

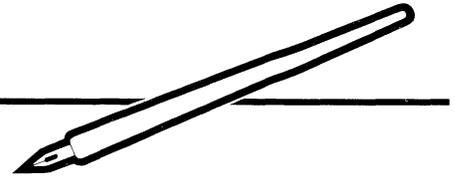
Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 33, No. 3

February 10, 1984





We must keep the Old Testament as Word of God for the Church

In the previous issue we learned that *Verdict Report* urges us to “demythologize” certain ideas and views about the Ten Commandments. The first “myth” was that the Ten Commandments are “a Divine Legislation Given to All Men for ALL Times.” According to Dr. Brinsmead this “myth” cannot be true, since these Ten Words were specifically for Israel, even though they contain elements that can be called “natural law,” a law that is natural, common to all men.

I shall now give a short overview of the other “myths.” The second one is, according to Dr. Brinsmead: “That the Ten Commandments Constitute the Highest Expression of God’s Will for Men.” The author calls this “a fundamental denial of the claim of Christ. Every revelation of God which comes before Christ is preliminary, veiled and partial. Christ is the full expression of the Father’s will (Col. 2:9). He is God’s final Word to the human race (John 1:1, 2; Hebr. 1:1-3). “. . . Christ is ‘the Way, the Truth and the Life.’” “Rather than being a final statement of the will of God, the Ten Commandments are actually an *inadequate expression* of Christian morality.” This is “proven” by the following statement: The Old Testament, including the Ten Commandments, tolerated e.g. slavery. We ask: did not Paul do the same?

The third myth is: “That the Ten Commandments Are Central in New Testament Ethics.” According to Dr. Brinsmead, this is so in much of the Roman Catholic and Protestant thinking, but it is not justified because in the gospel Christ takes the place of the Torah (the Law). “All that the Law was to Judaism, Christ is to the New Testament community.” In Christ the Old Testament finds its fulfilment. The New Testament has a new covenant.

We can skip myths 4 and 5.

Myth 6 reads: “That the New Testament Exhorts Christians to Keep the Commandments Is Proof That the Ten Commandments Are Binding Upon Them.” Dr. Brinsmead reasons as follows: “‘The Law’ (i.e. the Law of Moses) includes the Ten Commandments as well as regulations regarding uncleanness. According to the rabbis there were 613 commandments in the Law.” If now “texts as Matthew 5:17 and Romans 3:21 are ‘proof’ that Christians should keep the Ten Commandments, they are also ‘proof’ that Christians should keep all 613 commandments of the Law.”

After this the author comes with his “Conclusions.” There are two. The first one is that there is a legitimate use of the Ten Commandments for Christians, provided they approach them through Christ and interpret them “Christianly, that is, in the light of the New Testament and the New Testament law. It was and is wrong to adopt a more rigid and literal mind-set which tries to apply even the religious and cultic details of the Ten Commandments as a rule of life.”

The second conclusion is, that the use of the Ten Commandments “as a basis for a moral schema is not the New Testament approach. Here Jesus Christ replaces the Law, including the Ten Commandments, not only as a way to God but as a rule of life. All that the Law was to Judaism, Christ is to the New Testament community. . . . Christian behaviour is determined by Christ — His person, His work, and His teach-

ing. Paul’s epistles demonstrate conclusively that Christ is the great Guide, Shepherd, Teacher, Word and Rule of life for His people. As the apostolic fathers of the early church pointed out, Christ Himself has become the living Law or Torah.”

We wholeheartedly agree with Dr. Brinsmead when he calls for renewed faith in the living Christ Jesus, and for a new life that is rooted in Christ. Our Christian behaviour must be determined by Christ — His person, His work and His teaching, certainly. Only in that living relation with Christ, only through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, in a daily renewed total surrender and commitment to Christ can the church come to new life, new enthusiasm. This renewing cannot be brought about by preaching the Law. The only Saviour is Christ.

However, I fear that when *Verdict Report* seeks to promote a true Christian renewal in these changing times of ours, it will not succeed, because it wants us to abolish the Old Testament including the Ten Commandments. It breaks the two Testaments apart. The Old Testament cannot be understood without the New. But the New cannot be understood without the Old. Both are and remain the one Word of God. More than once in the history of the Christian church there have been people who fabricated a contrast between the Old and the New Testament. They abolished the Old, and come to heresies. For example there was Marcion in the second century, and later there were the Manicheans and the Anabaptists. Abolishment of the Old Testament inevitably leads to deviating teachings also with respect to Christ and His salvation.

This counts for *Verdict* as well. I quote from an article in *The Outlook* of January 1984, written by the Rev. J. Tuininga. He writes about Brinsmead’s view of the atonement, and says: According to Dr. Brinsmead, “Anselm and Abelard [two church leaders in the Middle Ages, J.G.] were both badly mistaken in their views of the atonement, though Anselm is the lesser of two evils.’ Anselm’s ‘view of ‘vicarious satisfaction’ or ‘penal substitution’ is based on the Latin theory of the Law in which ‘the fundamental task is to uphold the demands of the Law.’ But the apostle Paul ‘preaches the good news of a justice which by-passes the Law altogether.’ What is more, ‘the New Testament nowhere teaches us that Christ’s obedience was directed to the Law or that His death was a payment or satisfaction to its demand. These theories have been imposed upon the New Testament.’ And they lead to the ‘classical Calvinist’ view which ‘tends to transform God’s love into a coldly-calculating love’ which ‘must deny that Christ died for the entire world on the basis of mathematical, Law-based logic.’” In other words, Christ did not come to fulfil all the requirements of God’s covenant in our place for us, and His suffering was not a vicarious suffering, and satisfaction to God’s justice, according to *Verdict*. Indeed, here we see the consequence of abolishing the Law, that is, the Old Testament, and degrading it into an old sacred document.

Certainly, there is a history of revelation in which God comes further and further, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses via David and Solomon to the prophets Elijah, Isaiah and the others, then to John the Baptist, and finally to Christ Jesus. This history of revelation can be characterized by the words “more” and “completion.” God more and more revealed His counsel and plan of our redemption in Christ, until He completed it in the person and the work and words of Christ (Question and Answer 19). But this “more” does not mean: contrast.

It is working out what was already shown. It is making clearer what was already said. It is completion of what is maintained, and not replacement of what has been abolished. Christ says in Matthew 5:17, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them."

Dr. Brinsmead says: "What the Law is for Judaism, that Christ is for the New Testament community." Is not this his first mistake? Sure, the statement as such is true. Christ Jesus is for the church, what the Law was for the Jews, the Judaists: the way to salvation. But it is not correct to identify Judaism with the Old Testament and Israel. Judaism is a completely wrong, unjustified interpretation and use of the Law.

In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus does not place His explanation of the Ten Commandments over against the Law as given by God through Moses. On the contrary, He opposes the Jewish, Judaistic interpretation and use of the Law. In Matt. 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38 and 43 Christ speaks against what his disciples "have heard that (it) was said." That is: what was said by the Jewish teachers of the Law. Over against that Christ comes with His true explanation: "but I say to you."

In Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount Christ unfolds the full meaning of the Ten Commandments for His church: e.g. the meaning of the Sixth is given in examples in chapter 5:21-26; that of the Seventh in chapter 5:27-32; that of the Eighth and Ninth in chapter 5:33-42. In chapter 6 Christ shows the true meaning of the First Commandment and in chapter 7 He explains the meaning of the Second Commandment. So Christ works out that He did not come to abolish the Law, but to bring it to completion and fulfil it.

That Christ maintains the Law of the Covenant for the New Testament Church in completing and fulfilling it, does not have to amaze us. Actually it is self-evident. The Ten Commandments or Ten Words describe the redeemed life of God's liberated covenant children. James calls the Ten Words the "Law of freedom," for the Law gives a picture of our freed life in the covenant with God. That life reflects how and what God is, because the Law of the Ten Commandments reflects how and what God is.

Here we have the second mistake of Dr. Brinsmead, as I see it. Because he identifies the Ten Commandments with their Judaistic interpretation and use, he creates a contrast and conflict between the Law and the gospel that in reality is not there. The Law is not just a legal code, a body of rules. The Law teaches the gospel in teaching who God is, and how we as God's children, should live (Matt. 5:48).

Let me try to explain what I mean: God has revealed that He is the absolutely only God. There is no other God. The "other gods" are nothing but inventions of the human mind. They are false idols. This one true God made a covenant with Israel. Therefore He says that His people may not serve "other gods." This is the basic Law of the Covenant of all times, from the very beginning unto eternity.

God has also revealed Himself as God. Being God includes having divine authority. It belongs to the calling of God's creatures to recognize that divine authority by listening to what God teaches and by doing what He says, like a child listens to his father and mother. This is the fatherly covenantal instruction in the Second Commandment. Also this Word of the covenant is based in what God is. Here is also a connection with the Fifth Commandment.

Now I shall give two examples from the second part of the Law. God says that His people are not allowed to murder one another. They shall not do that, because God is life. He is also the God and Giver of life. Since life is His gift, His covenant children must protect and build life. Life and love belong together in God. God is also love. Therefore God's children, re-

deemed by God, protect and build life by love for God and for the neighbour.

Another attribute of God is faithfulness. He is absolutely loyal in the covenant with man and with respect to all His creation. In this faithfulness of God is based the "commandment" that husband and wife must be faithful to each other. Paul works this out in Ephesians 5 when He bases marriage faithfulness in the faithfulness of Christ for His church.

God is also trustworthy. Man can build on what He says. God's word is simply true. Out of this attitude of God flows the Ninth Commandment: God's children must be trustworthy and reliable for each other and not false witnesses. In this way we see from the Ten Commandments what God is.

We also discover that in these commandments God's people are called to reflect God, to be God's image in their redeemed life. Here paradise is back in principle. We have here basically the same gospel as taught by the apostle Paul when he speaks about the new man in Christ who is renewed after the image of God in true righteousness and holiness and with true knowledge (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). That is the freedom of God's children, pictured in the Law of Christ, which is the Law of freedom. This freedom is Christ's work in the lives of His disciples through His Holy Spirit.

God's children are a people of kings and priests (Exod.



Published by-weekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, Manitoba

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MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):
CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
 1249 Plessis Road, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2C 3L9
 Phone: (204) 222-5218

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

FOR 1984	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada	\$22.00	\$40.00
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$24.75	\$39.75
International	\$33.25	\$55.75

Advertisements: \$5.00 per column inch
 Second class mail registration number 1025
 ISSN 0383-0438

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OUR COVER

Lake Louise, Alberta

Capital punishment₂

3. Evaluation of the arguments

In the previous instalment the arguments against capital punishment were categorized into the following:

- a. It is not corrective, but rather revengeful;
- b. It does not prevent murder;
- c. It is a final, irrevocable measure;
- d. It is cruel and inhuman;
- e. We are not allowed to kill;
- f. There is no possibility of repentance.

What is the value and the real weight of these arguments? I will try to evaluate them in the light of what the Word of God teaches us about our responsibility as human beings. We will also consider the emotional aspects and the implications for our human society.

Let us trace them successively.

3a. Is it not corrective, but rather revengeful?

The reasoning is that every punishment should be corrective, remedial, and restorative, and not revengeful. It seems that capital punishment does not serve that purpose. At best, it gives some satisfaction to the victims as a matter of revenge, but that should never be the motive of justice.

However, that can be said and is actually said about most forms of punishment nowadays. A jail term does not restore the damage done by the crime either. And most people consider it very doubtful whether an extended jail term has a corrective and remedial effect on the murderer. His frustration and his hatred

of society may very well increase during an imprisonment, and the convict may be set free in a very desperate mood after he has finished his term. Therefore, the argument that capital punishment does not cure the criminal nor pay back the damage is not specific for this case, but can be adduced against almost every form of punishment.

3b. Does it not prevent murder?

The reasoning that capital punishment does not prevent murder is hard to prove. Of course, in those areas in the world where this sentence is used, murder still exists. But it is difficult to establish how many cases of murder have been prevented by the danger of being caught and sentenced to death. Moreover, the same reasoning can be used with respect to every crime and every punishment.

Still we believe that punishment always has a deterrent effect, at least for the majority of the people. Most people will agree that in the United Kingdom capital punishment for the killing of a police officer has worked quite effectively in protecting police officers, even when they did not carry firearms.

There is a tendency nowadays to do away with punishment and retaliation as a matter of deterrence, but it is certainly not a strong argument against capital punishment.

3c. Is it a final and irrevocable measure?

The death penalty is certainly a final and irrevocable measure, and it is not in-

conceivable that people might be sentenced by a judicial error.

However, there are at least three aspects we have to consider in this respect.

One: In our modern, judicial system it is very rare and unlikely that someone is convicted without conclusive evidence. The tendency to give the defendant the benefit of the doubt at the cost of the victims is more prevalent. Especially in a case of capital punishment, special precautions have to be taken to prevent such judicial errors as much as possible.

Two: When someone is sentenced to life imprisonment and, after many years, his innocence is proven, the error cannot be corrected either. The damage done when someone is wrongly incarcerated for many years, cannot be undone. It certainly will leave ineradicable scars, or, even worse, it will cause lasting damage and destruction of someone's life if he has been in jail for, let us say, thirty years, without being guilty.

Three: To execute justice is a very responsible task, and, as is the case with every action, certain risks are involved. We should never condemn a system because of the risks involved. We should consider the risks and reduce them to a minimum. Everyone who drives a car knows that he takes the risk of killing innocent people in an accident, and as a matter of fact, every year many are killed. Still, no one says that therefore all traffic must stop, and no one declares driving a car an unacceptable thing. To exercise justice and to execute capital punishment brings with it the risk that an innocent person may be convicted. However, considering the importance of the judicial system, the precautions taken to avoid mistakes, and the accuracy with which the courts are working, the "risk" that an innocent person may fall victim is minimal, especially when compared with the risk and the number of victims of traffic and other accidents. It is certainly not a sound ground for doing away with capital punishment.

19:6; Rev. 1:6; 5:9), made again in God's image. That is pictured in the Ten Commandments, as well as in the Sermon on the Mount and in the letters of Paul. That is realized by Christ through His Spirit in the believers in both the old and the new covenant.

There certainly are differences between the two Testaments or covenants. The old contains many "fore-shadows," while the new gives us the reality of Christ, and therefore the fulfilment and completion. Nevertheless there is a basic unity between the two. That unity is Christ and salvation through Him.

Also the apostle Paul does not throw the Law away. He calls the Law holy and writes that "the commandment is holy and just and good" (Romans 7:12). Therefore he can write, a little further, that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death." Not that the

Law makes free. God does that through Christ's death and resurrection, through Christ's regenerating Holy Spirit, "in order," Paul says then, "that the *just requirement of the Law* might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit," (Romans 8:2-4).

It is that same holy and just Law.

Therefore, let us continue to see in the Ten Commandments God's instruction in the meaning of faith, faith in Christ as the Redeemer from sin. Certainly, let us explain these Ten Words of the covenant in fuller, complete, New Testament light, and let us so see in them a normative picture of what it means to be renewed after God's image as His freed covenant children, freed in and through Christ.

J. GEERTSEMA

3d. Is it cruel and inhuman?

Capital punishment is considered to be cruel and inhuman, especially in a time when people almost everywhere are doing away with corporal punishment. Also this argument does not hold water, if we take a closer look at it. Of course, it can be done in a cruel way; nowadays many people are being tortured, in countries all over the world. However, this happens even without the death penalty, and often the death penalty is less cruel than prolonged torture. Moreover, let us not forget that an extended jail term can be horrifying and unbearable. When we call something inhuman, we should think about a life sentence. A human being, isolated in a cage like an animal, is not really an elevating picture or a symbol of human dignity. It is quite well possible that a death penalty is more “humane” and less cruel than a life term in prison. Many criminals have stated that they would rather die than stay in jail for the rest of their lives. The argument of cruelty can certainly not be adduced in favour of a jail term and against capital punishment. Of course, the question remains in what way the punishment is executed. It may very well be that the electric chair is more cruel and torturous than the guillotine of the Middle Ages. But nowadays it is also possible to execute a death penalty without any torture or cruelty.

3e. Are we not allowed to kill?

We are coming closer to the main point and the crucial question in this matter, namely, whether we have the right to kill in the first place. From a Christian point of view some say: it is against the teachings of the New Testament. We

ment does not bear the sword in vain. The death penalty is certainly not something that belongs only to the dispensation of the Old Testament. Romans 13 speaks very clearly about it. In Gen. 9:6 we read: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in His own image.” That is a clear statement. And in Romans 13:4 we read: “For he [that is, the governing au-

takes away the possibility of repentance and amendment of life. Especially from a Christian point of view, we should try to convince a criminal of his wrongdoings and make him change his life and start over again in obedience to the Lord. As long as someone is alive he can repent. Cutting off his life means that we, humanly speaking, remove any further possibility of repentance.

The main point is that repentance and conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, and disobedience to the Lord (in rejecting capital punishment) does not increase the possibility that the Holy Spirit will work.

thorities] does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute His wrath on the wrongdoers.” Some may say that the sword is mentioned only as the symbol of the power and authority given to the civil government. But the meaning is clear: “the sword” may be a symbol, but the purpose of the sword is to kill and to exercise justice by yielding the sword. The civil government, as the servant of God, has not only the right to take away life, but also the obligation to protect life, if necessary by taking away the lives of those who kill others. It does not necessarily mean that the government has the obligation to exercise capi-

That sounds convincing. However, we should not be wiser than God. The Lord commands us to do justice, according to His Word, as we have stated above. In obedience to the Word of God, we may count on His help, also in bringing a sinner to repentance. We don’t know if and when someone will change his life. We know about a murderer on the cross who believed in Jesus Christ and was saved. Obedience to the Lord in the execution of the punishment He has prescribed will never cut off or limit the possibility of conversion, because it will never limit the work of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary. If someone is sentenced to death, the Holy Spirit can certainly use this fact to bring him to terms and make him change his attitude. The main point is that repentance and conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, and disobedience to the Lord (in rejecting capital punishment) does not increase the possibility that the Holy Spirit will work. On the contrary. Only in obedience to the Word of God can we appeal to Him and His help.

So far our evaluation of the arguments against capital punishment. There are a number of general points which we have to consider, before we can come to a balanced judgment in this matter. In the next (the last) instalment I hope to discuss some less sound arguments which are sometimes brought forward in favour of capital punishment. I also hope to deal with some aspects of punishment and corrective measures in general. In this way we will try to formulate our conclusions in respect to this issue.

— To be continued

Langley, BC

W. POUWELSE

Obedience to the Lord in the execution of the punishment He has prescribed will never cut off or limit the possibility of conversion. . .

have to love our neighbour and we have to forgive. However, to forgive and to love our neighbour does not contradict the necessity and obligation to exercise justice. The Bible certainly teaches us that we have to love our neighbour, but this love to the neighbour has to be shown also in doing justice according to the Word of God. We do not have the right to kill. That is clearly stated in the Bible.

No individual person has the right to take away the life of someone else. However, the Bible teaches us also that the govern-

tal punishment with respect to everyone who, in one way or another, has taken away the life of someone else. It means, however, without any doubt, that the government has the *right* to execute the death penalty. As far as the obligation to execute this judgment is concerned, we will deal further with that in the next instalment. For the time being, may it suffice to state that the government has the *right* to take away human life.

3f. Is there no possibility of repentance?

Some argue that capital punishment



Rome still maintains that we, reformed confessors, are accursed

The leopard does not change its spots. The fox may grow old, but never good. These two sayings have the same meaning as the Dutch, "De vos verliest wel zijn haren, maar niet zijn streken." Last year the pope "preached" in a Lutheran Church in Germany at the occasion of the commemoration of the birth of Luther. The pope also calls the Protestants "brethren." Many Protestants find the present pope to be a very amiable, good, well-meaning man. They find that they can accept the Roman Catholic Church as a church of Christ.

However, the point is not whether the pope is a nice man. The point is not whether many Roman Catholic people are well-meaning people. The point is: does the pope speak and act, and does the Church of Rome speak and act, in accordance with the Word of God. Do the pope and the Church of Rome confess and maintain the truth of God as He has revealed it in His Word? This, the reader may examine. I read the following in *Nederlands Dagblad* of January 3, 1984. It was taken from *In De Rechte Straat*, the magazine of Rev. H.J. Hegger, an ex-priest, who became Reformed:

The new Roman Catholic book of Canon Law that made its entry into the Roman Catholic Church last year on November 27, requires all office-bearers in this church to swear an oath of allegiance to the Confession of faith of the Council of Trent. This council was held in the framework of the Counter-Reformation and considered the doctrine of the Reformation to be accursed. All pastors, professors of philosophy and theology, and all bishops must declare at the accession of their office that they wholeheartedly agree with all the pronouncements of Trent, according to Rev. Hegger.

Trent has declared, for instance, "Accursed is he who says that God's grace is only a favour from God, and that man cannot merit eternal life by his own good works. Accursed is he who says that man is justified only through the imputation of Christ's righteousness; only through the trust which a sinful man places in God's mercy which He has shown to us in Christ."

According to Rev. Hegger, the declaration regarding the Confession of Faith of Trent must be made with one hand on the

gospel, whereafter the gospel is kissed and the pronouncement is made: "May God and these holy gospels help me." Rev. Hegger makes the remark, "Thus they deny the gospel of free grace with a kiss on that very same gospel."

Some other canons from the Confession of Trent are: "If someone says that people are justified only through the imputation of Christ's righteousness and that the grace through which we are justified is only a favour of God, he be accursed."

If someone says that the faith through which we are justified is nothing but a trusting in the mercy of God who forgives us our sins for the sake of Christ, or that we are only justified through such confidence, he be accursed."

The oath of allegiance to the new Roman Catholic book of Canon Law also includes agreement with the following: "I agree with the confession that there is a purgatory, and that the souls who are there can be helped by the prayers of the believers; also that the saints who reign with Christ must be revered and called upon, and that they bring our prayers before God, and that their relics must be revered."

"I strongly confirm that the images of Christ and of the Mother of God, always virgin, and also those of the other saints must be there and must be kept and that they must receive the reverence due to them. I also confirm that Christ has left, in the church, the power of the indulgences and that their use is very beneficial for the Christian people."

"I acknowledge the catholic and apostolic Roman Church to be the mother and teacher of all churches; I promise and swear true obedience to the bishop of Rome who is the successor of the blessed Peter, the prince of the apostles, and who is the vicar of Christ on earth."

"Without any doubt I also accept and confess everything else that has been delivered, determined, and declared by the sacred canons and the Catholic Councils and especially by the most sacred Council of Trent (and by the Vatican Council) especially with regard to the primate and the infallible doctrinal authority of the bishop of Rome; at the same time I condemn, reject, and accuse (anathematizo) everything which opposes any heresy which has been condemned, rejected, and accursed by the church."

Thus, we who confess the doctrine of the Reformation (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 23, 24; Belgic Confession Art.

23, 23: we are justified by faith only, receiving the righteousness of Christ), still officially stand condemned and accursed by the Roman Catholic Church and by the pope (of Rome) who calls the Protestants his brothers, accursed brothers, then!

The Church of Rome can act amiably with its friendly pope, but it maintains under his leadership all the false doctrines and practices of the past, which are based on its own human traditions and contradict the Scriptures. The church of the pope still shows itself to be a false church with false doctrine. Its religion may seem pious, but being in conflict with the Scriptures it is a false religion, a self-willed religion, sin against the revealed will of God as expressed in the second Word of the covenant: we may not make our own image of God; we are to serve Him according to His revealed will, His commandments.

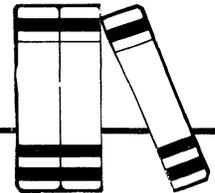
The pope claims to be head of the church and head of the world

There is another point that asks our attention. We confess that Christ Jesus is the Head of the church, and that He is the King of kings, the Ruler of the kings on earth. According to the doctrine of Rome the pope is the vicar of Christ on earth. A vicar is an official who represents his master and takes his place in his absence. Since Christ is Head of the church and the world, the pope also is considered to be head of church and world. In order to make it easy to maintain this legal position of the pope as a legitimate worldly ruler, the Vatican state is an independent state, just like all other states in the world. The pope is the head, the government, of that state. In this way the Vatican state, in other words the pope, can establish embassies in other countries.

In the beginning of this year the United States established such an embassy in the Vatican and received an arch-bishop in Washington as an official ambassador of the Vatican, of the pope, herewith, in fact recognizing the claim of the pope to have worldly governing authority. *Time* magazine of January 23, 1984, reports (page 16):

Given the historic nature of the step, there was remarkably little fanfare. The word

BOOK REVIEW



came first from Rome. A few hours later, the State Department made it official. After a lapse of 117 years, the USA was establishing full diplomatic relations with the Vatican. . . .

Reagan's action stirred sharp domestic dissent among those who believe it violates the constitutional separation of church and state. . . . A number of church groups, including the National Council of Churches (NCC) also objected. The presidents "incautious and naive action" could stir up "anti-Catholic animus," said Dean Kelly of the NCC.

In 1867, Congress barred funding of a mission to the Vatican as a result of anti-papal sentiment. President Truman tried to re-establish ties in 1951 but was forced to back down. Congress repealed the prohibition in November with little opposition. No pope in modern times has taken such a diplomatic interest in wielding diplomatic influence as John Paul II. Now that the USA has become the 107th nation with which it has diplomatic relations, the Vatican may move to establish ties with the world's other superpower. . . . relations with Moscow are surprisingly good. . . .

This year the pope hopes to visit at least three more countries. Among those is Canada. The trip in Canada is estimated to cost about one and a half million dollars per day and it is scheduled to last ten days. This does not include the costs that the Roman Catholic Church has to cover.

Pope John Paul II is a thoroughly "orthodox" Roman Catholic pope, who maintains all the old Roman Catholic traditions and claims and practices them. He sees himself as vicar of Christ, as both head of the church and head of the world. Therefore he has to establish diplomatic ties with the nations of the world, and he has to travel to all those nations to try and increase his influence.

The days of the "Investiture Controversy" belong to the past, when German Emperor Henry IV fought with Pope Gregory VII about the question as to whose right it was to appoint bishops (who had so much worldly power). King Henry IV was excommunicated and made his humiliating trip to Canossa. But although those days are old history (around 1075 A.D.), the principle is still fully maintained. It is unfortunate that 1984 begins with a decision of the American president and congress that gives into the false claims of the Roman pope, and so grants him another victory.

J. GEERTSEMA

The CHURCH: outside which there is no salvation

The Inter-League Publication Board has come out with a booklet on *The Church*, written by the late Rev. I. de Wolff of The Netherlands. The title page describes the outline as "notes on Articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession."

To recommend this product of the ILPB to the church-going public is not difficult. Despite the shortness of the booklet, the author presents a strong defense of the fact that Articles 27-29 speak not of two churches, but of *one* church. It is not true, Rev. de Wolff argues, that Article 27 discusses the church as-it-is-seen-by-God (the so-called "invisible church"), while Articles 28 and 29 discuss the visible church as-it-is-known-to-men. For "the Confession knows nothing of a conceptual shifting or transition from an (undefined) 'universal' to a local-institutional church" (p. 5).

Attention is drawn to the fact that the Confession echoes the Word of God. Paul writes clearly to the local congregation in his letter to the Ephesians that this church is one (4:4). At the same time, Paul maintains that this church is universal (2:14-18). That prompts from Rev. de Wolff this conclusion: "When we say 'church', we say universal, regardless whether the church-everywhere is meant, as it is scattered and dispersed over the entire world, or the church as it is established in any one place" (p. 7). Always the church is one, headed by one Christ.

Rev. de Wolff further stresses that the church is a *gathering*. Again, "church" is not some metaphysical concept; it is a very real being-brought-together and coming-together of true Christian believers (p. 8, 14).

When the Confession then states, that "all men are in duty bound to join themselves" to this church, Rev. de Wolff hears here not a plea urging all men to come to faith and so to join some invisible church as-God-alone-sees-it; rather this call to join is a command to all *believers* to gather there where God desires His

flock to be gathered. "No mention is made here of becoming a believer, but of joining a local church" (p. 17). That implies also that, according to Scripture, all believers are called upon to "separate themselves from those who are not of the church." The author mentions as proof Matth. 7:15; Titus 3:10; II John 10, 11. Possibly one might mention in this context also Is. 52:11, 12; Rev. 18:4. The question as to where one is to gather can be easily answered: with the church which "lives according to the Word and is faithful to the Lord" (p. 23).

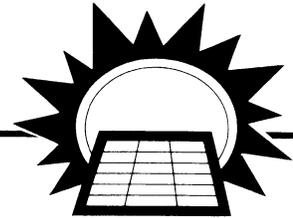
As to the technical aspects of this publication, the booklet is well put together. Typographical errors have occurred. To mention a few: on page 5, fifth line, "one" should be italicized, as should the first "in" of the thirteenth line. The third line on page 8 should include the verb "was" after "Rome."

It is a drawback that the King James Version has been used when Bible texts are quoted. It is an established fact that the large majority of churches use the Revised Standard Version in their worship services. Furthermore, Synod 1980 decided "to use the Revised Standard Version for the Scripture quotations in the linguistic modernization of the Creeds and the Liturgical Forms as much as possible" (Art. 111). If ILPB wishes to cater to the Canadian Reformed public, it would do well to recognize this.

In light of the fact that the doctrine of the church is currently the object of some discussion within our circles, it is to be applauded that ILPB saw to the printing of this booklet. Heartily recommended. And may ILPB see their way clear to prepare much more material for printing in the foreseeable future. We need it.

C. BOUWMAN,
Chilliwack

I. de Wolff, *The Church*. Available from Inter-league Publication Board, Box 783, London, ON N6A 4Y8



Tomorrow I'll Think About God

Not today when I am so busy,
 Not today when there's so much to do,
 Not today while I'm young and eager
 And life is far-reaching and new —
 But tomorrow when I am older
 And the tempo of life is less,
 I'll have more time for praying
 And for meditating, I guess . . .
 But time is swift in its passing
 And before we are really aware
 We find ourselves growing older
 And daily in need of God's care
 And while God is always ready
 To help us and lead us along,
 Because we have tarried and wasted
 Our young days in "dancing and song,"
 We find we are not well acquainted
 With the wonderful love of *The Lord*
 And we feel very strange in *His Presence*
 And unworthy of *Our Father's Reward* —
 For only the children who seek *Him*
 With hearts yet untouched and still clean
 Can ever experience *His greatness*
 And know what *His Love* can mean . . .
 So waste not the hours of "*Life's Morning*,"
 Get acquainted with *God* when you're born,
 And when you come to "*Life's Evening*,"
 It will shine like "*The Glory of Morn*"!

By: Helen Steiner Rice
 From: *Somebody Loves You*

* * * * *

On our birthday calendar for February we have:

MRS. J.L. OVERBEEKE

259 - 5th Avenue N.W.
 Portage la Prairie, MB R1N 1H1

Mrs. Overbeeke has been ill for quite some time now and is completely bedridden and unable to do anything for herself. She is looking forward to the day that she will be released from this life to be with the Lord. The Lord willing, she will celebrate her 80th birthday on February 4.

ALBERT DORGELOOS

199 Westwood Road
 Unit 91
 Guelph, ON N1H 7S1

Albert lives in a town house now together with two other boys. He works in a packaging firm where he has to count and package items from factories for the retailers. Albert is looking forward to receiving cards for his birthday. He phoned me especially to remind me to send in his name. He will, the Lord willing, celebrate his 25th birthday on February 12.

CONNIE VANAMERONGEN

Russ Road, RR 1
 Grimsby, ON L3M 4E7

On February 12, Conny hopes to celebrate her 19th birthday. I have no up-to-date information on Conny other than that she is confined to a wheelchair and that she loves to read.

CORA SCHOONHOVEN

700 D'Arcy Street
 Cobourg, ON K6A 4I5

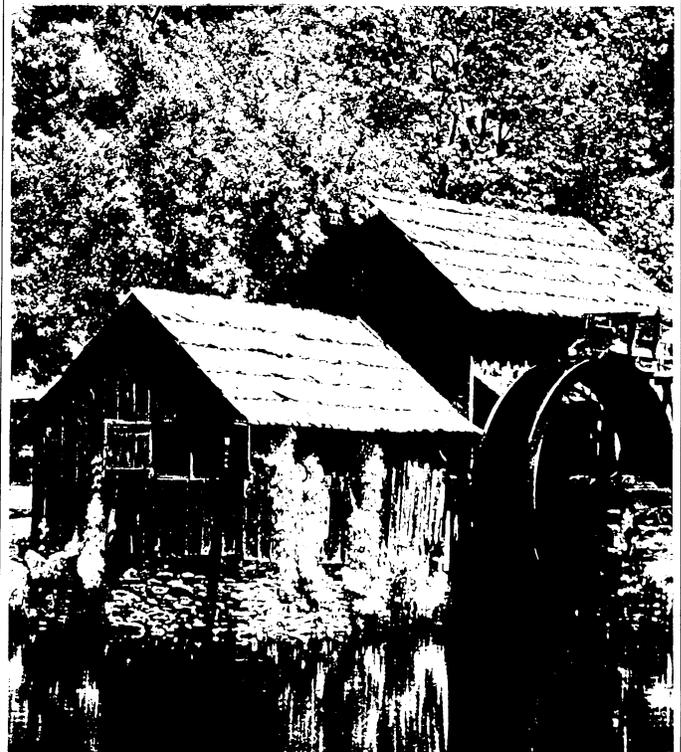
The Lord willing, Cora will be celebrating her birthday on February 18. She is (as far as I know) in her mid twenties. Many people will know her from summer camp. She would love to receive cards.

Happy Birthday, Mrs. Overbeeke, Albert, Conny and Cora.

From Mrs. Breukelman, Coaldale, Alberta, we received a thank-you note, thanking all the brothers and sisters for the attention given to the Breukelman children.

Send your requests to:

Mrs. J.K. Riemersma
 380 St. Andrew Street East
 Fergus, ON N1M 1R1



PATRIMONY PROFILE 30

By Rev. W.W.J. VanOene

Religious books and writings may be printed and published only after ecclesiastical approbation. A new article deals with "prophets." Again we must say that it is strange that a man like the Rev. Scholte with his basically independent convictions could propagate thoughts such as are contained in these points. Some of the provisions are purely hierarchical.

The Rev. Hendrik de Cock submitted a written protest against the introductory articles and against the many changes in the Church Order. It was cosigned by the same brothers who had joined in protesting against the first five introductory articles. In this protest, Rev. de Cock declares that they wish to abide by the Dort Church Order, that they object to the deletion of "doctors," and to the permanent tenure of elders and deacons, as they saw therein the tenet of the "Brownists" (that is of the Congregationalists, so named after Robert Brown who established the first independent congregation in 1580).

Synod's president, the Rev. S. van Velzen, urged de Cock to withdraw his protest, and the latter promised that he would "discuss it with his provincial assemblies." After his arrival in Groningen various classical meetings were held in Groningen and Drenthe. The Rev. A.C. van Raalte was also present at these meetings, and it was not in the last place a result of the discussions with him that de Cock came to the conclusion that a schism on the ground of these points would not be justified. Thus he sent a declaration to the Rev. van Velzen in which he stated to have been "brought to wrong suspicions and conclusions by distrust and misunderstanding." Therefore he withdrew his protest and declared "to acquiesce in the whole Church Order, reserving only for himself and for the congregations represented by him freedom regarding the distinction between three or four different offices and the ordinance regarding the election and ordination of elders and deacons."

The assemblies of Groningen and Drenthe similarly accepted the Church Order and a letter was written to the congregations in Overijssel to do the same. However, the Rev. de Cock did not succeed in preserving the unity among the churches in Overijssel. A number of these churches continued to reject the Church Order of Utrecht.

This was one of the factors which contributed towards the formation of *The Reformed Congregations under the Cross* or *The Reformed Church in The Netherlands*.

We shall return to them later on.

The Synod of 1840

The Synod of 1837 appointed the Provincial Assembly of Gelderland to convene the next General Synod. The letter by means of which the Synod was convened was written by the Rev. A. Brummelkamp. He wrote in the fall of 1840: "I have been authorized and requested by the Provincial Assembly of *Gelderland* of June 23rd, at Apeldoorn, and by the combined Assembly of Gelderland and Overijssel held on September 25th, to write you the following:

1. That the Assembly seriously weighed what is adduced in favour of and against having a general assembly.

2. That the Assembly, without considering it her obligation to prove the pro or con of those reasonings on her part, does not desire such a meeting under the present circumstances, but does not wish to work against it either.

3. That the Assembly has come to the conclusion that it should comply with the expressed desire of many to convene such an assembly with the convening of which it was charged, and which was accepted by its delegates, at a combined meeting of overseers, held in 1837 on September 28, and following days at Utrecht."

From the wording of this letter it is evident that the brothers complied only reluctantly with the mandate they had received. Thus the third General Synod of the Seceded Churches was opened on November 17, 1840, in Amsterdam.

Can this assembly really be called a *General Synod*? South Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, and a part of Gelderland were under the influence of the Rev. H.P. Scholte. Their Provincial Assembly of October 31, 1840, sent a letter in which they declared that the Assembly did not desire a General Synod under the present circumstances. It also advised the brothers not to meet under the name of "General Synod," but suggested instead to have a conference of ministers who could speak with each other about the basis of the faith and other differences. If it should appear that all ministers were mutually united in faith, all personal differences should be set aside. If, on the other hand, it became evident that the ministers disagreed in the fundamentals, this should be made known to the congregations to judge those ministers according to God's Word "in order that such as do not repent may be removed from the midst of the congregation." Imagine: *without any complaint* having been brought in, remove ministers if necessary. On what basis? On the basis of the judgment of a ministers' conference! What an un-ecclesiastical way of dealing with things. This suggestion came, of course, from the Rev. Scholte, in connection with complaints he had about Rev. van Velzen's preaching.

The above mentioned regions were not the only ones that sent no delegates to this General Synod. There were no brothers from North Brabant either. The Rev. Gezelle Meerburg was the one who had the most influence there. With him there was no unwillingness or divergent conviction as was the case with Scholte. Gezelle Meerburg was a man who suffered under the quarrels and the hatred which became evident. He therefore withdrew from all activities outside North Brabant. He did send a letter, however, on behalf of the overseers of North Brabant in which they disapproved of having a General Synod under the present circumstances. Yet the North Brabant Assembly did declare that they were prepared "to accept all decisions made according to God's Word and to submit themselves to them."

It appears that the Synod of 1840, as the broadest assembly of the Seceded Churches was very incomplete. Only the Churches of Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe, Overijssel, North Gelderland and North Holland were represented. Two more elders were received as members in an extraordinary manner.

The Provincial Assembly of Overijssel delegated only two ministers; however three churches were of the opinion that also an elder from Overijssel should be delegated. They sent elder C.G. de Moen. Two South Holland Churches disagreed with the decision of their Provincial Assembly not to send any delegates; thus they sent elder P. Zonne. Although these brothers were sent in a somewhat strange manner, they were received and were accorded "the same rights as the members who were delegated in the regular manner."

Another member was added when the Rev. L.G.C. Ledebouer suddenly appeared. He had broken with the Netherlands Reformed Church a few days before, and was not even aware that a Synod was being held, but when he appeared in the meeting, he was immediately received as a member of Synod.

One of the main points at this Synod was the question of the Church Order. Synod acknowledged "that from the very beginning of the Secession, the conviction and aim were found with the liberated and publicly united congregations not only openly to confess the doctrine contained in the Forms of Unity of the Reformed Church in *The Netherlands*, but also with respect to the ministry, the discipline, and the government of the church to follow the path of the Reformed Church as it manifested itself in earlier years when its confession was the clear expression of its faith." Synod recognized that confusion and alienation were the result of the lack of uniformity in drawing up guidelines for the government of the church and expressed the wish to make an end to the confusion and, with abolition of all Church Orders made after the Secession, to adopt the Dort Church Order. This was done, and Synod decided to have the *Ecclesiastical Handbook* reprinted, in which a Preface was to be inserted wherein account was given of the adoption of the old Church Order. This Preface was drawn up by elder P. Schaap of Urk and adopted with a few changes.

It is one of the rare examples of a Synod confessing guilt, even though it was not *this* Synod which was responsible for the confusion and alienation in *this* respect. Here follows what Synod adopted.

A Synodical Confession of Guilt

The Synod of the Seceded Reformed Congregations in *The Netherlands*, gathered in *Amsterdam*, November 17 and following days, decided to issue the following declaration to go with a new edition of the *Ecclesiastical Handbook*:

"The Assembly recognizes fully the Church Order of the Synod held in *Dordrecht* in the years 1618 and 1619, as the only rule in the government, discipline, and ministry for the congregations, and besides, insofar as they may serve further clarification, also all the ordinances of previous Reformed Synods in connection with the said Church Order.

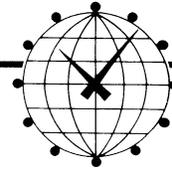
"We deem it necessary, however, to draw everyone's attention to it that we have to add the following declaration to this adoption of the Church Order according to the requirements of the present state and occasion of the church. In the first place, since we are united with the spirit and aim of our fathers, who never accepted the *Ius Pa-*

tronatus willingly but by compulsion, we reject the same, as well as all worldly power in or over the church, and by this rejection we display the spirit of the fathers. "However, we do not claim hereby that the government should not make its influence be felt at all with respect to the church. On the contrary, we desire that the government might protect the church and that it might make its influence felt all around to repel the evil, and to promote that which is salutary, according to Article 36 of our Confession. But we do not ascribe to it any dominating power or authority in the church, *for the LORD is our Judge, the LORD is our Lawgiver, the LORD is our King*, Isa. 33:22, and Psalm 2:6; Him alone we wish to fear and to honour with our whole heart by His grace.

"We also declare that we recognize the Dort Church Order with abolition of all that was ever produced before regarding Church Orders, judging and hoping that such may be to the edification of the congregations of the LORD. For a considerable time this has led to discord in the congregations and outside of it it was already said that the Seceders, as many others, busied themselves with making innovations. And, however much we may be convinced in our hearts that we aimed at the edification of the congregations, we could not escape this accusation. Therefore we publish the *Ecclesiastical Handbook* with the Dort Church Order in it, as our express rule in the government, discipline, and ministry of the church, and the Forms of Unity, namely the Catechism, Confession of Faith, and Canons of the Synod of Dordrecht are the rules of the doctrine and faith of the church. Without the slightest change we therefore recognize this Church Order as ours; since the congregations as it were of themselves will see the way shown to them to act as occasion of time and place may require in such a manner as will be found necessary unto edification in the spirit expressed in our Church Order. Let no one think, however, that with this Church Order we would impose a yoke upon the churches. No: we wish to show hereby that it is our only aim to associate ourselves as closely as possible with the government, discipline, and ministry as our forefathers put it. And while acknowledging that in imprudence, by changing the Church Order, we have disturbed the congregations, not realizing that this change was to have such effects of confusion, we now desire that by the setting aside of all self-made Church Orders, and by the recognition of that which our fathers made, the minds of all — Seceders as well as non-Seceders — who had become scared, may be put at ease.

"We also invite all brothers in the Lord who are of the opinion that we did not act well, whether they are among the Seceders or among the non-Seceders, to enter into correspondence with us at the first occasion when again a Synod will be convened, in order to lodge their complaints since we, miserable people, will gladly be pupils. Further we invite all who wholeheartedly agree with what was said above, to show their unity in order that the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, torn for so long already, may bear the proofs of union in the Spirit. We say this because we do not wish to lord it over the heritage of the Lord, but through grace to be only servants and overseers under the royal dominion of *Christ* to the honour of Him who lives for ever, and to the promotion of the edification of His Congregation."

— *To be continued.*



RADICAL EVANGELICALS BROADER SUPPORT IN USA?

WASHINGTON (RNS) — The approximately 5000 radical evangelicals in the JSA (Evangelicals for Social Action) want to broaden their base of support in the JSA and attract more participants in their 'pro-life' activities. The head office of the Social Action group has therefore been moved from Grand Rapids to Washington, DC.

The group was established in 1978 to undertake public action on behalf of radical evangelicals. Chairman Ron Sider admits that his organization is not as representative of American evangelicals as is the more conservative "National Association of Evangelicals," but he sees the existence of his group as proof that there is within evangelicals in the USA a good differentiation.

The Evangelicals for Social Action wish to concentrate their "pro-life" theme on seven main points: peace and disarmament, the rights of the unborn child, riches and poverty, racial and sexual discrimination, human rights, and the environment. On the board of the "Evangelicals for Social Action" are many prominent Americans, besides Ron Sider (author) also Jay Keller (chairman of Youth for Christ), Republican Senator Mark Hatfield (Oregon) and David Hubbard (president of Fuller Theological Seminary, Los Angeles).

FUNDAMENTAL CRISIS IN SYNODICAL CHURCHES

ROTTERDAM (ND) — All consistories of the Synodical Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) have recently received a letter signed by members of the concerned society "Word and Spirit" Society to promote Reformed Church life in which the churches are warned of the following, "All the lights are going out. The result may be that the church is no longer the Bride of Christ, but a social institution of well-being, a home out of which the children run away." The letter speaks of an emergency situation in the churches, "There has never been such a fundamental crisis in the listening to God's Word. . . ." (as now) ". . . we are in danger of losing all that God has given us in Jesus Christ." The main complaint is that theologians are overruling the Scriptures and that the true Word of God is no longer heard. The letter makes an appeal to the consistories to ask the Synod "to

return to the absolute recognition of the Bible as the Word of God and a new recognition of the great significance of the creeds."

The GKN (Synodical) Churches are members of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and the World Council of Churches, and maintain fraternal relations with the Christian Reformed Church.

BLACK LUTHERANS SEEK SUSPENSION OF WHITE BROTHERS

HARARE, ZIMBABWE (LWI) — After heated discussions the Panafrican Conference of Lutheran Churches, meeting at Harare, Zimbabwe, has decided to ask the seventh General Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation to suspend the white Lutheran Churches of Southern Africa. The black Lutherans feel that the white Lutheran Churches have had ample opportunity to speak out against the "apartheid" policy and to achieve union with the black churches. In 1977 the Lutheran World Federation already decided that the rejection of apartheid is "an article of faith." The World Association of Reformed Churches (WARC), meeting in 1982 in Toronto, has already suspended the white churches of South Africa as members on similar grounds as stated above. The Lutheran World Federation is scheduled to meet this summer in Budapest, Hungary.

FREEDOM OF PRESS RESTRICTED EVEN MORE IN '83

LONDON (DPA) — Freedom of the press is in most countries of the world not an individual right, but in reality a target of repression by governments. During the year 1983 the freedom of the press has become even more restricted throughout the world, despite the fact that most world nations have signed the Helsinki Charter, which guarantees this freedom. This observation is to be found in the Annual Report 1983, of the International Press Institute, published in London, England.

The greatest repression was found in the East-European countries, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Central and South America. Countries which were specifically mentioned as having persecuted authors and editors are Turkey and South Africa. Actions against the press are taken especially there where organized resistance against governments becomes apparent.

A CHRISTIAN WORLD PEACE COUNCIL?

Geneva, Switzerland (CPS) — The World Council of Churches has received the go-ahead from the Roman Catholic Church and the World Association of Reformed Churches (WARC) to work out proposals towards the establishing of a "Christian world peace council." Leaders of these three organizations have recently decided this at a meeting in Geneva. The proposal was initiated at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, in 1983, by delegates from East-German evangelical churches. The proposal basically comes from the late German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who suggested such a world peace council in 1934 to prevent a world war. This peace council would especially deal with the threat of nuclear war and seek to promote justice.

Cl. S.

Consulaat-Generaal Der Nederlanden CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE NETHERLANDS

One Dundas Street West
Suite 2106, Box 2
Toronto, ON M5G 1Z3
Phone: (416) 598-2520

OPSPORING ADRESSEN:

AHRENS, Heinrich, naar Canada vertrokken in 1951 met de Waterman met bestemming Edmonton, Alberta.

BARTELS, Fredericus Lambertus Maria, geboren op 16 februari 1950 te Breda, naar Canada vertrokken in 1967, laatstbekende adres: c/o 743 Banning Street Winnipeg 10 (Man.), correspondentie terugontvangen van bovengenoemd adres met mededeling "moved to BC" mogelijk als adres: 1626 McKenzie Ave., Victoria, BC.

BONS, George Frederik Hendrik, geboren op 20 december 1918 te Rotterdam, laatstbekende adres in Canada: RR 2, Alexander 16b, Rotterdam, naar Canada vertrokken op 9 april 1955.

GROM, Jacobus Wilhelmus Anthonius, geboren op 27 september 1917, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Kraaijerstraat 9B, Rotterdam, naar Canada vertrokken op 12 mei 1952.

De Consul-Generaal,
voor deze:-
Mevr. G. SCHNITZLER
Fgd. KANSELIER



From the many magazines that cross my desk I gleaned this article from Letter to Teachers a monthly publication of Alta Vista College.

Exploring Teacher-Student Encounters

One of the major concerns of school-teachers can be summed up in the question: "Am I being *effective* in my endeavors?" (If this is not a concern, it is a sure sign that another profession should be pursued.) If a teacher is not really communicating, the whole process of education breaks down, no matter how well-planned the curriculum might be. Even the most brilliantly designed program of genuine Christian education can fall tragically short of the target if the teacher's methods are not effective.

In considering the importance of effective communication in the teacher-student encounter, I have looked to examples in Scripture of effective communication God has used in history. I particularly looked at the model of Jesus Christ, the Master-teacher, as He encountered learners 2,000 years ago. It is evident from reading the Biblical accounts that Jesus used every "method" known to man plus some new ones. Yet we cannot limit these methods of encounter to the three-year public ministry of Christ, since God's many methods of encountering man can be seen from Genesis to Revelation.

The "Socratic" method has long been viewed as one of the most effective teaching methods. It is thought of as one of the oldest methods, and although it gets its name from the Greek philosopher Socrates who lived in the fifth century B.C., this method of teacher-learner encounter actually goes back to the Garden of Eden. For it was in the form of a probing and heart searching question that God first encountered Adam after his fall: "Where are you?" It must have sent shivers up and down Adam's naked spine knowing that God's question was not given for God's sake. He already knew where Adam was. The questions that followed were even more to the point: "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree . . . ?" These questions formed a foundation for all God taught Adam that day.

The question-answer method was also often used by Jesus during His time

of public ministry. Again, the questions were not given because Jesus did not know the answers. He simply used questions to teach others what He wanted them to know. For in answering His masterful questions, the learners were forced to realize something about Christ, about others, about things or about themselves. Consider such a question as, "Peter, do you love Me?" Three times Jesus asks it. Peter is taught an important lesson that day. Or consider the question, "Who do men say that I am?" Perhaps this was the occasion of Peter's first awareness of who Jesus was.

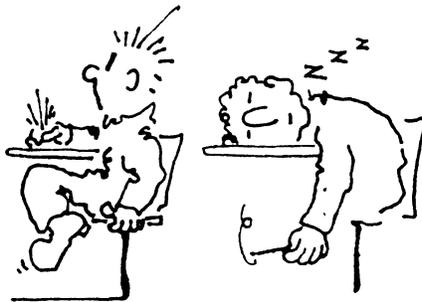
We cannot forget, as well, the probing questions addressed to the religious rulers when they questioned His authority: "The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" This question indeed caused them to think deeply!

The "Socratic" method may have its time and place, but we do not see the Lord using it exclusively. He used it when it was most effective to use. But, at other times, He encountered learners in differing ways.

The "lecture" method is perhaps best known to college students who tend often to equate it with scholastic boredom. Yet this method need not be dry or dull.

The Lord often used it when addressing large groups of people. The Sermon on the Mount is an example. But what was it about the lectures of Jesus that made them so memorable? Was it the content of His message, or was it content plus "delivery" that communicated with people? In looking closely at His lectures we can see several characteristics that made them effective.

Firstly, the Lord made frequent use



of mental images of concrete experiences to illustrate abstract thought. For example, He called His disciples the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." These images were used to help them grasp the significance of their role in the earth by likening it to the function of salt and light.

Secondly, He drew His illustrations from the real life experiences of those to whom He was speaking. He understood what the people understood most and He used their understanding of everyday things to teach His lessons. He often spoke of fields of wheat, wine, bread, water, etc, as He illustrated His message. He spoke of hunger and thirst frequently in connection with His message of life. This was something the people could personally relate to.

Jesus also used concrete visual aids to bring His message to make vivid impressions on the hearts and minds of His learners. There was the time He said nothing but drew something in the sand. We do not know what He drew, but it seemed to communicate a message. (No need for an overhead projector here.) Then there is the use of real bread and real wine at the Last Supper to communicate the truth of the new covenant. These same elements have been used through the centuries as a continual concrete expression of these dynamic spiritual truths. And then, of course, there are the many miracles Jesus performed as living "visual aids" to those who saw them, proclaiming His Lordship over all of life.

Storytelling was also an effective way Jesus used to teach His disciples. "A certain King took a long journey to a far away land . . ." Who can resist a good story? It is not just for kids, you know. His stories were used to illustrate truth and often aroused curiosity in the listeners as to what the "real" meaning was.

Jesus did not stop at filling minds with new thoughts and parables. He took His learners to the next step and sent them out on "field trips" to experience the message of the Kingdom in real life. Sending the seventy out by twos, He demonstrated one of the most effective teaching methods of all — learning by personal experience, or learning by doing. His students did not just sit under a fig tree and "think spiritual." He would

not allow that. The requirements of the course necessitated some "hands on" experience of what had been spoken of. I would dare say that His disciples probably learned more about the Kingdom of God through these real experiences than they did sitting at His feet! For it was out "in the field" that they stumbled, bumbled and never forgot. I am sure the Hebrew concept of "doing" as a prerequisite to "knowledge" was part of Jesus' makeup.

In addition to all of the above methods of teaching, we must not forget one of the most fundamental methods of all: that of *modelling*. Jesus did not just "tell" the good news — He lived it. He demonstrated what He taught and then said, "Do what I do." His students could respect Him. They could follow Him. He was not standing back pointing the way for others to go. He did not just talk about "the truth." He *is* the Truth. He imparted His Spirit to those who chose to follow Him. He literally shared Himself with others.

Not only did He share Himself with others, but He shared in a truly personalized way. His way of encountering people could be thought of as unpredictable. Consider the way He encountered the money changers in the temple! He taught the pharisees in a much different way than He taught the twelve, and for good reason. He understood that their attitude and needs were different and He used different methods accordingly.

Finally, it is important to see Jesus the Teacher as teaching the whole person. He did not come to reach only man's intellect. Nor did He come only to save man's soul. He came to give life to the whole person. He washed feet, fed the hungry, dazzled the learned ones at age twelve, and wept over a lost city.

In looking over the pages of the Bible for further examples of effective teacher-student encounters, we could cite many more cases. I will conclude with just a few methods God has used to encounter man.

We tend to get upset with the behaviourists' techniques of teaching through the use of environmental changes to produce inner changes, but we have to admit that God has used this technique at times to teach man what He would want him to know. We think of God's use of flood, fire and famine to bring His judgment on man or to motivate him to repentance. God's change of the external environment has had a great effect on man's learning to know His ways.

We must also acknowledge that the use of external rewards and punishment is not foreign to God's methods of teaching man what He would have him know. Rewards are not bad in themselves. We



When he speaks, those kids are all ears

must conclude that the misuse of rewards as a sort of manipulation is bad.

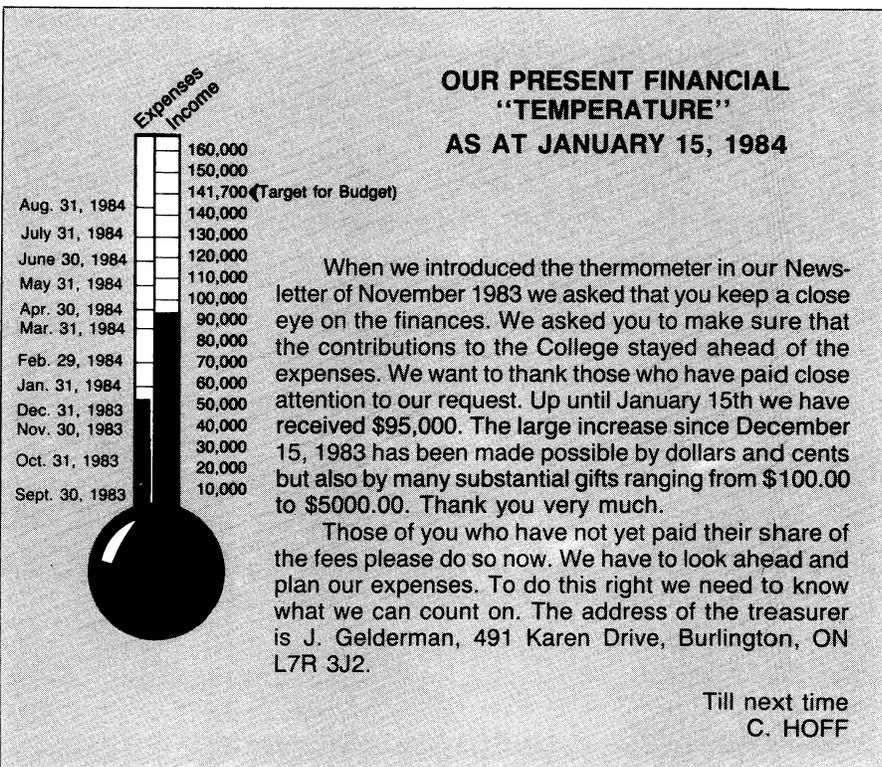
Finally, we must mention the teaching method of the Holy Spirit today as He does His "inside" work on man, convicting him of sin and righteousness and leading us into all truth. Here we see the teacher-learner encounter as a highly personalized inner revelation of reality and truth, apart from which we as Christians could not live. This is the learning experience that only He can lead us in and only we can respond to.

So too, we see in the Biblical models a *purpose* for teacher-learner encounters,

(i.e. the furthering of God's *redemptive process*). This is the purpose of Christ's encounters and the end of all teaching methods. We do not see God communicating for communication's sake. He communicates for the sake of redemption. And this, too, gives schoolteaching the sense of dynamic forward thrust so necessary for learning.

Send material for school crossing to:

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