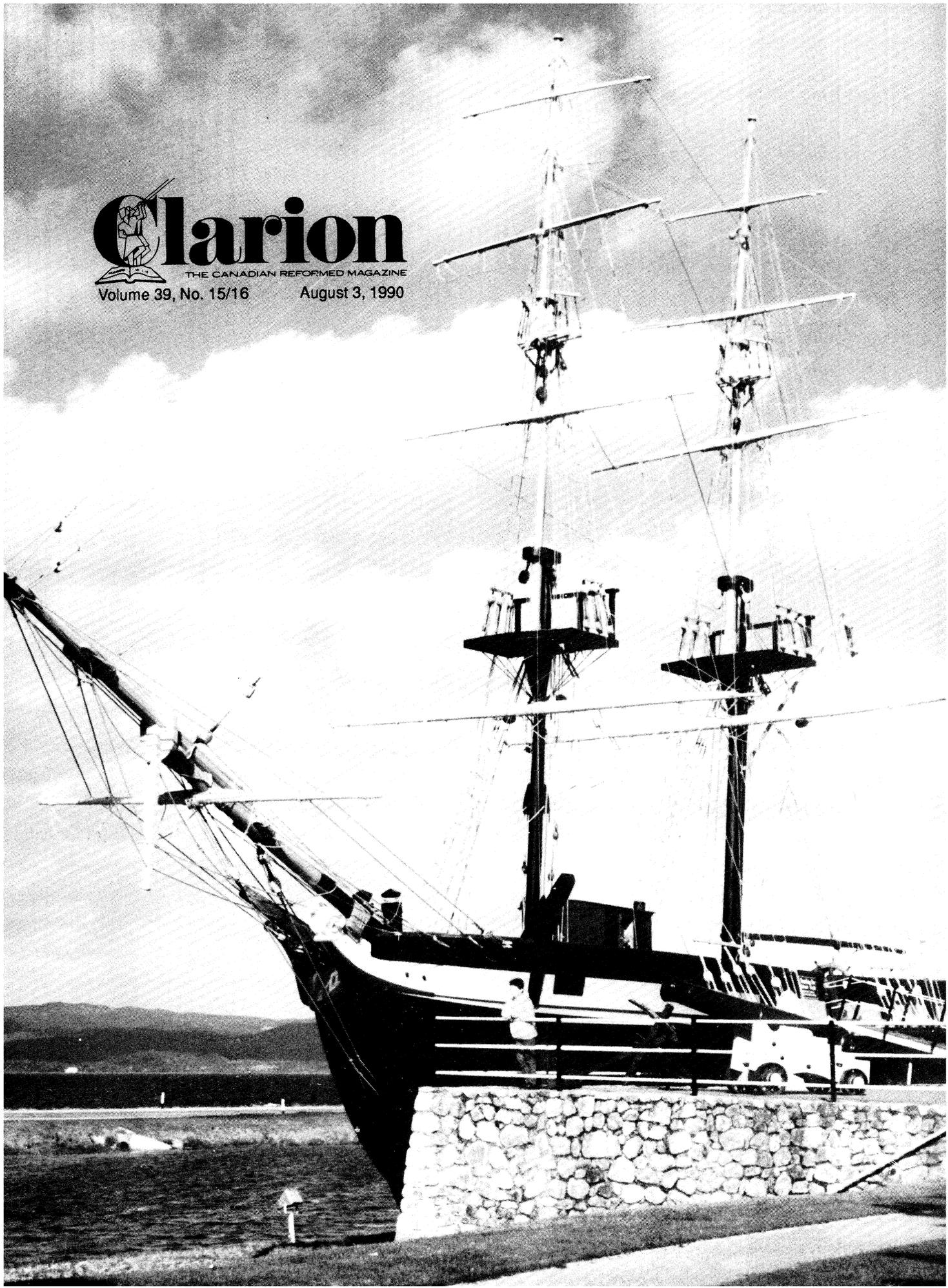


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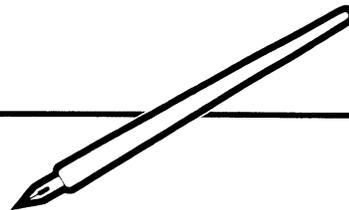
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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By J. Geertsema



All Offices Open for Women in the CRC

A decision

The decision has been made at the 1990 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church to open all the offices in the church for women. I have the information from *Calvinistic Contact* of June 1990, from articles written by Marian Van Til who was present at the meetings. I quote from the front page:

The decision came on June 19 during the denomination's annual general synod. By a ballot vote of 99 to 84, Synod 1990 decided to "permit churches to use their discretion in utilizing the gifts of women members in all the offices of the church."

Since 1984 the church has allowed female deacons but the offices of elder and minister have always been open to males only.

The article continues:

That [the church offices being open "for males only"] will change after the current decision is ratified by Synod 1992, giving the churches "adequate opportunity to respond to the proposed changes." (A few churches have defied the existing Church Order by already ordaining women as elders).

On the table of this synod was a report on the headship of man from a study committee which had the mandate, according to the article,

to biblically defend four previous synodical statements on headship — particularly to defend "extending the 'headship principle' from marriage to the church." If male headship in marriage applies in the church as well, many argued, it would prevent women from exercising over men in the church the "authority" implicit in the offices of elder and minister.

The committee's report concluded, however, that while "weighty arguments can be credibly adduced" to support such views, "other weighty arguments can be raised against them."

Synod presented three reasons for its decision: (1) the headship report as a whole "does not 'provide clear biblical' and confessional grounds for extending the 'headship principle' from marriage to the church; (2) Synod 1989 stated that women's ordination is not a creedal matter but a "church order matter"; and (3) previous synods have "permitted local congregations to introduce changes governed by church order, while synod chose not to force such changes on all the churches."

The article says that there was much prayer and that "the manner in which we worked has been a testimony of the Spirit's presence."

Some arguments

In the same *Calvinistic Contact* issue, on page 10, the same writer gives a number of quotations from what delegates said in the debate on this matter. I quote some of them, leaving out the names of those who spoke them, since they are not important for us.

"The [study] committee believes it is possible to be both biblical and Reformed while holding either view. Had such clear grounds for one position or the other existed, they would have found them."

"The main cultural factor hasn't been explored. Before the industrial revolution the family was the basic social unit, the basic economic unit, and also the basic political unit. That was the context in which the New Testament was written. The competence of the individual is now the thing society hinges on. Paul couldn't have foreseen a society in which all social units are based on the individual. The question the church has to face is whether to try to be

the one social structure in which the family rather than the individual is the unit of competence. In such a culture, can the headship of the [male in] the family carry over into the church while it doesn't in any other area?"

"Women have been oppressed through history, they've been treated as property, as chattels . . . Even today, some weddings begin with that despicable question, 'Who gives this woman to this man?' Worship too has degenerated into a man's world. But Christ doesn't agree with the discrimination against women. We have to rise above the Jewish tradition in which men in Christ's time and still today pray every day, 'Lord, I thank you I am not a slave, a Gentile or a woman.'

To not go ahead with this would be a serious vexing of the Spirit, and of 51 per cent of our church membership. Ninety-nine per cent of the world's population doesn't know what we're talking about on this issue. We need to talk about important things; we need, for example, a theology of ecology. The Spirit is forcing us to the real issues."

I shall not comment on any detail in these quotations, except on one point. One minister called the question at the beginning of a wedding ceremony ("Who gives this woman to this man") "that despicable question." I thought that the background of this question was two things: first the recognition that God gives to this man who is going to marry this woman who has been brought in, just as God gave to the man, Adam, the woman Eve; and second the recognition of the biblical view that the husband and father is the responsible head of the family, so that, when he

"Here is "Christian" religion, not subject to what God says and teaches in His Word, but subject to, and in the frame of, the neopagan thinking of modern man."

says that he and the mother of the bride do, we have here the parental consent, the parental giving of "this woman" to "this man" in the faith that with doing so they act in accordance with God's Word. Is this despicable? One can cry when someone who is called to preach and teach God's Word makes such remarks and gives this kind of leadership. But let us return to the main issue.

The quotations given here from those who were in favour of the synodical decision give us a clear picture of the argumentation. The question is not: what does Scripture say? The main argument is: what does our modern society require. What is the thinking, the view, of modern man? What must we say and do to fit within this modern world and avoid to be (seen as) old-fashioned and obsolete? The so-called new hermeneutics, the modern humanistic way of interpreting Scripture, rules here. What Paul said must be read in the light of the culture, the thinking, of his days. And like Paul adapted his instruction to that thinking of his days, so we must adapt to the views of our modern time.

How did Paul argue — according to the 1984 Study Report?

But is this true? Does Paul adapt his instruction on the point of the position of women in the church to the culture of his days? Is his argument that women (not females, please) in the church have to be silent because it was in accordance with the custom and views of his days? Is that what Paul writes? Let me restrict myself here to quoting one text from the letters of Paul. Speaking about the proper conduct in the congregation in 1 Tim. 2:8-15, the apostle writes in vs. 11, 12 "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over man; she is to keep silent." Why did Paul prescribe this? Was it because this was the custom of the day? Was it because it was the cultural position of women at that time? No, Paul does not give this as the reason for his apostolic instruction. Paul gives as ground (vs. 13): "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." In other words, the creation of Adam first so that he was to be the head in marriage, this creation institution, has a clear impact on the life and position of brothers and sisters in the congregation.

The remarkable thing is that this was clearly acknowledged in the majority study report "On Headship in the Bible," presented to the Christian Reformed Synod of 1984 (*Acts of Synod 1984*, pp. 281-336). This study committee of 1984 came with a majority report and two opposing minority reports. The majority report says (p. 313):

It is important to note that when Paul says in chapter 2:11-15 about the possibility of having women teach has to do with teaching in the church. This is particularly evident from chapter 3:14 and 15: "I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth" (NIV). It should further be noted that verses 11-15 occur between 2:1-8 and 3:1-13, passages dealing with the instituted church, its worship and its organization.

The report agrees also with the following quotation from Stephen B. Clark (*Man and Woman in Christ*, p. 196) "... the scripture views teaching primarily as a governing function, a function performed by elders, masters, and others with positions of government" (page 316 of the Acts 1984). And the report says concerning the verses 13 and 14 "... we note that ... Paul grounds his prohibition in the facts of creation." It will be good to note that for Paul the ground for his instruction is not just the "facts of creation," but these facts as they are described authoritatively in Scripture.

The majority report, then, continues

Paul now adds a second ground: the circumstances of man's fall into sin. "And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (vs. 14). ... [Paul] seems to be using the Genesis 3 narrative here as indicating what can happen when the proper roles of man and woman are reversed. The man should have been the teacher of the woman, and should have taught her cor-



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rectly. Instead, the woman became the teacher of the man, with disastrous results. She, having been deceived by Satan through the serpent, led man into sin. This, then, is Paul's second ground for forbidding women to teach in the church (p. 316).

Then the report speaks the noteworthy words:

The fact that Paul grounds the injunction of verses 11 and 12 on the biblical data about creation and the fall makes it clear that these instructions were not just intended for the Ephesian church at that time but are binding for the church of all time (p. 316).

Thus, the recommendation of the majority report to the CRC synod in 1984 was to declare that the headship of man is to be seen as "a creational norm" and counts not only for marriage



"You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it; that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."

Deuteronomy 4:2

but for the church as well, so that the offices of elder and minister should not be open to the women in the church. However, it recommended also that the synod "declare that the headship principle does not prohibit women from serving in the office of deacon" (Acts 1984, pp. 336/7).

The first minority report agreed with the body of the majority report, but not with the recommendation concerning women and the offices of deacon. The second minority report disagreed with the two others. Dealing with the question "of women's addressing men with some authority in church," this last report states:

The Bible does not answer this kind of question directly. ... On some of these matters of Christian conduct we must seek to make sound and sensitive Christian judgment beyond the specific guidance of the Scriptures. We nonetheless appeal for the Holy Spirit's guidance [emphasis added, J.G.] (Acts, p. 361).

When we read this second minority report further, the reasoning remains the same. According to it, Paul, when he speaks, is bound to his own specific situation and time. Women had to be

silent, otherwise their "conduct was threatening the good name of the church in the Gentile community and the peace, welfare, and orthodoxy of the Christian community" (p. 364). Thus, it is declared that it was the culture of those days, that caused Paul's instructions.

An evaluation

It is clear that at the CRC synod of 1990 the view expressed in the second minority report has won the battle. This is a very sad situation. For what is happening here? The decision is not ruled by what God's Word says, but by the thinking of our modern world, by the humanistic culture of the day, which has its roots in the humanistic philosophy of the Enlightenment and of the French and all subsequent revolutions. In other words, here the Christian religion, the service of God, is placed in the framework of the modern humanistic, revolutionary, anti-biblical, anti-Christian, world view. Here is "Christian" religion, not subject to what God says and teaches in His Word, but subject to, and in the frame of, the neo-pagan thinking of modern man.

This is, in a modern form, the same as what Israel did at Sinai and later under king Jeroboam, when it made the gold calf and said: Israel, let us serve the LORD our God in this form, through this calf, for this is the LORD our God (Ex. 32, and 1 Kings 12:25-33, esp. vs. 28, "Behold your God [not: 'gods' J.G.], o Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt"), such in obvious conflict with what God has said in the Second Commandment (cf. also Deut. 4). Israel sought there to serve the LORD, sure, but in the framework of the pagan idolatry, the pagan religions, the pagan thinking, of those days.

It is this very same thing which the CRC synod decided to do with its decision, and what the CRC is doing as a church, by accepting and following the reasoning behind this decision, only in a modern form. And with this decision another (once Reformed) church brings itself, its members, under the dominion of the adversary. All the talking about the intense praying by the study committee and at the synod, and the claim of the guidance of the Holy Spirit should not blindfold any from seeing what is really at stake here: sin against the Second Commandment in a modern garment.

Is praying to God while going and acting against His revealed will pleasing God? Can the Holy Spirit guide us on a way on which we reject what He says in His Word? Or is this mysticism? Disobedient mysticism?

A warning

Indeed, this decision makes us sad, and also angry, because here a church of Christ for whom He gave His blood, is led into the arms of the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), and this, o sad irony, with much prayer and pious words about the Holy Spirit's guidance. May God have mercy and lead out of this grip. And may those who want to remain truly Reformed, holding on to Scripture as God's infallible and inerrant Word and to the Reformed standards of faith, help and find each other in the unity of the true faith and of the true church of Art. 28 and 29 of the Belgic Confession.

At the same time, let us watch out, that not the spirit of the age overpower us via a modern self-centered life-style and lead us to the modern manner of thinking. May this sad synod decision be for us an urgent warning to keep learning to think what God thinks, as He has revealed it in His Word. And let us increase our prayers in this our modern day and age, for our neighbour and for ourselves, that God grant us this living in humble submission to His Word. Let those who think they stand watch that they do not fall. And let the men among us see their responsibility and study, in order to prepare themselves for possible service in one of the offices in the church for which Christ Jesus died at the cross.



REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

Is Christianity the Only True Religion?

During the past year I was enrolled in a Master of Arts program in the Department of Religion at a local university. The department offers areas of study in the five great world religions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Studying in that context I came into contact with the popular idea that each religion is as legitimate and true as the next. They are all different roads to the same Divine Mind.

Is this idea true? Are any of these five religions, or any other one for that matter, as valid as the next?

Not too far from where I live there is a huge Hindu Temple. At the end of our block there is a Jewish Synagogue. The community in which I live is not peculiar in this regard. Many of you have temples, mosques, and synagogues in your neighbourhoods as well.

How do we perceive these "other religions"? Have they found their way to God while we, as Christians, have found *our* way to the same God? Are the five Pillars of Islam the way to God for the Muslim just as Jesus Christ is the way to God for the Christian?

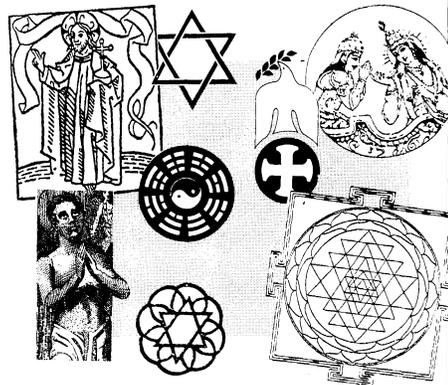
To speak of "other religions" is to refer to two thirds of the world's population. And these other religions are no longer continents away. They are on our doorstep. In the West, Christianity is declining in numbers while the other religions are increasing. Like it or not, the concept of "Christendom" has given way to "the Pluralist Society". Today in North America there are over 7 million Jews, more than 5 million Muslims, about 1 million Hindus and an estimated half million Buddhists. Especially the number of Muslims is growing. In the past decade they have surged in North America from 2 million to over 5 million.

What are we going to say about these people who live, work, and worship in our towns and cities? Are they saved, or are they not? And what about the two billion people living today throughout the world who have not (yet) heard the gospel? Have they no hope for salvation?

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ

has always insisted on the uniqueness of Christ. It has consistently proclaimed that salvation is only through Him. E.g. article 29 of the *Belgic Confession* affirms that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour.

Many people who claim to be Christians say that we must let go of this *exclusivistic* notion. (By the way, you can make almost any word sound like a dirty word if you add "istic" to it.) They have swallowed the rampant relativism of our



20th century culture which says that all religious beliefs are determined wholly by culture and experience and therefore it is the height of conceit to say that *your* religion is the only true one.

What are we going to say? Must we continue asserting the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father? Yes. We must. Why? Because we Christians, in our brilliance, have figured this out? No. Because we, in the strength of our spiritual conviction, are able to resist contemporary relativism? No. Because the Bible, God's Word, tells us so? Yes.

The Church of Christ continues to look to the revealed Word of God for its answers and does not begin to look at phenomena as they present themselves to it. And the Church discovers in its reading of Scripture that in Isaiah 45:22 God said, "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other." Pretty clear, right?

In Acts 4:12 Peter says, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Exclusive? Yes. Peter excludes all other saviours or names by which we might be saved.

In John 14:6 the Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by Me." How many ways to the Father? One. What is the way? This way is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Paul, in 1 Timothy 2:5, speaks the same language. He says, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." How many possible mediators between God and men? One. Who? Christ Jesus.

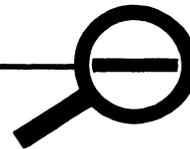
Does proclaiming Christ as the only Saviour allow for intolerance against those who subscribe to other religions? Does it allow for the desecration of tombstones in Jewish cemeteries? Absolutely not! It demands a completely different attitude. The uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ calls upon us to point out the only way to God the Father. We are to be witnesses of the only One who came to lay down his life for the ransom of many.

And what are we to say about the billions of people who died without having heard the name of Jesus Christ? Do we fire them all off to hell? No. That's not our job. We do better to speak with the Scriptures on this point where the Lord Jesus says in Luke 12:47 & 48:

And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.

We do not judge. We continue to repeat faithfully what the Scriptures say about the Lord Jesus being the only Saviour and refer all people to Him.





Synod, Statistics, and Questions

The Leeuwarden Synod — II

The General Synod of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) meeting in Leeuwarden made decisions on a wide variety of subjects. What follows is a digest in chronological order of the ones that will be of most interest to us.¹

New Bible translation

The Synod unanimously agreed with the intention of the Dutch Bible Society to work towards a new translation of the Bible. This approval was, however, accompanied by certain criteria which a new translation should meet. The new translation must be a careful and faithful rendition in contemporary Dutch. Account must be taken of the unity of Scripture as well as of the current language of the church. Such a language has developed over centuries of tradition. The Synod made it clear that contemporary Dutch does not mean a word-for-word translation which does not result in fluent and comprehensible Dutch.

The deputies for Bible translation were charged to speak with the Bible Society on behalf of the Reformed Churches. A reason given for participation in this Bible Society project was that the churches should not needlessly isolate themselves.

A visitor from Ireland

On May 18, the Synod welcomed into her midst the Rev. Alec Johnston of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland. The chairman, Dr. W.G. de Vries, noted that the enthusiastic report of the deputies for foreign churches about their visit to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church brought these churches closer to the Dutch as faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. Fruitful talks have been held which have strengthened the tie of sister church and which have made it possible to understand each other's situation better.

Rev. Johnston brought the greetings of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and mentioned the support from the Netherlands which helped to make mission work in Dublin possible. A church can now be instituted there. Rev. Johnston also

mentioned the cooperation among Reformed-minded churches in England. This cooperation is of great importance for the defence of the Reformed faith in that country. He was clearly happy with the cooperation enjoyed with the Reformed Churches (Liberated). This cooperation shows that contact between the Westminster tradition and that of the Heidelberg Catechism does not have to be difficult. He expressed the hope that the mutual bond would be further strengthened in the future.

A Kampen archive

A central archive will be established in Kampen in a newly purchased property adjacent to another building of the Theological University. Although some members of Synod appear to have been concerned that this project was desired for the wrong reason, namely because of the prestige that comes with such an expensive undertaking, it was made clear that this was not so. The Liberation took place a generation ago and the number of surviving ministers from that period decreases

constantly. Important and irreplaceable material threatens to get lost. Something must be done in a systematic way. It is interesting to note that at our own Theological College there has also been some discussion about the great desirability of such an archive at our school in Hamilton.

Further details about the project approved in Leeuwarden include the following. This central archive (Archief-en documentatie centrum — ADC) is to have one full-time archivist. According to an earlier report (March 28, 1990), such an archive would not only save and manage all archival and documentary material, but would also be available for advice to local and regional ecclesiastical archives. Furthermore, it was the intention of the deputies who came with this proposal that consistories, major assemblies and their deputies be officially advised of the existence of this archive, presumably, so that copies of important material can also be deposited in the central archive. This would greatly assist future research. It is alas not unknown in the history of the church that important material was completely lost. Recently Mr. Ton Bolland, antiquarian dealer in Amsterdam, discovered the official Acts of many years of Regional Synods in South Holland in a private library!

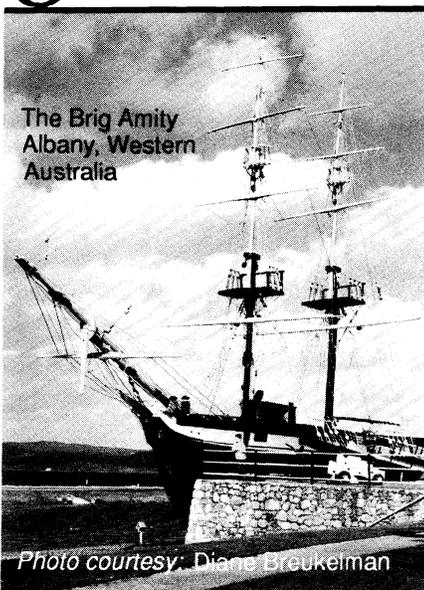
Statistics and Questions

Since the Synod of Leeuwarden of our sister churches in the Netherlands is now meeting, it may be a good opportunity to pass on some facts and figures about these churches. The data comes from the 1990 yearbook of these churches.

The total membership is just over 114,000 which is a modest increase over the figure of the preceding year. The growth was primarily due to increase from within. Four hundred and seventy were admitted from other churches, but 683 left. Of those who left, 110 became members of the (Synodical) Reformed Church and 168 ceased being members of any church.

The number of congregations is 264, an increase of one from the previous year. The number of vacancies remains high at

OUR COVER



over fifty. Although there are a fair number of ministers annually entering the ministry of the Word, yet the number of vacancies increases each year by five and within the next five years, twenty ministers will have reached the age of retirement.

In a comment on the data from the 1990 yearbook (in *Nederlands Dagblad*, March 1, 1990), H. Hoksbergen underlined the concerns of the yearbook editor Dr. W.G. de Vries, by noting that although the membership in the churches seems stable, it is not a good sign that the growth is only from within. Where do the thousands go who leave the so-called national Reformed Church or the (Synodical) Reformed Church? Are we not attractive to them? Have we done everything we could to show to those thousands that they are

welcome? Have we done our best to show that we are subservient to the Scripture and the confessions?

"...although the membership in the churches seems stable, it is not a good sign that the growth is only from within."

Should these questions not also be ours? Also the Canadian Reformed Churches enjoy stability and small but regular growth from within. However, in view of the many who wander about looking for a faithful church or who have difficulties with the direction of their own "denomina-

tion," questions arise. Why are we not receiving more of them? Are we not attractive? The only attraction we need to be concerned about is that we are faithful to the Word of God, as also summarized in the Confessions. More is not necessary. Do we do our best to see to it that others know that they are welcome? Do they also feel welcome in our midst? After all, it is not "our" church, but the church of Jesus Christ and the requirements for membership are set by Him and are not to be determined by us. Why are we not, apparently for many, an obvious rallying point and address to go to?

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the above is based on reports in *Nederlands Dagblad*, 28 March, 17-18 May and 1 June, 1990. 

NEWS MEDLEY

By W.W.J. VanOene



Everyone likes a good story, right? Well, perhaps not everyone, but most certainly the large majority of people do. Let me pass on a little story from the Providence, Edmonton, bulletin. It is entitled "The Saga of the New Collection Bags."

Two years ago someone took possession of our collection bags without our permission, i.e., stole them. New ones were ordered to be picked up in Holland. Excuses were made when the bags were not ready, so after two years of excuses a new supplier was found. This outfit took over where the old one left off, excuses about delivery dates, etc. On my last trip to Holland we paid a visit to the new firm, and after dipping through boxes full of bags, in eight different colours, with six different embroidered letters and all these in various lengths, we came home with four black bags with the letter D and four maroon bags with the letter C; all eight the same length! A Miracle! The deacons were happy with the letter D. Someone suggested that the C stands for Charity and that will cover all other causes. On our trip we also found a used rank of pipes (1 3/5) to supplement our pipe organ. The church in Zwolle donated parts and diagrams to improve our sound system for those hard of hearing. Give us a few months and it should be operational. Going through customs with the collection bags, organ pipes and electronic gadgets was a real experience! The lady customs officer in Toronto, when told what all these items were for, came up with a tax-free solution: All the items were declared to be Religious Objects!! We agreed, for who would dare to question this ruling!! End of the saga.

Beginning of the other news. But first a question: How did they manage in Edmonton during the years without collection bags?

The Young People's Societies in Ontario have again issued a Handbook containing all the names and addresses of the societies "of Regional Synod East." Our readers may recall that I questioned the propriety of the term "Regional Synod East." The President of the League addressed this point in his "Introduction to the Handbook." At least, I gather that the remarks which will follow below are a reaction to what I remarked in this respect.

"One clarification with respect to the title may be in order.

By our constitution we are known as 'The League of the Canadian and American Reformed Young People's Societies of Regional Synod East.' Any geographical description that has been suggested to us is either unwieldy because of its length, or it doesn't include all of the churches in our area. Until a clearly better name comes along, this name will stay."

I will not claim that I have better names to suggest. "Division East" would be preferable, however, and would be better than using a strictly ecclesiastical term that might be used to defend incorrect concepts.

The constitutions contained in this booklet are of a more lasting value; as for the names and addresses of secretaries and treasurers, of at least one president and secretary of one specific society I know that they will become husband and wife before the next season starts, and this will render this information obsolete. But that is the "fate" of all directories, and our young people should not themselves be discouraged by the transience of this kind of information.

Could not such a directory be issued for all societies? Then we will get rid of that "Regional Synod" at the same time. It is only a suggestion, but well worth considering, I think.

Turning to the West, I think it is useful to pass on what Rev. J. Visscher wrote in the Church News about church visits which he and Rev. VanderWell brought.

"Tomorrow Rev. M. VanderWel and your pastor begin a long auto trek. We plan, the Lord willing, to do church visitation in Vernon on Monday evening, to travel Tuesday to the Bulkley Valley, to visit with the Rev. M.K. Marren Wednesday morning, to have church visitation in Houston in the late afternoon and Smithers in the evening. On Thursday we will be returning home. All in all it will be a journey of over 2500 km. We considered doing it by plane, but the costs are prohibitive and the time saved would be minimal."

In view of the above we ask the question: Was it wise when the provision in Art. 46 C.O. that visitation shall be brought each year "unless the great distances render this inadvisable" was deleted and it was made compulsory to visit the churches each year? And was it wise and really in the best interest of the church-

es when General Synod 1986 refused to reinstate these words on the ground that the need for them had not been proved? How else can the need be proved than by weighing the necessity over against the costs in time and money? I leave this question with you, our readers.

Continuing with the Fraser Valley, we pass on that the Lynden Church now has a telephone installed in the church building. The number is 354-0507. You can find the area code yourselves. I should leave something to your own initiative, shouldn't I?

The Port Kells Church is considering changing the time for the morning service from 9:30 to 10:00 o'clock, but no decision has been made. In Vernon, on the other hand, the services will be held in the United Church building, a short distance from their regular meeting place, at 12:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. This arrangement is valid for July to September 2nd.

The Abbotsford consistory received a "Letter from the Canadian Reformed School Society of Abbotsford regarding board members being appointed as office-bearers; a reply will be forwarded to the board." I would have loved to know what this reply was, and deplore it that we have such cryptic sentences in brief reports that could just as well be left out, because they don't mean a thing to the people for whom the brief report is published. If you don't want to communicate anything, say nothing. This is a remark which refers not only or even in the first place to the above-quoted sentence. It is a general malady from which practically all brief reports suffer. The congregations know that the consistories work hard and that the brothers are not just sitting there whittling away their time. If a congregation is not allowed to know what a brother wrote to the consistory and if the consistory does not feel free to divulge the contents of its answer to that communication, why mention anything at all?

But now about the point itself. I have an inkling what the letter from the school board was all about: that members of a school board, who are occupied many evenings by the work to be done for our schools, are nominated for the office of elder or deacon and, in most instances, are elected as well. Is not the burden laid on the shoulders of these brothers too heavy? Why, it is sometimes asked, do the same brothers always have to do everything? Are there no others?

There are others, indeed. But in the first place a consistory looks for brothers who are considered most capable. Is it strange that a consistory looks at those whom the school society already discovered? And in the second place we must say that there are too many members that stand aside and let others do everything. If all were involved in everything going on, the school boards as well as the consistories would have a much larger number to choose from and the burdens would be more equally divided. Consistories should indeed try to avoid as much as possible nominating brothers who are in the school board, but sometimes consistories have no other option left to them.

The best solution is: let everyone in the congregation become wholly involved in all things going on in the church. And secondly: should our school boards not look more closely at the gifts found among the sisters in the churches? Think about it. And act upon it.

Before we leave British Columbia I would like to draw attention to one more point. In his Review of the year 1989, the Rev. J. Visscher wrote about the contribution to the College library by the Women's Savings Action. I quote the following passage: "As a former Governor I was often frustrated by the fact that at times there were insufficient funds to buy the periodicals and books needed. Let us do what we can to rectify that situation and let me even be so bold as to issue a challenge. It is this: let the contributions to the Women's Savings Action from our churches in the East match those of the West. During the last fiscal year the churches in the West gave twice as much to the College library as did the churches in the East. Come on, Ontario!"

I had to think of this again when reading in various bulletins what had been collected for this Action. I will not mention any church by name, but was struck by the poor performance of some of our eastern churches in comparison to some of those in the West. I do realize that in all provinces except Ontario our schools receive support from the provincial governments and that the burdens in Ontario are much greater and heavier than those in other provinces. I readily accept that this is a factor affecting the contributions to the Savings Action, but the fact remains that a considerable amount would be collected if every family set twenty-five cents per week aside for it. This would make thirteen hundred dollars per year for a congregation of one hundred families.

Now I saw that a congregation in the East just short of one hundred addresses gave just over \$ 78.00, whereas one one/fifth its size in the West collected over \$ 99.00, with one six/fifths its size contributing over fourteen hundred dollars for the Action. There is a disparity here that I cannot explain in any other way than by concluding that more love, dedication, and faithfulness is needed. Let this suffice.

We hasten to Carman. Once again the request was received to have some worship services conducted in Dutch. "It is decided to maintain the previous decision to not implement this. This matter has been considered before and no new grounds have been brought forward to change the previous decision."

"It is decided not to start a separate organ fund at this time. When we come to the purchase of an organ, it will be included in the budget."

Above we spoke of love, dedication, and faithfulness. We have to repeat it in connection with the regular voluntary contributions. Bulletin after bulletin urges the members to become more faithful in contributing for the maintenance of the ministry of the Gospel. I cannot recall having read about even one church that there was no deficit in regard to the budget. This, too, is a sad situation. The only way to remedy this ill is that the elders pay good attention to faithfulness or unfaithfulness of the members. Things should not be left till the end of the year. It is for this reason that I cannot call it wise that the Carman consistory defeated a proposal to give the elders a quarterly statement of contributions from families or single members in their ward. It was decided to leave it at two times a year. I know of churches where the elders receive monthly statements, and this is much better. No, the brothers certainly are no "tax collectors" or "internal revenue inspectors," but the love for the Lord and faithfulness in His service must become evident in the regularity of voluntary contributions as well. And that is what the office-bearers pay attention to. If they do, they may also discover families in need of assistance. That is an additional bonus.

Scanning the pages with advertisements, our readers will have seen repeated an urgent requests from the brothers and sisters in the Thornbury area in Ontario to come and strengthen their ranks. They loved to start a "house congregation."

The Orangeville consistory decided to "grant(s) their request in principle, to start a house congregation in the Thornbury area as of July 1, 1990, until Sept. 1, 1990, as a trial period."

In a commentary on this decision the Rev. den Hollander wrote: "A kind of impasse had come about in the sense that a lot of contacts expressed their intention to come as soon as there would be a house congregation, while the Thornbury group could not start a house congregation until certain targets were met." Now the brothers and sisters there will have three months to prove the feasibility, and after three months the situation will be re-assessed. Whenever there is administration of a sacrament, the "Thornbury-group" will attend services in Orangeville.

Apparently the brothers and sisters were so elated because of this decision, that they already invited the whole Orangeville congregation over for a picnic (and dinner?). Know what you are doing!



The Brampton consistory discussed the "Votum" and the "Salutation" at more than one meeting. The final result was that the consistory decided that "office-bearers reading the salutation and benediction use 'you' instead of 'us.'" "By "office-bearer" the brothers referred to an elder or a deacon. It would have been clearer to use those terms, for I am convinced that their minister is also an office-bearer. For the information of our readers we pass on one of the grounds which, in our opinion, decides the whole matter. "When we change the salutation and benediction into a prayer, instead of leaving it as word and gift of God in Christ to His church, we essentially change the character of the salutation and blessing. Liturgically this means that the SPEAKING and GIVING of the Lord is taken away."

Although I would have preferred a different formulation, I fully agree with the essential contents of this ground. As the brothers in Brampton, so I cannot see any need to change the wording that has literally been taken from the Word of God itself.

Brampton's committee of administration reported: "The purchase of land is behind us now. There is no expansion plan at

this time, so the building committee that looked after this purchase has been dissolved."

"As you undoubtedly know by now, we are now the proud owners of one-half acre of dirt in the village of Metcalfe. The building committee has the mandate to go ahead and build a house." This, as readers familiar with the Ottawa area will already have understood, is a quotation from the Ottawa bulletin. There is progress, and this progress is not confined to the actual purchase. There is the fund-drive as well. In particular a gift from the John Calvin School in Kelmscott WA was mentioned. As for the rest, the solicitation for funds in the Netherlands has hit a snag which, in the meantime, has been removed.

The committee sent a letter to the Netherlands and to Australia. "Since then we have received a similar reply from many of the Dutch churches as well as from the editor of *Nederlands Dagblad*, namely that they (these particular churches) will consider such a request only if it is accompanied by a letter from classis endorsing our fund raising activities." Thus, hat in hand, the consistory went to the classis Ontario North of June 8. "At the past classis we received the declaration which many of our Dutch sister churches require before they can deal with a request for financial aid, namely, that our request is made *bona fide*." (Sic!)

Isn't that silly, that a church needs a classical endorsement when directing a request for support to a sister church? If a church is in doubt whether a request it received is "*bona fide*," what prevents this church from asking for more information before acting upon the request? But a demand *a priori* that there shall be a classical endorsement of a request for financial support leaves me dumbfounded. Before things get worse, we move on to the Rehoboth Church in Burlington.

"The Committee of Administration did not submit a report. It was suggested that the committee look into purchasing a computer and printer for the bulletins, membership administration, financial records, and other possible uses. Liaison will submit this suggestion to the committee." If I were in the committee I would not need much time to follow up that suggestion!

"This issue of *The Messenger*," Watford wrote, "was supposed to have carried a report informing you that the manse had been sold and a new one acquired. However, the whole deal fell through, because the buyer did not qualify any more for his mortgage at the new interest rates." Another "meech-victim"? Too bad, though.

Another item from Watford. "A worship service to commemorate the ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ into heaven will be held on Sunday, May 27, 1990 in the morning service. In the past this worship service was held on the actual day. Grounds for the change: ascension day is on a Thursday which makes family worship in the evening very difficult for many who have small children. As a consequence attendance has been poor so that many miss the ascension day message." In my view this is a wise decision. Sometimes the starting time for a service on Sundays is changed because one or two members would be permanently prevented from attending if the starting time remained the same. But that many members are unable to attend in the evening when services are called on weekdays, generally speaking, does not seem to be prohibitive. Strange inconsistency, isn't it?

For this time I have to leave you with the above to ponder and digest it. Someone asked me a few weeks ago whether from now on there would be a newsmedley every other time. No, there is no schedule, but for the past couple of months I have been rather busy and at times other copy demands the space available for our column. Our editor decides what goes into each issue. Have patience and good hopes.

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Rethinking Redemptive-Historical Interpretation

By N.H. Gootjes

K. Schilder and redemptive historical preaching

1990 is a commemoration year of the important Dutch theologian K. Schilder. Much attention is being paid to him in the Netherlands, not only in our sister churches, but also outside of them. A public presentation of a book on K. Schilder took place in Kampen, the city where he was born. In one of the lectures given on that occasion the remark was made that theologians outside the "Liberated Churches" should no longer ignore him. At the Free University in Amsterdam a symposium on K. Schilder was organized. Many speakers from several church backgrounds each presented an aspect of Schilder's thought. Later this year the Theological University in Kampen will organize its Schilder symposium. Here in Canada our Theological College, recognizing the importance of Schilder for the history of the Canadian Reformed Churches, plans to organize a series of lectures on aspects of K. Schilder's theology. It is a happy coincidence that in this Schilder commemoration year the first doctoral dissertation devoted entirely to a theme in Schilder's thought, was presented by our Dr. J. De Jong.

The occasion for all the attention paid to Schilder this year is the fact that he was born one hundred years ago, on December 19, 1890. He was a minister in the Reformed Churches from 1914 to 1933, and became professor of dogmatology in 1934. Synod 1942 (-1944) first suspended and later dismissed him as professor and as minister of the Reformed Churches (1944). Those churches that liberated themselves from the dogmatical and church-political decisions of this and the following synod, asked him and Dr. S. Greijdanus to continue their teaching at their Theological Seminary. Schilder did so from 1945 until his death in 1952. There are plans to publish an English translation of the biography of K. Schilder by R. Van Reest; we hope this can be realized.

K. Schilder has on many points stimulated a renewal of Reformed theology. One of his most important contributions was in the field of preaching. He addressed the problem how to preach on the

historical parts of the Bible. His famous articles *Some remarks on the Unity of "Redemptive History" in Connection with Preaching* appeared almost sixty years ago in *De Reformatie*, the weekly in which he wrote so many important contributions. This article dates from the period when he was still a minister. This series of articles, and sermons, meditations, and even a trilogy (*Christ in His Suffering*) led to a practically new preaching method, called the Redemptive-Historical Method. This approach is not only important for preaching, but also for all Bible study. It seems appropriate in this year of Schilder commemoration to rethink this approach to biblical history.

Importance

Everyone who reads Scripture will feel the need to know what it means. Of course, this is not only the case with Scripture; it applies to every book. The reader wants to know what it means. Books usually are not read as an exercise in spelling but as a source of knowledge or pleasure. But in both cases the reader will try to understand what he reads. This is also the way reading is taught in school. The teacher will ask the students: "Can you tell us in your own words what we have just read?" Reading requires our effort of interpreting and understanding.

In the case of Scripture the reader should certainly know what it means. It is not meant to be a spelling book but the book containing the good news. This makes not only the minister, but every reader of Scripture an interpreter. That is why Christians at Men's and Women's Societies together try to understand what God has revealed in a certain part of Scripture and discuss what it means for us today. This is also the reason for the excellent custom of reading a part of the Bible after meals. We read to realize afresh something that God wants us to know. Therefore it will do no harm if father or mother, after having read a number of verses, tries to summarize it in one or two sentences. Or a parent can stop somewhere and ask one of the children what he thinks the last words mean. Often some discussion will help to bring the main point across. Any-

way, reading after meals too is done for the sake of understanding. The hardest thing is often personal Bible reading. You have to force yourself to read with understanding. In all these forms of Bible reading the emphasis is on understanding. What does a particular part of the Bible mean, and what can we do with it in our personal life?

In these articles, however, I intend to discuss not the way to understand the whole Bible, but only of a certain part of it. Several things are described in the Bible: history, law, psalms, prophecies, explanations on matters of faith and life. Among all these the historical part is certainly not a minor part of the Bible; about one third of the Bible recounts history. This part is probably the best known part of the Bible, since the stories are already told to us as children. But there is a specific problem connected with these stories. They are all about other people, even people who lived a long time ago. Since they are not about me, the question arises how they affect me. What should we learn from those parts of the Bible that speak of what happened to people long ago?

Starting point

The starting point for all true explanation of Scripture should be that Scripture is the Word of God. The Bible is the Word God addresses to people of all centuries, also to us today. This is decisive for the way we have to explain and apply it. And to add the reverse, if someone does not believe Scripture to be the Word of God, then his way of explaining it and applying it to our situation today will be different.

Many theologians and readers of the Bible today will say that Scripture is a book that shows us how different people living between 1200 B.C. and 100 A.D. saw God. If this is true, then we need no longer believe Scripture. And everyone can explain its stories as he likes. For then the stories of the Bible will tell us how people in the olden days thought about God, the world, etc. But we are entitled to have our own opinion. Then we are allowed to distinguish within Scripture between what is acceptable today and what is not. And we can say: I can agree with what this person

said, but I can't agree with that one. Then we will accept those parts of Scripture we can agree with, but reject other parts we cannot agree with.

Even more important for our discussion are the results of this view for the interpretation of Scripture. If someone does not believe that Scripture is the Word of God, then he can also disagree with the way an event is recorded in Scripture. He may say: "It is true that about 2000 B.C. a man called Abram left the place where he was born. The writer of Genesis describes this fact as the result of a calling of God. But that is only his interpretation; my interpretation is that Abram for some reason (famine? troubled relations?) had to leave the place of his birth. I accept the fact but I explain it in my own way." This kind of explanation is far from uncommon today. Actually it is this explanation that is generally taught at theological schools. The reader of the Bible goes beyond the description given in the Bible, and tries to give his own interpretation. This is only possible when Scripture is considered to be not the word of God but the word of man.

On the other hand, if Scripture truly is the Word of God, then we are bound to the interpretation that is recorded. For who would know better than God what the significance is of a certain event? This attitude is no doubt required by Scripture itself. It introduces itself as the Word of God: "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness . . .," 2 Tim. 3:16. Therefore we are not allowed to explain it as we think fit: "First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God," 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

That means we have to interpret Scripture according to God's will. For our subject, the interpretation of the historical parts of the Bible, it means that we have to explain the historical events according to the way they are presented in the story. For the way they are presented has been determined by God. God is of the opinion that the facts in the way they are recorded are profitable for us.

Historical facts

What then does God want us to learn through the events recorded in Scripture? Everyone who reads the stories will learn many historical facts from them. Gen. 11 gives an idea how people built towers already before the days of Abram. They already knew how to make bricks, and how to cement them together. Another fact that can be found in the Bible is that people in the time of Abram already had domesticated camels (Gen. 12:16). When the people of Israel left Egypt, somewhere between 1400 and 1200 B.C., the Egyptian army in-

cluded chariots (Ex. 14:6). It is also possible to reconstruct at least a part of the religion of the Philistines from such chapters as 1 Sam. 5. And from the story of the fall of Jerusalem we can learn about the policies of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24).

These are all true facts and we are not allowed to deny them. In the past several scholars denied that the Egyptians had domesticated camels at the time of Abram. Now they will not deny this any more because it has been confirmed by archaeological finds. But this approach undermines the historical trustworthiness of the Bible.

"All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness . . .,"

2 Tim. 3:16.

Scripture is, also in the historical details, the Word of God. Denying the historicity of it or believing it only after confirmation from other sources means not trusting God in His speaking to us.

On the other hand, we should not think that the historical details are the very message God wants us to know and to believe. The goal of the Bible is not to teach us historical details about the life of tribes and nations in the Ancient Near East. The Bible is not even the textbook for Israel's history. Although God needed such historical details to bring his message across, God's goal in giving the Bible is not teaching history.

When we therefore read the story about the building of the tower of Babel, we should not concentrate on the tower itself. It is not enough to say: "How interesting, that man already that early was able to build large towers." Such a reaction would damage the meaning of God's Word. And if we, reading the story of the Babylonian captivity, would only be interested in the year in which this occurred, we would not do justice to God's revelation here. For the thing God wants us to focus on is not this kind of facts. Scripture has been given to us "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." God's goal in having these histories recorded is not giving historical details, but giving information we need to know in order to live as we should.

Historical facts can prove anything

When we read the Bible we have to seek the significance of its historical accounts. But what kind of significance are we looking for? Are there no limitations? For often very strange applications could be made on the basis of those old histories.

It is very easy to show from the Old Testament that bigamy is allowed. When

we read the story of Jacob, we see that he first married Leah, and then married her sister Rachel (Gen. 29:16ff). In describing this fact Scripture does not even say that this was wrong. New believers have often expressed their astonishment about this story. An application of this fact could easily run like this: If a man today does not like the wife he married, he too can marry another woman. This kind of application can even be extended to include a harem. For Jacob took, at the wish of his wives, their maids Bilhah and Zilpah as concubines (Gen. 30). Is this also allowed today?

In the same way we can derive the application from the story of Absalom that it is wrong to have long hair. Or at least that it is wrong for a man to let his hair grow long. Part of the beauty of Absalom was his hair (2 Samuel 14:25f). But his hair caused his downfall. When he rebelled against his father king David and had to flee, his head caught fast in an oak, and so Joab could kill him (2 Sam. 18:9ff). Can a mother use this story to warn her son: "It is very dangerous to let your hair grow long. You may get yourself killed?"

Historical facts in the Bible can be (and have been) used to teach people that they have to avoid all luxury. They have to give up nice clothes and delicious food. Think of John the Baptist. It is said about him that he was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey (Mark 1:6). Don't we dress too expensively, compared to John? Then there is of course the complicating factor that you cannot apply this directly to ourselves, since today a mantle of camel's hair would be rather luxurious. However, shouldn't we use this as a general warning not to buy expensive clothes? The same could be said for the food. We need not eat exactly the same things John ate (in some countries honey is very expensive!) but can this story be used to urge people to eat frugally?

The Bible could also be used to provide an argument against speaking in a dialect. When Peter entered the palace of the highpriest to be present at the trial of Jesus, someone recognized him as a follower of Jesus. But Peter denied having had anything to do with Him. This denial betrayed him. For when the people heard him speak they said: "Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you" (Matt. 26:73). His identity would not have been revealed had he been able to use the standard pronunciation of Jerusalem. The seriousness of the situation has prevented people from making this ridiculous application, but what is the difference between this and the preceding examples?

Next time we hope to return to these examples of application and investigate what is wrong with them.

— *To be continued*



Music in the School

In the *LINK*, the magazine of the Maranatha and Emmanuel schools in Fergus-Guelph, I found colleague L. Van-Veen's description of her music course in Grades 7 and 8. In most of our schools music seems somewhat of an orphan, receiving minimal attention. Yet music in a large variety of forms demands so much of the time and interest of young people. It is encouraging to read about the efforts in Fergus-Guelph.

Grade 7 and 8 Music

"Throughout the book of Psalms, God is praised through voices and instruments. In the Bible there are many references made to singing and to the playing of musical instruments. Music was often used in the worship services (2 Sam.6:15; 1Chr.15:28; 1 Chron.10:42; 2 Chr.7:6; 2 Chr. 29:25) and in other festivities (Is.5:12; Is.14:11; Amos 6:5; Luke 15:25; 1 Cor. 14:7). Revelation 5:8 and 14:2 also describe the songs of praise, sung and played to God in heaven.

Music played an important part in the lives of God's people in the past and should continue to do so in our lives today. Unfortunately music has been divided into 2 forms: religious and secular music with religious being sung in church on Sundays and secular being that listened to and sung throughout the week. This dualistic view of music should not exist in a Christian's life. All of life, including music, should exist to praise and glorify God's holy name."

Course Outline

Keeping this in mind a course for music in Grade 7 and 8 has been set up. This course is primarily a course in music appreciation. The students are introduced to and led through music throughout the ages. The course is divided into 5 units:

UNIT 1: Music of the Bible and Church

This includes the use of music in the Old and New Testament and the history and development of music within the church.

UNIT 2: The Instruments of the Orchestra

This is a study of the various instruments, how they are played and used within an orchestra.

UNIT 3: Classical Music

This unit deals with various composers, their lives and music.

UNIT 4: Sacred Music

This involves the origins of well-known hymns as well as their musical form.

UNIT 5: Contemporary Music

This is a study of the various forms of present day music including the basic

"The children need to learn how to discern, what to look for and how to test that in the light of the Scripture."

themes found in this type of music.

Throughout this course the following objectives should be achieved:

1. The students will learn to appreciate the gift of music given to us by God via many men and women. This gift of music can be seen in those who play, sing, compose or conduct music. The students need to appreciate each of these talented men and women when listening to a piece of music.
2. The students will realize the great variety of types of music. They listen to a number of different musical pieces including early church chants, "classical music" and sacred music, music which they seldom choose to listen to on their own. Within this course they then receive a structured introduction to the various types of music.
3. Throughout the course the students will improve their singing ability. This

is done primarily by the singing of our own psalms and hymns. They are made aware of how to sing, keeping in mind the proper volume, diction, posture and attitude especially when singing songs to God's glory and praise.

4. Finally the students should be able to discern which music is acceptable before the LORD. After studying the various types of music from early church to modern music the students should be able to decide which is acceptable to listen to as a child of the LORD, for all things are lawful but not all things are helpful.

We all pray that our children acquire the ability to discern what is right and what is wrong and to approve what is excellent. However, this discerning needs to be taught. The children need to learn how to discern, what to look for and how to test that in the light of the Scripture. With regard to music, the students need to realize what they are listening to and if the songs and lyrics are acceptable to the LORD.

This course is not meant as an end in acquiring this ability to discern but rather as a continuation of what is taught within the home, school and church. Let it be that we all work together to equip God's children with the ability to discern, approve or test what is around us and to choose only that which is pleasing to God.

Indeed, "Let it be that we all work together..." How important this is, especially in order to grow in Scriptural discernment of the culture of our time. May also this work bear rich fruit.

Problem-solving in schools

The March issue of *THE CANADIAN SCHOOL EXECUTIVE* contains the columns "You Said . . ." This time the magazine editors had asked a number of subscribers, "What proportion of problems you encounter in your school do you consider routine? What is your approach to resolving these problems?" Answers were received from Nova Scotia, and Ontario. Colleague Kingma, principal of the Emmanuel Christian School in Winnipeg, represented Manitoba. He commented on

problem-solving in his school as follows.

It is reasonable to say that routine problems do differ from school to school. Many factors within the school and within the school's community can be responsible for certain routine problems. By recognizing these factors, one discovers ways to solve these routine problems.

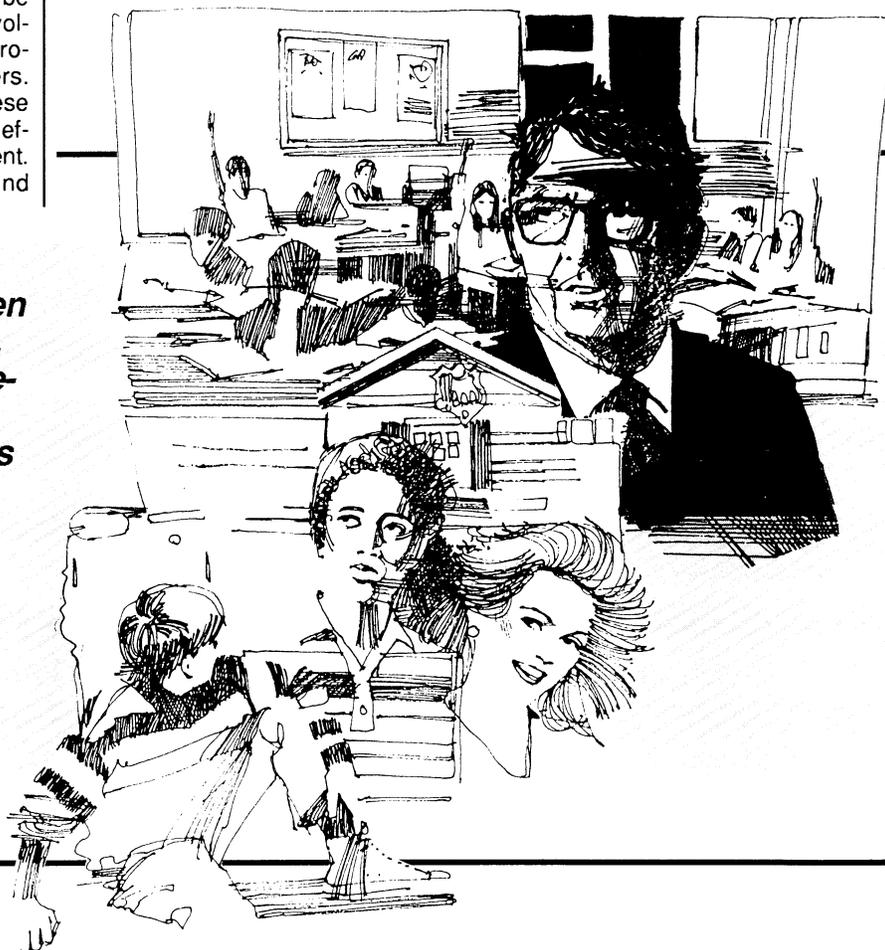
The school in which I am principal is a small Christian school: we have grades K-12, 100 students, and 8 staff members. In this type of the school, various factors can quickly produce routine problems. Among staff members, working a double grade can be a real problem. However, having volunteers or "classroom mothers" provides a big help for these teachers. The principal should also give these teachers special pointers on time-efficiency and classroom management.

Among students, trying to find

communication is another recurring issue dealt with at departmental or staff meetings. Communication between principal and teachers, among teachers, and between the school and community must always be kept open. The principal must invite teachers to discuss problems which they are experiencing within or outside the classroom. A principal can do this by socializing with the staff during breaks, by asking leading questions, by showing interest for and understanding of a teacher's problems, and by talking

Communication between the community and the school can be strengthened in various ways. At our school, we have decided to publish a one-page newsletter every Friday to tell the parents what is happening in each classroom, what activities will be occurring during the next week, and to tell parents and students any other noteworthy school news. We implemented this newsletter in September 1988, and have had great responses from parents ever since. They simply love it!

"Communication between principal and teachers, among teachers, and between the school and community must always be kept open."



close friends can be a problem. We try to help students who find this a problem by encouraging them to look beyond their class or age group. Among high school students, the wish to be in a bigger school with all the facilities seems to be a recurring reason for discontent, e.g. students cannot have team games with other schools. We tell them that we understand how they feel, but we continue to impress upon them the lasting value of working hard in their studies. We also plan with the students an extensive intramural schedule for various sports and other activities.

I think that in all schools commu-

on a one-to-one basis with staff members. This is one area where a cheerful and helpful principal can do wonders for a staff.

Communication problems among staff members can often be solved if teachers socialize in staff rooms during breaks (even among departments in larger schools). One needs to talk with adults after talking to kids. A teacher needs a place to voice or to sound his/her opinions about problems in the classroom, halls, or in the gym, etc. A staff member can share something wonderful that has just occurred in her room.

We have also encouraged parents or other members of the community to volunteer in school. Not only do they help teachers by doing many various little tasks, but they get a better understanding of how hard teachers can work, how fatigued a teacher can feel, or how wonderful it is to be in school.

Many routine problems are unique to every school. I only listed a few problems unique to our situation. Understanding the structure and characteristics of a school and its community helps immensely in trying to solve routine problems.

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News from the LCRSS

By W. Horsman and G. Veenman, M.D.

Introduction

The League of Canadian Reformed School Societies in Ontario functions as an advisory and service organization for the benefit of local school boards. It meets five times yearly to deal with a variety of issues. By means of a regular newsletter we hope to make the community more aware of the riches we share in Bible-centred education and in the struggles we face in maintaining our Reformed heritage.

Constitution and Bylaws

Since the League was established in 1965 it has operated under the original bylaws. Twenty-five years ago we were in the process of starting our own schools. Today the concern has shifted to the problem of maintaining these schools. In the last several years the League has received several reports containing thoughtful recommendations aimed at improving our *system*. In order that we might be in a better position to implement some of these recommendations, a committee was asked to review the bylaws in light of the current situation and to suggest changes that might serve to streamline the activities of the League and its standing committees. The bylaw committee has responded with an extensive report which recommends some important changes while at the same time maintaining the principle that the League continue to function as a *service organization*. The boards are currently considering this report.

The Kampen Report

This report was presented to the League in June, 1989. It describes those factors which influence men and women to enter into, and remain in, the teaching profession in our schools. It also contains a number of suggestions. Many of these can best be implemented by the local boards. There are, however, a number of suggestions that are obviously directed to the League. One suggestion was that the League organize a number of seminars or workshops for board members. The Principals' Association has offered its services to the League for that purpose. Topics will include: board/staff relations, staff supervision/evaluation, new directions from the

Ministry of Education. The League also plans to follow up on the suggestions regarding a comprehensive salary study, a marketing program for encouraging young people to become teachers, and the role of the Teachers' College.

Committee for Government Contact

This committee was appointed last year to keep the League informed of any developments in the relationship between the Ontario Government and Independent schools. Our representatives have attended a series of meetings with other independent school groups. Recently these groups have formed the Forum of Independent School Associations in Ontario (FISAO). Although we have not formally joined this forum, our representatives do attend the meetings and keep us up-to-date. At this time we are not so much concerned with gaining access to public funding but we would simply like the government to recognize us as legitimate alternatives to public and separate schools. In the near future FISAO hopes to meet with representatives from the Ministry of Education.

C.A.R.E. (Curriculum Assistance for Reformed Education)

This committee has brought to our attention the need for assistance in the implementation of new curriculum material produced by C.A.R.E. – sponsored writing teams. Unless there is involvement in the teaching of the methodology of a new curriculum, it often sits on the shelf in the classroom. It was decided that those who request the assistance of the writing team, in order to help in the methodology of a course, should pay for the time of the teacher(s) concerned.

Treasurer's Report and Budget

The perennial re-appointment of Mr. J. Gelderman as treasurer was approved. It was also decided to change the fee structure of the League from payment according to membership to payment assessed on a per student basis. Furthermore the "Health and Benefits package" will be put to tender and will as in the past be restricted only to teachers.

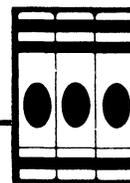
C

PSALM 78

Geneva, 1551

1. Give ear, my peo-ple, lis-ten to my teach-ing;
In-cline your ear, and let my words be reach-ing
Your heart and mind, and with their truth im-press you;
The par-a-ble in which I speak shall bless you.
My mouth will voice dark say-ings from of old,
Things we have heard, which us our fa-thers told.

2. Such things we'll tell, *not from their children* hide them,
That *those accounts of olden days* may guide them,
And *we will* tell the coming generation
How *God has* dealt with *Israel, His* nation —
The glorious *deeds the LORD* for them has wrought,
The wonders *which His mighty* hand them brought.



How Does God Speak to Us?

An Introduction to the Doctoral Dissertation of Dr. J. De Jong, *Accommodatio Dei: A Theme in K. Schilder's Theology of Revelation*. (Kampen: Mondiss, 1990)

By N.H. Gootjes

Imagine a mother who studied at a university before she married. Now she has a toddler walking around in the house. How would she warn her child not to play with the electrical outlet? Does she say: "Do not insert that metal teaspoon into the socket. For the metal will conduct the electricity to your body. As a result you will experience an intense discomfort at the place where the electricity enters your body. It may even result in damage to your cardiovascular system?" No, she will say: "Don't touch that. It hurts."

You could call the way the mother speaks: accommodation. She does not give an explanation for adults but speaks so that her toddler can understand her. There may be a lack of precision, but the message is clear enough to be understood by her child: He has to keep away from that socket. Otherwise she will be angry at him and he may get a spanking. In order to bring the message across, the mother speaks as simply as possible.

This idea has been used in theology to explain something about God's revelation. Calvin said that God uses children's speech to speak to us. In a sense He makes himself little (*A.D.*) (= *Accommodatio Dei*), 35f.)' But we find the same idea already in Augustine: Scripture "suits itself to babes" (*A.D.* 24), and before that in Origen (*A.D.* 20). In the twentieth century K. Schilder took up that traditional ecclesiastical thought and used it in his struggle against early Barthianism.

What Barth meant is this: There is an enormous difference between God and man. This is such a fundamental difference that there can be no connection between God's Word and man's words. The Bible is written in human language. That means that the Bible cannot be God's word. The only possibility for revelation is that God in His good pleasure at a certain moment makes use of this human word, the Bible,

to bridge for a moment the gap between Him and us.

Of course, Reformed theologians such as K. Schilder were shocked when Barth, in order to safeguard the exaltedness of God, denied that the Bible is the word of God. They maintained that the Bible is a divine book, the word of God. But is God not infinitely exalted over us? K. Schilder did not want to deny this, but used the traditional doctrine of God's accommodation to show how both can be believed. God indeed is exalted far above man, but when He speaks to us, He stoops down to our level, just as a mother will use children's language to make her child understand what she means.

Dr. De Jong has devoted his doctoral dissertation to this subject. We congratulate him with it, and we are grateful for what he has given us in his book. It is in the first place a general survey of the use of accommodation in the doctrine of revelation through the centuries. He notes that it is not an exhaustive survey, but even so this part consists of more than forty pages (*A.D.* 16-62). It is a very important part since it is the first general survey on this theme.

The main part of the book is, however, devoted to a summary of the theology of K. Schilder from the perspective of accommodation. He discusses not only those doctrines that are directly related, the doctrine of God, of revelation, and of man as the receiver of this revelation (*A.D.* 63-119), but also how accommodation is present in Schilder's view on other parts of dogmatics (119-165).

Dr. De Jong does not stop after having given this survey of K. Schilder's theology; he also discusses this theology in the light of criticism brought in against it. Here Dr. De Jong acts in general as an advocate for Schilder, maybe sometimes too much so. He can with reason say: "It does not appear that Schilder entertained a static, lifeless view of God" (*A.D.* 177, 181): it is also true that Schilder did not devalue time. But that does not imply that his definition of eternity was very apt, as his trouble finding Scripture proof for it shows.

But back to the main theme of accom-

modation. To return to the example we began with, the mother warning her toddler not to touch the electrical outlet will use language on a level that the child can understand. But the child will grow up, and the time will come that its mother can explain the dangers in a more scientific way. Or at least she will use different language when her child has become a teenager. He has outgrown childish language.

Can this also happen in the relation between God and man? Does man at a certain stage outgrow specific expressions? K. Schilder states at one point that God gradually removed the anthropomorphisms from His revelation to man. Anthropomorphisms are expressions derived from the human sphere and applied to God, such as God's "hand," His "arm," and His "arising" (see, e.g., Ps. 10:12). Dr. De Jong does not agree with Schilder here. According to him, later revelations do not remove, but deepen former revelation (*A.D.* 186).

Dr. De Jong has developed our understanding of God's revelation on this point. For here the parallel between God's and a mother's language can no longer be maintained. A child will not always be a child: he will grow up and outgrow childlike expressions. But God will always remain exalted over us, and therefore His language in His revelation will always have to be specially adapted to our limited understanding. God accommodates all of His revelation to our understanding, and the anthropomorphisms are nothing but a special feature within the general accommodation (*A.D.* 269). There is no need for God to remove them.

I have a question in connection with chapter 6, in which Dr. De Jong gives Scripture proof for the accommodation of God's revelation to our understanding. He discusses a number of passages that speak of God's appearances, God's repentance and other anthropomorphisms, figurative language, etc. He shows that these instances do not hide God, but reveal something about Him, and he makes important remarks about what they reveal to us about God. But my question is whether this proof is sufficient. They are

— Continued on page 337



Press Release of Classis Ontario-South held June 13, 1990 at Attercliffe, Ontario.

Opening: On behalf of the convening Church at Lincoln elder R.J. Oosterhoff requested the brethren to sing Psalm 128:1,3. Hereafter the Word of God was read from Eph. 4:1-16. The meeting was led in prayer. A cordial welcome was extended to all present.

Examination of Credentials

The Church at Lincoln checked the Credentials and reported that the Churches were duly represented.

Constitution of Classis

Classis was constituted. The moderamen consisted of the officers
 Rev. D. Moes — chairman
 Rev. K.A. Kok — clerk
 Rev. P. Kingma — vice-chairman.

The chairman noted the following memorabilia:

Rev. R. Aasman accepted the call to the "Providence" Church at Edmonton.

Rev. D.G.J. Agema declined the call to the Church at Winnipeg.

Rev. Cl. Bouwman declined the call to the Church at Smithville.

The Church at London will receive service from Rev. Dr. W. Boessenkool, retired minister of the sister Church of Johannesburg in South-Africa for a period of 9 months.

Rev. J.G.R. Kroeze, missionary of the Church at Hamilton, received a visa authorization permit for Brazil.

Prof. Dr. K. Deddens has retired as professor at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches at Hamilton.

The Church of London has extended a call to Rev. P.G. Feenstra of the Church at Guelph.

Rev. K.A. Kok received a call from the Church at Port Kells, B.C.

The vacant Church at Lincoln, London, and Smithville have not yet received a minister. The Church at Ancaster is facing vacancy, and the Church at Hamilton is seeking another missionary.

Adoption of the Agenda

Certain items have been added to the Agenda. The Agenda was adopted.

Question Period Art. 44 C.O.

Is held. Upon request, the Church at Lincoln received Rev. Agema as counselor;

the Church at London Rev. D. Moes; the Church at Ancaster Rev. N.H. Gootjes, after the request for Rev. R. Aasman's release was granted.

The Church at Blue Bell asked and received advice.

Proposals re: Art. 33 C.O.

Request of Release of the Rev. R. Aasman who accepted the call of the Providence Church at Edmonton, Alberta.

This request was heeded. The Rev. R. Aasman was most honourably released from his ministerial duties in the classical region of Ontario-South.

Correspondence

A letter from four former members of the American Reformed Church at Grand Rapids has been received and was declared inadmissible.

Reports

The Church at Chatham reported re: Needy Student Fund ad Art. 20 C.O. Classis accepted this report. The church at Watford had checked the Archives and reported that they were found in good order. The treasurer br. P.L. Schuller submitted the Financial Report covering the period June 1, 1989 to May 31, 1990. This report was accepted. A report on Audit of the treasurer's books was submitted. Br. P.L.

Schuller was officially discharged. Classis thanked him for his faithful and diligent service during six years.

The following Church Visitation Reports were submitted: To the Church at Attercliffe, the Church at Grand Rapids, and the Church at Lincoln

Appointments

Br. D. Van Amerongen has been appointed as the next classical treasurer. His address is 342 Russ Road, RR 1, Grimsby, Ontario, L3M 4E7 Phone: (416) 945-8830

Next Classis:

Convening Church : Church at London
 Place : Lincoln
 Date : September 12, 1990

Moderamen:

Chairman Rev. J. Van Rietschoten
 Clerk Rev. D. Moes
 Vice-chairman Rev. K.A. Kok

Appointed Committees:

Church at Lincoln
 - Auditor of the treasurer's books
 Church at London
 - Classical Archives
 Church at Watford
 - Inspecting Classical Archives
 Church at Chatham
 - Financial Aid for Students of the Ministry

Appointed Church Visitors and visitations:

Church at: Ministers
 Ancaster Rev. D. Moes and Rev. J. Van Rietschoten
 Attercliffe Rev. P. Kingma and Rev. K. Kok
 Blue Bell Rev. D. Agema and Rev. C. Stam
 Chatham Rev. B. Hofford and Rev. P. Kingma
 Grand Rapids Rev. D. Moes and Rev. J. Van Rietschoten
 Hamilton Rev. P. Kingma and Rev. K. Kok
 Laurel Rev. D. Agema and Rev. C. Stam
 Lincoln Rev. K. Kok and Rev. J. Van Rietschoten
 London Rev. B. Hofford and Rev. P. Kingma
 Smithville Rev. B. Hofford and Rev. D. Moes
 Watford Rev. C. Stam and Rev. D. Agema

Appointment Examiners

Two changes of appointments have been made:

CHURCH NEWS



YEARBOOK CHANGE p. 99
 Classical and Regional Treasurers
 Classis Ontario North:
 Mr. J.J. Poort
 1131 Fisher Ave.
 Burlington, ON L7P 2L2
 (416) 335-8084

NEW ADDRESS:

Dr. and Mrs. J. De Jong
 349 Stone Church Rd. East
 Hamilton, ON L9B 1B1
 Phone: (416) 383-8560

Effective July 31, 1990:

Rev. Richard Aasman
 26 Inverness Cres.
 St. Albert, AB T8N 5J3

For Old Testament Exegesis
— Rev. J. Van Rietschoten
For Ethics
— Rev. D. Moes

The Church at Hamilton was appointed to represent the Churches of the classical region of Ontario-South in the afternoon worship service of the Church at Ancaster on July 29 in which Rev. R. Aasman hopes to deliver his farewell sermon.

Personal Question Period

Rev. Aasman spoke a word of thanks to the brethren for the wonderful fellowship and cooperation enjoyed during the time of service in the midst of the Churches of the classical region of Ontario-South. He also responded with thanks to the words of the chairman addressed to him earlier.

Classis was informed of the worship service of the Church at Hamilton on June 24, 1990, at 3:00 p.m. to be conducted by Rev. Dr. K. Deddens who hopes to deliver his farewell sermon on that date.

The ladies who had served the brothers with refreshments and meals were

called in, and given thanks followed by an audible appreciation of approval.

Closing

The chairman Rev. D. Moes requested the brethren to sing Hymn 59, stanzas 1, 2 and 3. After the singing he led in prayer of thanksgiving.

P. Kingma, vice-chairman e.t.

Press Release Classis Pacific (Contracta) June 19, 1990 at Langley, BC

Rev. J. Visscher, chairman of the convening church at Langley, called the meeting to order. He then led in Scripture reading and prayer. The delegates of the neighbouring church at Cloverdale checked the credentials, and reported them to be in good order. Four churches sent delegates. Rev. J. Visscher was appointed chairman, and Rev. J. Moesker was appointed clerk.

Since this classis contracta was convened to deal with the request for the release of Rev. A. van Delden who accepted

a call to the Free Reformed Church at Bedforddale, Australia, the documents required for such a release were read. These documents were found to be in good order, and classis decided to grant Rev. van Delden honourable release. A certificate to that effect was approved and signed by the officers of classis. Chairman then spoke a few words of thanks and farewell to Rev. van Delden.

Lynden requested classis to appoint Rev. M. VanderWel as counsellor for that church. This request was granted. There was also a request from the church at Lynden for classical preaching arrangements. One Sunday per month was granted, until the next classis. Rev. J. Visscher was appointed to speak some words on behalf of classis at the van Delden's farewell evening on June 24.

Question period was held. Censure ad Art. 44 C.O. was not necessary. The Acts were read and approved. Rev. M. VanderWel led in closing prayer. Chairman then declared the meeting closed.

J. Moesker, clerk e.t. **C**

BOOK REVIEW

— continued from page 335

instances that show that God did use accommodated language, language especially adapted to our understanding. But are there also texts that teach us that God had to use accommodated language in order to be understood by us?

In conclusion: Dr. De Jong has given us an important book. Its importance can be shown in two directions. 1. In connection with K. Schilder, it is the first full-scale introduction into the theology of this important theologian written in English. 2. In connection with revelation, it shows that God's accommodation to our understanding does not make God's revelation uncertain, but is God's way of giving us sure knowledge of Him and of things divine.

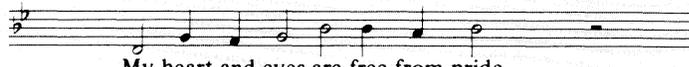
The very last page of the main text (A.D. 274) is devoted to accommodation and preaching. Here Dr. De Jong shows how his dogmatic exposition can receive a homiletic application. We may be very happy that Dr. De Jong will have the opportunity to apply this in his future teaching at our Theological College.

¹Calvin used here the Latin verb *balbutio*, translated by De Jong as "God stammers." I doubt whether this is the correct translation in the context. The point Calvin wants to make is not that there is a repetition of sound, as in "This b-b-book is g-g-good," but that the level of language is low and imprecise, not technical. The verb *balbutio* means not only "to stammer," "to stutter," but also "to speak obscurely, not distinctly, not correctly." **C**

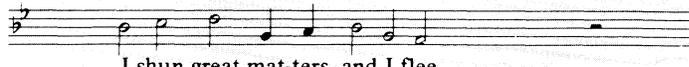
PSALM 131



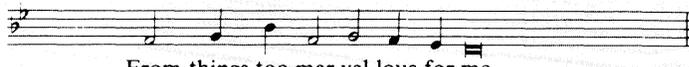
1. O LORD in whom I do a-bide,



My heart and eyes are free from pride.



I shun great mat-ters, and I flee



From things too mar-vel-lous for me.

2. But I have set my soul at rest.
As, sheltered at its mother's breast,
A child may linger quietly,
My soul is quieted in me.
3. Hope in the LORD, O Israel;
The just shall in His presence dwell.
Trust in His mercy, Him adore
From this time forth and evermore.

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE



By Aunt Betty

Dear Busy Beavers,
Join in the fun!
It's time for our Summer Quiz Contest!
Use your story Bible, your concordance, your Bible handbook
or Encyclopedia, whatever you like as a help.
Maybe your Dad, Mom, big sister or big brother will help you.
Or your friend!
Take all the time you need, but be sure you finish. And send
it in!

Here's the address: *Aunt Betty*
c/o Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R2J 3X5

Happy puzzling!

QUIZ #1

Joseph

One of the first Bible people that children learn about is Joseph. Don't you think it's one of the most exciting? Match the following facts about Joseph found in the first book of the Bible.

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Home country | a. Jacob |
| 2. Father | b. Reuben |
| 3. Mother | c. Simeon |
| 4. Oldest brother | d. Potiphar's wife |
| 5. New country | e. Canaan |
| 6. Purchasers | f. Egypt |
| 7. Master | g. Rachel |
| 8. Grandfather | h. Ishmaelites |
| 9. Tempress | i. Pharaoh |
| 10. Interpreted dreams | j. Laban |
| 11. His hostage | k. Potiphar |

QUIZ #2

Listeners

Match the listener and the speaker.

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. Felix | a. Delilah |
| 2. Eunuch | b. Andrew |
| 3. Naaman | c. Jethro |
| 4. Moses | d. Paul |
| 5. Barak | e. Jezebel |
| 6. Elisha | f. Jeremiah |
| 7. Samson | g. Philip |
| 8. Eve | h. Elijah |
| 9. Ahab | i. a slave girl |
| 10. Peter | j. Deborah |
| 11. Zedekiah | k. Satan |

QUIZ #3

Where in the Bible?

- | | |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| _____ | 1. In what books of the Bible are the Ten Commandments found? |
| _____ | 2. In what book of the Bible are 150 songs to be sung with stringed instruments? |
| _____ | 3. In what book of the Bible do we find many wise sayings of Solomon? |
| _____ | 4. In what book of the Bible do we find the story of how God sent Jonah to preach in Nineveh? |
| _____ | 5. In what book of the Bible do we find the history of the first churches after Jesus' ascension? |
| _____ | 6. In what book of the Bible do we find the battle of Jericho? |
| _____ | 7. In what book of the Bible do we find the story of a queen who saved her people? |
| _____ | 8. In what book of the Bible do we find the story of a man in a lion's den? |
| _____ | 9. In what book of the Bible do we find the Lord Jesus' Sermon on the Mount? |
| _____ | 10. In what book of the Bible do we find the creation story? |
| _____ | 11. In what book of the Bible do we find the story of a runaway slave who returned to his master? |

August Birthdays

Here's wishing all the Busy Beavers celebrating an August birthday a very happy day and many happy returns. May you have a thankful day, too, with your family and friends. And may our heavenly Father guide and bless you in the year ahead.

Joanne Visscher	1	Kristi Van Popta	11	Karin Boot	22
Adalia Dam	4	Alice Van Woudenberg	13	Albert DeBoer	24
Mary-Anne Moes	5	Erinna Jansen	14	Derek Bouwman	26
Heidi Siebenga	5	Alex Sikkema		Karin Van Hof	26
Christine Lodder	6	Neal Gelderman	16	Jocelyn Kamphuis	27
Mary Breukelman	7	Jocelyn 't Hart		Wendy Vandergaag	28
Florence Nijenhuis	8	Christa Jansen		Cindy Van Woudenberg	30
Linda Nap	9	Emily Moes	20	Edie Alkema	31
Felicia Teissen	10	Netty Sikkema	21		