

# Clarion

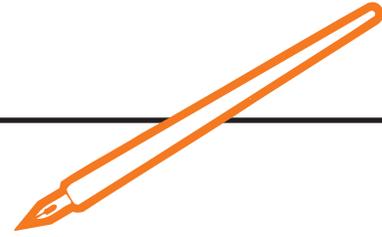
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*Synod Kelmscott 1996 of the  
Free Reformed Churches  
of Australia*



By J. Geertsema



## Christ must be preached

The church has as its source of life the living Christ Jesus. As believers we (must) live out of Christ like branches receive their life from the vine. Christ Jesus gives Himself to those whom the Father has given Him through His Spirit and Word. The Spirit regenerates them and works faith in their hearts. In this regeneration and through this faith, the Holy Spirit places those who believe in communion with Christ. In that communion or fellowship with Christ the believers receive that new life that comes from Christ.

It is evident from the teaching of the Scriptures that Christ comes to us and gives Himself to us, placing us in His fellowship, in and through His Word. Calling upon the Name of the Lord is there through faith. Faith is there through hearing the Gospel. Hearing the Gospel is there through preaching. This is what Paul teaches us in Romans 10. And Peter writes that believers are born anew of imperishable seed. This seed is the living and abiding Word of God, that is preached (1 Peter 1:23,25).

When so Christ is the only source of that new, regenerated life, and when He gives Himself and His saving fellowship in His Word that is preached, it is clear not only that preaching is a must, but also that Christ has to be the contents of that preaching. What is preached must be Christ, and Christ only. Not experience, not the law or anything else, only Christ must be preached.

Of course, herewith we do not deny that in the preaching of Christ the spiritual experience of a true faith can and must receive its proper place. The apostle Paul speaks about joy in the Lord, and love for Him, about willingness to obey Him, and so on. Dealing with conversion our Heidelberg Catechism speaks of a heartfelt sorrow because of sin and a heartfelt joy in God through Christ and delight to live according to all His commandments, (Lord's Day 33). The experience of faith is also mentioned in the Canons of Dort, e.g., Chapter III/IV, Article 12.

That Christ must be preached does also not deny that in this preaching the law with its commandments and prohibitions must have its own proper place. Christ said Himself that those who love Him will keep His commandments, e.g., John 15:10. He told His apostles that they had to go and preach the Gospel and make the nations His disciples, and that they had to teach them *to observe all that He had commanded them* (Matthew 28:19).

Nevertheless, giving the proper place to the experience of faith and to the law in the preaching must never degenerate in preaching experience or preaching the law. The experience of faith is fruit of a life in fellowship with Christ through faith. And so is keeping God's commandments. The source of new life is and remains the living Christ Himself. And the commandments must always flow forth from the living Christ. Experience does not save us. Neither does the law. Christ Jesus does. That is why He must be preached. Salvation with its experience and with its keep-

ing of Christ's commandments is found only in the living fellowship with Christ.

As far as I know, we do not run the danger of preaching subjective spiritual and psychological experience as basis for the certainty of salvation. We are scared of subjectivism. But how is that with preaching the law? Is there not a danger that in our preaching the law is sometimes stressed in such a way that it tends to become a preaching of the law?

Preaching the law is so easy, not only in the Church of Rome, but also in a Reformed church. You must attend church twice on Sunday; you must be faithful in your church contribution; you must send your children to a Reformed school; you must support such schools even when you have no children (anymore) that go there; you must be a member of a true church; you must be against divorce and abortion and revolution. You must maintain the law of God. You must adhere to the confession of the church. I mention only a few things.

Now these are things that we stand for and should stand for, as well as for many more things. But why is it that here and there the afternoon service is attended less than the morning service? Why are there quite a few who do not financially contribute to the church? Why do quite a few not see the need to support the schools with their membership and involvement or anyway with donations? Why is there among us a growing lack of church consciousness and why do we so easily attend worship services of other denominations? Why is there also in our churches among our young people, our teenagers, that spirit of rebellion? Why is there divorce, dishonesty in business, jealousy? And so I could continue.

One could give as an answer: this is because we are all sinful and inclined to backsliding. Someone else could say: the need for regeneration is not stressed enough, and the call for conversion and repentance is not sufficiently heard. This is possible. But we must also ask the question: are those things that we must do or not do which I mentioned above, and more, perhaps, preached to us in a legalistic way as just laws and commandments? Let us not forget that the law cannot deliver us from the power of a sinful nature. The law cannot convert people. The law cannot change the heart. It cannot sanctify us and make us obedient in faithful dedication to our God. Conversion and obedience is only possible through Christ. It can only be found in the living communion of faith with Him. Only when the Holy Spirit has regenerated a person, and ingrafted him into the fellowship with Christ, can that person begin to live in humble obedience. Only those who are truly born again or born from above can see and enter the Kingdom of God. Only in them will the just requirement of the law be fulfilled, as the apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:4.

We know these things. We must maintain them in our churches, in our schools, and not less in our homes.

Whatever commandment is given and maintained, whatever prohibition is established in our families, from the pulpit and on the family visit, or in our schools, it must not be separated from Christ but flow forth from Him. Christ must be taught, shown, preached. We must call each other to communion with Christ. Only in the true living communion

with Christ, will true obedience in humble submission to what Christ has commanded flourish. Only in the living fellowship with Christ through faith, through the Holy Spirit will there be a keeping of God's law. Christ as the living active Saviour and Lord must be preached. Then there is also place for the law, His law.

# MEDITATION

By H.J.J. Feenstra

## BE WISE WITH WISDOM!

### The LORD comes first – Proverbs 3:1-10

Originally published as *Wees wijs met de wijsheid*, Woord en Wereld # 11 Uitgeverij Woord en Wereld, Ermelo 1989 Translated by T.M.P. VanderVen

#### Spiritual public health

A necessary condition for a healthy life is a living relationship with the LORD.

*It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.*

We must trust in Him, and we must know Him. We are not talking about knowing in the sense of being aware of things, but in the sense of having experienced things. We are not concerned with knowledge that can be described statistically or stored in a computer. A young man does not develop a card system of all the qualities of his girl friend. He does not know her on the basis of all the data he has collected about her. What we are talking about here is a warm, personal knowing of the Lord as the first One in your life.

Know Him Who wanted to know us first – in Christ the Saviour! Acknowledge Him in all your ways. The automobile club is called only in case of car trouble – not so within the covenant relation with the LORD. *In all your ways acknowledge Him.* . . . Do not keep anything from Him. Trust Him in all things, and fully trust yourself to Him. Trust Him in all that He says, promises, and demands. Walk with the God Who came to us in Jesus Christ (Who calls Himself *the Way!*). Be children of your heavenly Father. Oppose

the revolutionary world which rejects the Creator of heaven and earth.

Those who follow these travel instructions will experience the truth of the promise which comes with them:

*. . . and he will make straight your paths.*

This does not guarantee that the journey will be completed without any difficulties. This proverb paints an Eastern scene: a path which needs to be

straightened and stones which have to be removed. This is not a picture of a paved road with curbs and a smooth road surface. We are reminded of (well-worn) paths strewn with stones, full of dangers. Ecclesiastes can, therefore, speak about old people for whom there are terrors in the way.

Straightening such a path means removing rocks, and making it passable. That is the promise heard here: trust in the Lord in all your ways, then there will



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be a passable road for you. Then no insurmountable obstacles will force you off the road so that you might lose your way. Knowing Him will be like walking along a road. There certainly will be much stumbling, but you will be able to continue. The road of your life is not a dead-end road. The journey along these dangerous roads will reach its blessed destination to God's praise.

From Scripture Proverbs 3:5-8  
Ecclesiastes 12:5  
John 14:6

### Christian money management

We read, *Honour the Lord from your wealth* . . . (NASB). And we might think that this proverb certainly does not apply to us – we are not rich! The Revised Standard Version translates, *Honour the Lord with your substance*, we might also read *your possessions*. This proverb speaks of your material goods. That may be much, or very little. But no one needs to skip this proverb.

This is a remarkable verse. The previous passage spoke rather in general: acknowledge the Lord in all your ways, and that does involve many things. Indeed, many things happen in our lives; we travel along many different roads. But the details are not given; Proverbs gives a general indication: *all your ways*. After all, later chapters, from chapter 10 onwards, will expand on this.

We are dealing here with the introduction to Proverbs, the basic principles, the ABCs. Therefore it is remarkable that in this introduction this one aspect of our lives is highlighted: money management. And with good reasons.

The Lord knows us through and through. He knows much better than we do that you learn to know people when you ask them for their money. Your money is a touchstone to find out whether you, indeed, do acknowledge

the Lord in all your ways. If your money management is okay, then more things will be all right. Money management does not stand on its own; it betrays a particular attitude to life. It shows often so clearly our loyalty and faithfulness, or our faithlessness and lack of trust. The manner in which we deal with our money so readily shows whether we want to serve the Lord only with our mouth, or also with our deeds.

In this way, the place of this proverb within this Bible book clearly shows its urgency and revealing character.

Read this proverb again,

*Honour the Lord with your substance  
and with the first fruits of all your produce . . .*

God asks that we honour Him, that we give Him a *honorarium*. Here is not spoken of gifts demanded under duress, and given reluctantly. The Lord does not come to take things from us – the whole earth is His, all things are His legal possessions! Giving is always *giving back*. Therefore we love to give to God and for His service. And we do not do that as the final financial transaction, if there is something left still; we will give of the first fruits.

He who gave us His first-born Son, asks from us our first fruits. That has been the theme of Moses' teachings when he instructed the Israelites to give the Lord with joy and thankfulness the first fruits of the land and the tithe.

The Lord wants to be honoured by the gifts of His people. The Hebrew word for honour means *making heavy*, acknowledging someone's importance. To show our awe of the Lord, of His awesome greatness and power, we bring Him our gifts for His service.

We do that with care. We give of the first fruits. Only the best will be

good enough. We will be as careful as Abel who carefully selected – even twice – what he wanted to offer to the Lord; not like Cain who took whatever was nearest.

Abel wanted to honour the Lord with his gifts. Cain gave because he was forced to do it. We know that this showed an attitude to life which had terrible consequences.

The very ABCs of wisdom throw a clear light on our financial contribution to the church and everything else that is connected with that. A priority in our money management is identified here: we may never reason, first this and that for my family, myself, my hobby, my financial commitments – and perhaps I will have something left for the Lord. And that could well be \$ 0.00.

Those who give little out of fear that their budget will not be met, do not understand the heavenly logic which the Lord Himself teaches in this proverb, a logic of the covenant and faith. Consider what follows after the call of the Lord to honour Him with the first fruits:

*. . . then your barns will be filled  
with plenty,  
and your vats will be bursting with  
wine.*

It is not the other way around! This should give us much to think about!

From Scripture Proverbs 3:9 - 10  
Deuteronomy 26  
Psalm 24:1  
Genesis 4:3-5 and Hebrews 11:4

Also study Nehemiah 12:44 - 47  
Haggai 1  
Matthew 6:24; 19:16 - 26  
Acts 20:35  
2 Corinthians 8 and 9  
1 Timothy 6:6 - 19



## What's inside?

In ecclesiastical terms, we live in interesting times. Here and there, Free Reformed and Canadian Reformed are speaking to one another about the need for federative unity. In even more places, Canadian Reformed are having talks with Orthodox Christian Reformed and the recently federated Uniting Reformed. The Lord bless these talks! May trust and understanding grow between the various communions. Let us diligently pray and work for church unity based upon unity of faith.

Recently, Dr. De Jong went on a speaking tour through Western Canada. He spoke on the topic of pursuing federative unity. We publish the first installment (of three) of his speech in this issue.

Recently, general synods were convened in Holland and Australia. We publish part 1 of the Australian synod's press release. Dr. Van Dam highlights some of the decisions of the Dutch synod.

Rev. Van Spronsen updates us on church news from here and there around the globe.

GvP

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# Pursuing federative unity: obstacles, possibilities and strategies<sup>(1)</sup>

By J. DeJong

*Text of a speech (part 1 of three parts) that was held in various forms in the churches in Winnipeg, and the region of Classis Pacific from April 18 to April 26. The text has been adapted to include some points of discussion that arose in the meetings, and also to pass on elements that were neglected in addresses because of time limitations.*

## OBSTACLES

Several churches in the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches are currently involved in discussions with former independent churches as well as other Reformed churches with a view to working towards federative unity. As I speak with church officers in various locations, I notice that some of these discussions have proceeded very well, and that a good measure of understanding and good will exists between the two parties in the discussion. In my own home town of Hamilton, the consistory has declared the former Independent church a true church of Jesus Christ and similar steps are contemplated in other locations. These discussions have not been idle, and there is no doubt that unity is fervently desired by many of our members, and that there is much effort and activity going into this. This only increases what for many elders is already a heavy load.

Now one of the questions that arise is: at what cost should union take place? Some have even suggested that the cost in 1892 was too high. You should not pursue union if it evokes division within your own ranks. This raises the question how the various elements in the discussion must be weighed. Many factors come into focus here: the church book, the liturgical practices, Bible translation, views of church discipline, and so on. In some ways we sense a spirit of co-operation and kinship; however, in other ways the former Independents appear to be a

very different group of people than we are, a people with their own background, customs and routines. Some sense the differences to be very acute, others see them as basically minimal. How do we proceed?

My focus in this talk is to highlight three areas of concern with regard to pursuing federative unity with the former independent churches: obstacles, possibilities and strategies. There are so many options that we cannot be exhaustive. But it may be worthwhile to look at the major options and in so doing try to uncover the general lines which should be followed in pursuing ecclesiastical unity.

### 1.0 Obstacles to union

If one would speak precisely, we really do not have any obstacles to union with the Fellowship of Uniting Churches. They hold to the Three Forms of Unity and to what is essentially the Church Order of Dort. From the point of view of confessional stance we are in a position to unite. In several places churches engaged in the discussions have found a remarkable spirit of unity, understanding and co-operation. Yet unity is still elusive, and there is even the danger of stagnation. Some churches are asking: where do we go from here? And although there are not actual obstacles, there are *potential* obstacles. And it is only fair to mention these, since churches may be faced with them at a later date.

### 1.1 Confessional obstacles

As stated, there are no confessional obstacles to union with the former independent churches. They have maintained allegiance to the *Three Forms of Unity* and wish to uphold them in their church life. The only difference here would be differences re the adopted version of the creeds. Independent churches generally follow the version of

the creeds in the *Psalter Hymnal* of the Christian Reformed Churches. But this is an issue which should not present major problems in terms of resolution.

A point of concern might be the use of the liturgical forms. Generally the churches use the liturgical forms as found in the *Psalter Hymnal 1957*. But the proposals for revision have come up with some interesting revisions in the *Form of Baptism*. Of the baptism by the Holy Spirit the proposed form says: He will sanctify us by applying to us what we have in Christ. Note that the old form does not use the term "sanctify" at this point. The first question at baptism in the proposed form reads: "Do you acknowledge that our children though conceived and born in sin, and therefore subject to all manner of misery, even to condemnation itself, nonetheless are heirs to the promise of God and therefore set apart for the Lord, and ought to be baptized as members of His church?"

The differences here are clear. Among the Uniting churches some appear to have a hesitant attitude to the phrase "sanctified in Christ" as it exists in the old form, and as we have retained it in our revisions. The brothers want to restrict the term "sanctify" to the inner work of the Holy Spirit. There appears to be some difficulty with the notion of communal sanctification and with the idea of being a sanctified people, set apart for service.

This in itself need not present an obstacle to unity, and in fact we might be able to live with the changes that have been made. Yet it can easily become so, and is a point which should have our attention in the discussions. For "sanctified in Christ" is precisely a phrase that played such a central role in the time of the Liberation. And the term was defended precisely in its corporate, juridical sense, that is, that the baptized child was grafted into the church,

and became a member of the covenant and church of God, see Heidelberg catechism, q. and a. 74. Somehow one senses that our brothers in the federating churches have missed the struggle around the Liberation, and are not aware of some of the insights and perspectives that were gained in this struggle. Without the juridical approach to the term “sanctified in Christ” one can only interpret it in a Kuyperian sense. I sense that the Fellowship Churches want to avoid the old idea of presumptive regeneration, but in reaction they are possibly charting a course in different waters.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.2 Church Order

After the adjournment of the last meeting of the Alliance of Reformed Churches, a group of fifty-five churches adopted the CRC Church Order of 1920 as the church order of the newly formed Fellowship of Uniting Churches.<sup>2</sup> This Church Order for the most part follows the lines of the Church Order of Dort. In other words, the churches were hesitant to go along with the church order proposed by their revision Committee. However, the stated intention is to move to a new church order, which could possibly happen at the meeting of the Fellowship churches this November. Thus while on the one hand we have a newly found kinship on the point of church order, this may well be an elusive one, since this connection to the church order of 1920 is by definition a temporary one. The decision itself shows the pressing desire of the brothers to come to a point of federation. On the whole I think it is a positive step, and I was glad to read the comments of Rev. John Bouwers in *Christian Renewal*,<sup>3</sup> indicating that this decision also reflects a willingness to reach out to other Reformed churches, including the Canadian Reformed.<sup>4</sup> Yet at this point I think it is too early to predict what will happen. How temporary is this state of affairs? How soon will the churches move to their own church order? This is anyone’s guess.

There are potential obstacles to union in the proposed Church Order of the Fellowship of Uniting Churches. In general one can say that along with retaining some elements of the old CRC order, a new anti-hierarchical principle has been inserted into the church order, one which pushes the entire focus of church government in an independent direction. We can briefly review the four sections of the proposed

church order to show this. I will only touch on some essential elements of this proposed Church Order.

### 1.2.1 Offices

The proposed Church Order suggests that the training of the ministry be left to each local consistory. In 1992, it was suggested in the east that equal standing be given to M.A.R.S. and to the Theological College as a training school for ministers. However, this presents obstacles that cannot easily be overcome. The Canadian Reformed Churches follow the tradition of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in demanding a fairly high level of training, which includes a thorough working knowledge of the Biblical languages. Furthermore, the Theological College has been instituted under the old adage of 1892, that is that the churches have the duty to set up a training school for the ministry of the word. It is a school run by the churches for the churches. It is indeed a question whether this principle has been properly understood and appreciated by the former independent churches.<sup>5</sup>

There are also differences in approaches and in admittance standards which should become the subject of consultation and possible agreement so that the institutions are not working past each other or seeking to violate each other’s territory. Perhaps some form of agreement can be reached on these matters. This is an element of practical living which affects all members, and some form of understanding will need to be reached before union can take place. We should not let our enthusiasm for union overtake our concern to safeguard the heritage of the gospel for future generations.

The proposed Church Order leaves many elements to the local consistories which are entrusted to the classis in the church order of Dort. One senses that ideas such as those propagated by Rev. J. Tuininga are present in the proposed order: broader assemblies are not required by Scripture, and really form in themselves a hierarchical tendency in the church.<sup>6</sup> There is an implicit suspicion directed against the Church Order of Dort right at the outset. Rev. Tuininga has argued that the Church Order of Dort is not the best system of Reformed church government.<sup>7</sup>

For example, in the proposed Church Order the consistory declares an applicant eligible for call after the completion of his examination at the

classis. Why cannot the classis declare the applicant eligible for call? Release of the minister is also left to the “consent of his current consistory.” Here again, the classis is left out. Does this not breathe a reactionary spirit?

### 1.2.2 Assemblies

On the point of assemblies, I fear that in some ways the uniting churches are rapidly reverting to becoming a new model of the CRC in an old dress. This may even be inherent in the decision to revert to the Church Order of 1920. The proposed Church Order provides for a stated clerk, and assemblies once every two years. True to CRC tradition, one finds no reference to the regional synod – an important appeal assembly in the Church Order of Dort. Should not the churches strive to implement this additional assembly as soon as possible?

With regard to the process of appeal the entire article dealing with this matter has been reformulated, and the central ideas for it have been taken from the Westminster Confession.<sup>8</sup> This Confession does not use the phrase “settled and binding” but simply states that decisions are to be received with reverence and submission, by virtue of their agreement with the Word of God, without which they do not bind at all. However, these concepts are more subjective, and harbour an implicit ratification principle which is foreign to the Reformed church order.

This section of the proposed Church Order allows a congregation to withdraw from the federation by a process of “defranchising.” A congregation that does not want to receive the decisions of the broader assembly as binding can leave the federation. But this is departure not considered an act of discipline. Indeed, the proposed church order stresses that church discipline cannot in any way be administered by broader assemblies. In other words, there is a lot of room for voluntary actions as a local church that cannot be overruled by a federation.

This section of the proposed Church Order also allows churches to enter into ecumenical relationships of their own, strictly with the advice of classis. This makes ecclesiastical contacts essentially a local affair. Here again, more weight is given to the local church, and less to the federation. Normally we would consider entering into ecclesiastical fellowship with other church groups to be a matter of the

churches in common, and hence to be regulated by the general synod. And given the commitments we make in a federation, that is the proper way of managing our affairs. In summary, with some of these proposals, we are moving into an other view of the church, and another form of church government.<sup>9</sup> These are more than linguistic or stylistic deviations from the Church Order of Dort. It is only to be hoped that those voices wishes to hold on to the central thrust of Dort's church order will hold sway at future assemblies of the churches.

### 1.2.3 Ceremonies and tasks

The proposed Church Order allows that preaching take place from the *Three Forms of Unity*. I would think that this is also a step needing further discussion. This step may not deviate from current CRC practice but certainly deviates from the stated procedure maintained in the CRC up to this point, and, more importantly, deviates from the Church Order of Dort. Personally, I would discourage such a move, since the Heidelberg Catechism is a time honoured vehicle for training the youth, and there is no stringent necessity to move away from this little booklet of comfort as the guide for the afternoon preaching. I grant that we cannot make this a point of division; but it cannot be minimized either. Even among the Canadian Reformed Churches, often too little attention is placed on the importance of regular catechism preaching for the sake of the instruction and well-being of the youth as well as the whole congregation.

Another point of difference on the ceremonies is that there is greater freedom with respect to admission to the Lord's Supper. This is also a contentious point on which much discussion has taken place.<sup>10</sup> The reason for this discussion is obvious: This is the point at which the shoe pinches. If we in the Canadian Reformed Churches place a brother under discipline, it would be counter-productive to our discipline if he has the freedom to go over to the Uniting church, and be admitted to the Lord's Supper there on the basis of his personal testimony. There is a need for greater clarity here before we can move towards union.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.2.4 Discipline

On this point one notices in the proposed Church Order an inherent bias to the more independent position. For ex-

ample a minister can be dismissed on the advice of classis. But the idea of advice is not explained, and in my view it represents a rather precarious basis for an effective ministry. The margin of protection for the minister has become smaller. I wonder if dismissal should be allowed to take place as easily as is suggested in this church order.

This section of the proposed Church Order also includes a principle of ratification which illustrates an anti-hierarchical bias. Statements are only accepted when they have been ratified by the consistories. The proposed Church Order stresses that ecclesiastical power essentially rests with the local church, but this is emphasized so much that one wonders whether the role of the major assemblies is not being short-changed.

On the whole I think it is incumbent on the Canadian Reformed participants in the ecumenicity discussions to stress the position taken by the late Rev. Van Dooren in the last years of his life. He always pointed the independents to the *re in reformanda*. Reformation is *return*.<sup>12</sup> There is every reason for the brothers to hold to the basic structure of the Church Order of Dort. After all, this church order is a time-honoured testimony to what being Reformed is all about. There is also no need to add all kinds of Biblical support material to the church order itself. The church order is not a confession; it is only a guide or rule for the government of the church. The principles can be found in the confession, which in turn summarizes the testimony of the Scriptures.

<sup>9</sup>The phrase in the baptismal prayer should be "this thy child" and not "these children." The Uniting churches are proposing the latter. The Protestant Reformed churches also follow this reading. But this is a change which I suspect came at the whim of the printers, see J. Faber, *Amerikaanse Afscheidings theologen over verbond en doop* (Barneveld, De Vuurbaak, 1995) 22. Faber here refers to W. Heyns, *Liturgiek*, see note 32. The Reformed Congregations (*Gereformeerde Gemeeten*) also insist on the plural. But according to Dr. T. Brienens there is not a whim of doubt that the singular "this thy child" must be used here, cf. *Nederlands Dagblad*, January 17, 1995.

<sup>10</sup>The decision actually refers to the Church Order of 1934, but this means: the Church Order included in the 1934 edition of the *Psalter Hymnal*.

<sup>11</sup>December 18, 1995 (Vol 14, # 7).

<sup>12</sup>I believe that the Fellowship Churches have wisely taken the step to federate first, and

then proceed with discussion concerning possible federative unity with other Reformed Churches. I also believe it would be unwise to unite with Presbyterian churches immediately. Talks with Presbyterian churches are really on a different level, because they have a different historical background. A union strategy that lasts will always require a deference to historical patterns. In this sense I differ from the objections made by Rev. P. De Jong, "The Proposed Church Order: A Critical Review" in *Christian Renewal*, October 9, 1995, 12-13

<sup>5</sup>M.A.R.S. does not have direct ecclesiastical affiliation. However, it may be assumed that many independent churches will be drawing their ministers from this institution.

<sup>6</sup>In *Christian Renewal*, December 21, 1992 ("Church Polity Revisited"). If I understand him correctly, Rev. Tuininga argues that there is a paucity of Scriptural data for the formation of a church federation. In other words, we are left free on this matter. But the Biblical evidence is overwhelming once you put it together. Allow me to refer to the article of J. Kamphuis entitled "The Calling and Duty to Maintain the Church Federation" in J. De Jong, (ed.) *Bound Yet Free. Readings in Reformed Church Polity*, (Winnipeg: Premier, 1995), 203-249

<sup>7</sup>See *Christian Renewal* March 1993. Despite several warnings by the late Rev. G. Van Dooren not to throw out the baby with the bath water, Tuininga has not altered his view, see *Christian Renewal*, December 26, 1994, ("Future Federation and Ecumenical Relations"). For the abundance of Scriptural data regarding a federation of churches see the article of J. Kamphuis mentioned in the previous note.

<sup>8</sup>The source here may be the *Cambridge Platform*, which has essentially the same wording.

<sup>9</sup>It is saying too much when Prof. David Engelsma suggests: "One of the most discouraging developments in Reformed circles is that CRC seceders are energetically creating a new church order in the place of that of Dort, patterning it in crucial articles after the congregationalist CP." (Cambridge Platform, JDJ) See D. Engelsma, "The Cambridge Platform: A Reformed Option? (A Review Article), *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, Vol 24, #1 (November 1995), 53. I think the CP influences in the proposed church order are rather few.

<sup>10</sup>I refer especially to the discussions in *Christian Renewal* in 1994.

<sup>11</sup>An added point is how to deal with situations in which those who have for dubious reasons left the Canadian Reformed Church in a given area have been accepted by Fellowship churches (or vice versa). Most places realize that in this stage of the discussions, acceptance of members defecting from one party by the other party only adds a hindrance to the progress of the discussions.

<sup>12</sup>See for example the letters in *Christian Renewal* November 9, 1992 and April 26, 1993.

# Synod Kelmscott 1996

## of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia<sup>(1)</sup>

### Opening

On the evening of Monday 10th June, 1996 the nineteenth Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia was opened by the chairman of the convening church, Rev. C. Bouwman. In a word of welcome he referred to various events which happened since the nine churches last met each other in General Synod, concluding that with deep thankfulness, we may note that the Head of the Church has continued to gather, defend and preserve His Church. He stated that this is a gift we need to note with humility especially in light of the fact that the men Christ uses in gathering His churches are sinful people and yet God has shown mercy to us.

### Credentials

Credentials were checked by the delegates of the church of Launceston and found to be in good order, with all the churches represented by their prime delegates. Present as delegates to synod are:

Delegates from the church of Albany	Rev. A. Veldman, Elder L. A. 't Hart
Armadale	Rev. W. Huizinga, Elder W. Geurts
Bedfordale	Elder J. Eikelboom, Elder J. L. van Burgel
Byford	Rev. W. vander Jagt, Elder H. Gunnink
Kelmscott	Rev. C. Bouwman, Elder B. Veenendaal
Launceston	Rev. F. van Hulst, Elder B. vander Velde
Legana	Rev. C. Kleyn, Elder J. Alberts
Rockingham	Rev. A. van Delden, Elder B. Bosveld
West Albany	Rev. J. Poppe, Elder A. Mulder

As delegates from the Reformed Churches of Indonesia are present Rev. P. Hawu and Rev. M. Radjah and as an

observer from the Musyafir Churches in Timor Rev. E. Fangidae.

### Constitution of synod

The following members were chosen to serve as officers for Synod:

Chairman:	Rev. W. Huizinga
Vice Chairman:	Rev. A. Veldman
First Clerk:	Elder B. Veenendaal
Second Clerk:	Rev. C. Bouwman

The new chairman thanked the convening church for all the preparatory work done. Next he requested all the delegates to show their hearty agreement with the Three Forms of Unity by rising from their seats. Though in itself a simple procedure, it is the basis that unites us together on which we may do our work in synod. After the singing of Psalm 51:4, 7 the opening evening was closed with prayer by the vice-chairman.

### Tuesday, 11th June – Day session

Synod started the day off with some basic arrangements. A time schedule for daily meetings was made. The agenda was adopted including some late correspondence from Deputies for Inter-church relations with other Reformed churches. Four advisory committees were appointed to serve synod on matters which cannot be finalized in open sessions.

A hearty welcome was extended to the Rev. B. Hoyt who was delegated by the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to attend our synod as an observer. Synod decided to send a congratulatory letter to Rev. P. K. A. de Boer who accepted the call extended to him by the church of Bedfordale.

Next synod started a discussion on a report of the church of Kelmscott which was delegated by Synod 1994 to prepare a general revision of the Rules of Synods and the introduction of Domestic Regulations modeled on the Dutch Regulations adopted in 1978.

After two rounds of discussion it was decided that during this synod the present rules will still be used, whilst new deputies are to be appointed who should simplify the proposed regulations for conduct of synod. Synod felt the proposed rules to be too complex and considered that the rules for synod should reflect its ecclesiastical nature as the Church Order does with providing general guidelines only.

### Tuesday, 11th June – Evening session

In the evening a beginning was made with discussing the report of Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches. Synod decided to continue sister relations with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands and the Canadian Reformed Churches according to the established rules. With respect to the Dutch sister churches deputies to be appointed were mandated to ascertain what progress there was in the discussions about the differences (beyond what is covered by Art. 46 C.O.) with churches as the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia. Because of the degree of common interests with the Canadian Reformed Churches which make face to face contact desirable, synod decided to send a delegation to the next synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, subject to finance being available.

### Wednesday, 12th June – Day session

Concluding its discussion regarding the report of Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches synod decided to continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa and with the Presbyterian Church of Korea. Next a report concerning Synod Archives was dealt with. Thereafter synod dealt with a proposal of the church of Armadale in which it was

requested to grant permission to theological students to speak an edifying word/preaching consent in the churches. Synod considered this request and acceded to it on the ground that it is good for theological students to receive also practical experience. More accent is placed on this today. Even teachers and others are required to have practice in their fields, so also theological students undergo practical experience during or after their formal training. Thus far in Australia consistories could ask them to teach catechism classes, but preaching consent could not be offered. Therefore it was decided to accept the decision of classes of sister churches to grant theological students the right to speak an edifying word/preaching consent in the churches and to allow these students to deliver an edifying word. In case such permission is to be granted in Australia, this has to be done by an extraordinary synod. The student shall submit his sermons to a minister appointed by Deputies for the Training of the Ministry who in turn will give a report to the Professor of Diacology at the Theological College. In the afternoon synod made a start with discussing the report of Deputies for Bible Translation.

### **Wednesday, 12th June 1996 – Evening session**

In the evening the Rev. B. Hoyt received the floor of synod. On behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) he extended greetings in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In his address to synod, after a personal introduction, he pointed to the strength of the RCNZ through diversity in background (see next page for text of speech).

During the remainder of the evening Synod continued its discussion regarding the report of Deputies for Bible Translation.

### **Thursday, 13th June, 1996 – Day session**

Synod continued its discussion on the report of Deputies for Bible Translation. Next Synod discussed a proposal of the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott for the formation of three classes in the bond of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, to wit, Classis Tasmania (consisting of the churches of Launceston and Legana plus one floating church), Classis Rainbow Coast (consisting of the churches of Albany and West Albany plus one

floating church), and Classis Metro-Perth (consisting of the churches of Armadale, Bedforddale, Byford, Kelmscott, and Rockingham). An extensive report to support this proposal was sent to the churches.

Synod decided to thank the FRC Kelmscott for its elaborate proposal, but considered it to be unworkable. Nevertheless it considered that the FRC Kelmscott has clearly demonstrated the need for classes and therefore Synod deemed it wise to appoint deputies to study this whole matter, using Kelmscotts materials and past submissions and decisions. Deputies to be appointed will also be charged to invite comments from the churches.

### **Thursday, 13th June – Evening session**

In the evening the delegates of the sisters churches of Sumba, Savu, and Timor received the opportunity to pass on their greetings. The actual address was given in the Indonesian language by Rev. G. Hawu, when after Rev. M. Radjah gave the English translation of it. It was the second time that delegates from Indonesia were present at our Synod.

In his address Rev. Hawu informed the delegates of Synod about the history of the Indonesian churches, consisting of 4,200 members spread over 14 churches and 27 mission posts. The mission work started first over 100 years ago with the arrival of the first missionary Rev. van Alphen in 1881. At that time there was as yet no written language, which made the task of a missionary very difficult. There was also a lot of tribal fighting going on. Due to the death of his wife Rev. van Alphen returned to The Netherlands after one year. Yet the work continued. Nevertheless it took a long time before the first member could be baptized.

Slowly the Dutch got control over Sumba, and peace came to the island. This made the work of the missionaries much easier. During that time many churches, schools, and hospitals were built. God blessed the work. At present the churches are divided over 4 classes and every two years a synod is held; the first one in 1985. In that year the churches became independent, though there was still financial support from Holland. In 1990 this stopped altogether, except for the Theological Seminary.

Rev. Hawu concluded by saying: "We hope that through the visits of the

delegates the bond between our churches will be strengthened. May through the grace of our heavenly Father many more be called unto Him from all tribes and nations and may in this Christ also be glorified."

After this address, Br. J. van Dyk, deputy for Relations with other churches (Reformed) received the floor to respond to the address of Rev. B Hoyt of the previous evening. On behalf of deputies he expressed his sincere and brotherly thanks to Rev. Hoyt and the RCNZ for being present at this synod. "It is a great joy to us to listen to your witness of faith and that you also recognize the church gathering work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Southern Hemisphere where both our countries are situated. There has been a mutual time of courtship over the last years which has given us insight into your federation. As we have voiced in the past: nothing can replace seeing a face to the contacts and relations that we maintain. So often personal contacts can clarify misunderstandings and promote a trust that is needed in a relationship. The insight that you have given us into your personal background as well as the strengths and diversities of the backgrounds in your churches opens up for us a greater dimension to understanding not only the make up of your federation but also sets before us Psalm 87 as a living example. We are thankful that you continue to work together on the basis of the Reformed faith and agreed order, that you are bound by the infallible Word of God as confessed in your four forms of unity, the continental Three Forms of Unity and the fourth being the "Westminster tradition" the Westminster Confession.

It is good to hear that you as federation want to maintain ecclesiastical relations faithfully, and that you see it as a very precious part of your "marriage relationship" using His Word as the ruler of measure. In your speech you have made it quite clear in what manner your last Synod has acted in relation to the CRCNA and we are thankful for this. From your address Synod Kelmscott 1996 has heard that you also see error, deviation from the truth, in the Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA) and that you see it as your duty in your sister relationship to "remonstrate with your sister" and to call her back to faithfulness in the areas of your concern which was evident

## Speech of the Rev. B. Hoyt, delegate of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ).

Our membership is of quite diverse backgrounds. Amongst others we have people from Romanism and nominal Anglicanism; from Baptist, Methodist and from both liberal and conservative Presbyterian churches; from the Reformed Churches of Australia; from the Hervormd, the Gereformeerd, the Gereformeerd (Vrijgemaakt), and even the Gereformeerde Gemeente in the Netherlands. This wide range of backgrounds in our federation is a great strength and also gives us a strong motivation to work diligently at the task of maintaining the unity of the faith in the bonds of love. God has blessed us in this by enabling us not only to remain together in our common confession of the Reformed faith but also to grow closer as we work together on the basis of our agreed order.

We continue to work on many things which arise out of this diversity of backgrounds. Some of these things have never been an issue with you. But we know that the faith we confess is not limited to one culture or language or church tradition and so we continue to work with joy on the issues that arise from this diversity. It is a diversity which in God's grace has led us to greater unity. When you consider the issues with which we are wrestling, keep in mind the diversity of church tradition and background with which we are blessed. We have learned that it is important to distinguish carefully between that to which we are bound by the infallible Word of God as confessed in our standards on the one hand and that which is national, cultural or church-traditional, however good and profitable it may be on the other. We have learned that close interaction with believers and churches of other traditions and cultures helps us to make these distinctions which we in our sinful weakness find difficult to make.

(Next Rev. Hoyt touched on the desire for wider ecclesiastical contact. The diversity as mentioned) is one motivation for our desire to participate in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). We have found the contributions of those with different backgrounds and perspective to be a healthy correction for small-mindedness that arises in our thinking about God's great church-gathering work. We need continually to rub shoulders with others who can contribute to our struggles theologically and in mission outreach. And we hope that we in turn may make a contribution to others. For these reasons as well as the feeling of being isolated, it is not surprising that the vote to apply for membership in the ICRC was unanimous.

We know that there are many true and faithful churches around the world and that some contact with them would be profitable for us. But because of cultural differences and our limited resources and geographical remoteness, it is impossible to carry on sister-church re-

lations with more than a very few. Membership in the ICRC will enable a limited contact with such churches without the practical demands required by a sister-church relation. This is our solution to a practical difficulty we have as a small federation.

(Touching on the matter of ecclesiastical relations he stated): As a federation of churches we are committed to maintaining faithful ecclesiastical relations. Our last synod suspended the sister-church relations with the Christian Reformed Church of Northern America (CRCNA). We did so because of their unscriptural allowance of women in office and their continued use of a relativizing hermeneutic. As regards the ties with the Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA) our synod stated very plainly that we regard their decisions on Word and Spirit to be an error and that we are concerned about views on women in office among them as well as various worship practices common in some of their congregations, nevertheless we are not ready to break that bond. Because of the strong bond we have had over the years we believe it is our duty to use that bond to remonstrate with our sisters, to call them to faithfulness in the areas. We pray that our admonition and warnings may be used by God to bring about a change of decision.

With this in view it is a great disappointment to read the recommendations of your deputies, namely, not to acknowledge the RCNZ as true churches because of our relationship with the RCA. Your deputies indicate in their report that such a declaration, according to your 1985 decision, would oblige you to pursue sister-church relations with us while our relations with the RCA would make that problematic. Although your deputies have gratefully acknowledged that the decisions of our 1995 Synod indicate faithfulness in regard to our sister-church relations and that the marks of a true church are present, this recommendation is a considerable step backwards. I say a step backwards because your 1994 Synod mandated your deputies "to work towards a resolution about third parties, so that the way can be opened towards sister relations and 'to investigate how the relation of the RCNZ with the RCA should impact our relation with the RCNZ.'" (Using the analogy of marriage Rev. Hoyt said): Regarding our marriage with the RCA, we believe it would be unfaithful for us to sue for divorce while there still remains the hope of biblical reconciliation. If you expect us to sue for divorce at this point, then we shall certainly hesitate about marriage with you. We will ask ourselves a question. Will you divorce us when we struggle with error or sin as quickly as you expect us to divorce the RCA? We sincerely hope not.

at your last Synod Avondale. May your admonitions and warnings truly bring repentance.

We sincerely wish for reconciliation and unity in order to work towards sister relations with you. It is pleasing to hear from you Rev. Hoyt that it is your churches' desire also, even though you as well as we are not ready yet to enter into formal sister-church relations. Yes it is true that there is a hesitation to recommend recognition of the RCNZ as true and faithful churches because of your relation with the RCA. As you mentioned last night your relationship certainly is a problematic issue for you, and yet it is also for us, as you are fully aware."

After this address Synod commenced discussing the report of deputies for relations with the RCNZ.

### **Friday, 14th June, 1996 – Day session**

At the beginning of the morning session the chairman informed the delegates about some news from Canada. In a meeting of Classis Ontario-South three candidates from the Theological College have been examined. Br. R. Eikelboom and Br. J. van Vliet were made eligible for call, whilst Br. R. Pot received the right to speak an edifying word within the churches. Meanwhile Br. Eikelboom received two calls, viz. from the church of Fergus and Calgary.

During the morning and afternoon session Synod dealt with the report regarding the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. Most of the discussion circled around Recommendation 2 of Deputies report:

"That though the three marks of a true church are present in the RCNZ, there is the stumbling block of their sister relationship with the RCA and therefore acknowledgment of the RCNZ as a true church of our Lord Jesus Christ be postponed until it can coincide with the time when an offer of sister relations can be extended according to Article 67, Acts Synod Launceston 1985. This will occur when their relations with the RCA has been resolved."

Most delegates of synod were unhappy with the recommendation, since on the one hand it says that the marks of a true church are present in the RCNZ, whilst on the other hand the acknowledgment of the RCNZ as a true church of our Lord Jesus Christ be postponed until it can coincide with the offer of sister relations. By the end of Fri-

day afternoon Synod had not reached a consensus on how to continue contact with the RCNZ.

### **Friday, 14th June, 1996 – Day session**

Rev. E. Fangidae who on behalf of the Musyafir Churches in Timor attended synod as an observer received opportunity to pass on the greetings. In his address to synod he told something about recent developments in his churches. An official synod was planned for December 1995, yet the convening church on its own accord changed the agenda of synod.

Rev. Fangidae stated: "A number of people, who were members of the convening church, strongly rejected the decision of Synod 1992, which accepted the Reformed doctrine as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. They also rejected the system of Reformed Church Government. They wanted to go back to the synodical system. They showed this by changing the name from Gereja-Gereja (plural of churches) to Gereja (singular, church). This changing of name had been decided upon prior to synod. At synod there was not even a chance to discuss the issue. The nine churches that remained faithful stated their disagreement and rejected the synod of Gereja Musyafir Indonesia as the synod of the GGMM-NTT. They agreed to have their own synod which was held from 12-13 April 1996. This synod affirmed not only to remain faithful and truthful to God's holy Word, but also to protect and defend our church's confession in the Three Forms of Unity. Nine churches – small in the eyes of man. But we believe that it is pleasing in the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ, The Head of the church."

Rev. Fangidae continued by saying, "The relation between the FRCA and the GGMM-NTT has been strengthened by the visit of your deputies Brs. Buist and Bosveld. They were witnesses when our synod unanimously agreed to accept the Free Reformed Churches of Australia as sister churches. We realize that you from your side will not so quickly accept us as sister churches. There may be shortcoming in our growing efforts, but please brothers, don't hesitate, especially after the separation." "What pleases us so much is that now already we have received from you the heart of sister churches. Do help us to strengthen our hand, that is carrying the Reformed torch, to keep flaming. And

when the fire is almost out, please help us to put oil in the torch."

Next Br. J. Bosveld received opportunity to respond to the address on Thursday evening by the Indonesian delegates. Br. Bosveld stated: "We realize your struggle to be independent and your struggle to remain faithful to God's Word. But be assured that you do have sister churches in us and that also our bond has strengthened. Since our last synod contact has grown. We attended your synod and experienced the struggle you have, also with different opinions among each other. You experience it here among us as well, be it on a different level. Scripture has foretold us the struggle of the church. Already in Paradise God said, "I will put enmity." Also the New Testament speaks about those who want to live faithfully will endure hardships. Yet the solid foundation of God stands having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His and let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

"Now that our bond together has grown and we start to understand each other better, let us as servants of God, in all humility correct each other that we may walk on the road to eternal life, finding out together what is acceptable to the Lord."

After these two addresses synod in a final round concluded its discussions regarding contact with the RCNZ deciding that:

1. Synod notes with thankfulness that the recent synod of the RCNZ could acknowledge the FRCA as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Synod declares its gratitude for the faithfulness which deputies have found in the RCNZ.
3. Synod declares its appreciation for the principled approach which the RCNZ have shown in dealing with third parties by their encouragement and establishment of relations with faithful churches and by its admonition and if necessary breaking of ties with unfaithful churches.
4. To strive for a sister relation with the RCNZ.

In the grounds for this decision it was stated that deputies have indicated that in doctrine, worship and church government the RCNZ must be considered as a true and faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ. But

seeing that the matter how the relations of the RCNZ with the RCA (Reformed Church of Australia) should impact our relation with the RCNZ has not yet been resolved, it would be premature to offer a sister relation at this point of time.

In the grounds it was also stated that although it cannot be expected that the RCNZ suddenly breaks ties with an er-

rant sister without first exercising brotherly admonition, the deformation within the RCA has been evident for considerable time. Therefore deputies should encourage the RCNZ to act consequently if the admonitions of the RCNZ continue to go unheeded.

After two smaller items had been dealt with synod was adjourned till Monday 17th June.

*Note: This press release was prepared by the Vice-Chairman of Synod, the Rev. A. Veldman. Those who wish can access the daily press releases on the WWW at <http://kite.ois.com.au/~eric>. This is the home page of Mr. Eric 't Hart who was asked to make the press releases available.*



## PRESS REVIEW

By C. Van Dam



# Synod news from the Dutch sister churches

### Kampen

The Synod meeting in Berkel en Rodenrijs made two more appointments that can be noted here. Drs. P. W. van de Kamp, minister in Groningen, was appointed as lecturer in the diaconological disciplines and Drs. A. L. Th. de Bruijne, minister in Rotterdam-Centre was appointed as successor to Dr. J. Douma, Professor of Ethics, who retires after the next academic year.

### New missionary institute

Starting in January 1997, D.V., the Reformed Churches (Liberated) will establish an Institute on Reformed Theological Training. Its primary purpose will be to serve the new type of mission work now done outside the Netherlands. Although the press report does not mention it, this decision appears to formalize into an institute the summer courses that have been given at the Theological University in Kampen the last couple of years to help equip leaders in Reformed churches in Eastern Europe.

### Relations with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken (CGK)

The relationship between the CGK (whose sister churches are the Free Reformed Churches in North America) and the Reformed Churches (Liberated) has become very good. The Synod of the latter churches has decided to draft a letter to the next synod of the CGK expressing their gratitude for the positive developments in the relationship be-

tween the two church federations. Prior to this decision, synod heard the address of the chairman of the CGK deputies for unity, Rev. J. Westerink. His speech was well received and the joy at the closer relationship was clearly mutual.

### Liturgy

Deputies will be appointed to deal with the issue of modified church services for the mentally handicapped. Synod decided not to go in the direction of having a special order of service for these members of the church. It was felt that there was enough room in the present order of services to make adjustments for the mentally handicapped. It was noted at synod that one can learn much from these handicapped members. They have the gift of being able to give a direct and spontaneous expression to their faith.

### Other decisions

Regional Synod Utrecht had requested the General Synod to allow the baptism of adopted children from abroad to take place immediately after the foreign country involved approved the adoption. The Synod, however, decided to stay with the current practice of only allowing the baptism after all legal procedures (including Dutch ones) were completed.

A new translation is being prepared in the Netherlands under the auspices of the Dutch Bible Society. There was an overture from one of the churches not to

participate any longer with the Dutch Bible Society in this project because of the presence of modernistic scholars in that society. In the discussion at synod it became clear that the participation of our sister churches in this project can hardly be characterized as a form of cooperation ("samenwerking") since the translation is the project of the Bible Society and not of the churches. Furthermore the role of the churches is important. They have the opportunity for input. Whether the churches will adopt this upcoming translation in the future is a separate issue.

Synod appointed a national coordinator for diaconal matters. It is not clear from the press reports what precisely his task would involve, but he would be paid for his work.

A consistory in the federation had decided not to make any (general) pronouncement about whether desertion by one marriage partner is a valid ground for divorce before God. The consistory would judge each request for remarriage on its own merit. In response to an appeal against this decision, the Synod backed the consistory. Earlier, the Classis Harderwijk had judged that the consistory in question did not go into an unscriptural way and the Regional Synod of Gelderland had called the consistory decision "wise and careful." All these decisions were in the line of Synod Middelburg 1933.

(based on reports in *Nederlands Dagblad*)



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of His glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.*

Jude 24

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Do you sometimes think that the Lord made a mistake? That you would have done something much different if you had been in a position to do so? Or do you wonder why the Lord did what He did?

Even though we know very well that the Lord cannot make mistakes, yet those thoughts come up in our mind. We all know that we have to serve and obey the Lord. We also know that it is a great privilege that we know Him, and that we are His covenant children. That is not our own doing. It is the Lord Who chose us, and Who established His covenant with us. That means, that if we serve Him with all our heart, He will be our God. He will help us, take care of us, and never forsake us. We hear that in church on Sundays, and we believe that.

But why does it sometimes become so difficult to believe that? Why do we ask questions, why do we sometimes even doubt the truth of God's promises? It is because of the things that happen all around us. If we had a say in the matter, then all God's children would have a prosperous life, and those who do not serve the Lord would have difficulties. That would make sense to us. God's children would be blessed, they would receive what they are praying for. Those who did not serve the Lord would experience difficulties and that way they would even maybe turn to the Lord. But that is not the way it goes. A hard-working Christian endures difficulties in his business, maybe even bankruptcy. Somebody else, who in his lifestyle shows that he is an unbeliever, has a flourishing business. A God-fearing boy gets killed in an accident, and the one who causes a lot of the trouble stays alive. A caring mother of a big family has to die to cancer, and the woman that lives a sinful life gets old. Other people who do not care about anything are healthy and can do anything in their life, and I have to face this handicap, which destroys my future. . . . Then there are some people who, in spite of their difficulties, are so strong in their faith; why cannot I be like that? Why do all these doubts and questions come up in my heart?

The Lord takes care of all His children, He sees them all, He knows them all. He also gives each person his own life, possibilities, disappointments, and trials. There is a purpose for everything the Lord does. When we have to face difficulties then we know they come from the Lord. He wants us to endure them *in faith*. He also is there to help us, and He is there to provide us with everything we need to cope with the difficulties in our lives. The Lord wants us to pray for His help, then He will strengthen our faith. The Lord Jesus Christ, after He ascended into heaven sent down His Holy Spirit as a Helper to us. That Holy Spirit is always with us. He will help us to make decisions that are pleasing to the Lord,

and to be strong in faith when our bodies are weak. The Holy Spirit is there to help us also when we start asking questions, or when we are doubting, or when we become upset or maybe even rebellious. That will not mean that we receive answers to all our questions, but it will mean that we will receive peace in our hearts. Peace with the way the Lord rules the world and our lives. We will receive everything we need to carry on with our lives, to trust in the Lord, and to know that nothing can go wrong. The Holy Spirit will help us to trust in God's promises, and to know that, out of grace, Jesus Christ paid for all our sins. He died for us, so that we will live forever. He suffered for us, so that we will never have to endure anything like that. He opened the way for us to a new earth, where everything will be perfect and where we may live with the Lord forever. We will all be praising the Lord and serving Him in a way that we cannot even imagine. That will keep our hearts and minds so occupied that there will be no room left for anything else, and certainly not for questions! So pray for faith, and for God's guidance as long as you live. "And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith" (Matthew 21:22)

*Heed my prayer, O Lord, be near me;  
O incline Thy ear to hear me.  
Let my cry come unto Thee;  
Do not hide Thy face from me.  
When I pray in grief and worry,  
Lord, to me Thy answer hurry.  
Listen to my supplication;  
Quickly come with consolation.*

Psalm 102:1

## Birthdays in September:

- 8: Marsha Moesker**  
Gateway House, 4807 Georgia Street  
Delta, BC V4K 2T1
- 11: Mary Vande Burgt**  
32553 Willingdon Avenue,  
Abbotsford, BC V2T 1S1
- 14: Jerry Bontekoe**  
"ANCHOR HOME", 361 30 Rd., RR 2  
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0
- 29: Paul Dieleman**  
156 St. Catharines St., Unit 12  
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

I wish you a happy birthday, and until next month,

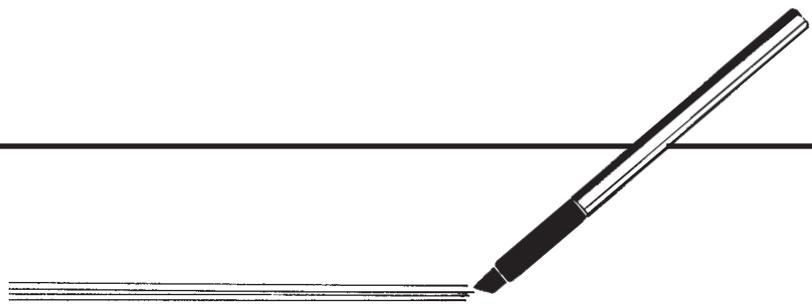
Mrs. R. Ravensbergen  
7462 Hwy. 20, RR 1  
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

# THE HI-LITER

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## News from Here and There

By C. Van Spronsen



In Albany, Australia the deacons met with the youth club committees. They received a positive response to their proposal that the youth would organize visits to the elderly in the congregation. A good idea and in line with the task of the deacons as described in art. 23 C.O.!

\*\*\*

There is no unemployment problem for those interested in mission if going to Papua New Guinea is no objection. The Australian churches conduct a mission work there. We read: "The November 1995 meeting of cooperating churches decided that PNG needs three field workers, of which one must be a missionary. Br. and sr. Fokkema and br. and sr. Slobe are presently in PNG but br. Fokkema will most likely repatriate to Australia in December, 1996. Br. and sr. Slobe's position is seen as temporary. Thus there is a need to find a second mission worker as soon as possible, a missionary to commence as soon as possible and a worker to replace br. Fokkema."

\*\*\*

In one of our bulletins we read the pastor's comments about a common concern which may be helpful to a broader audience. "Sometimes people wonder why it is that, even when couples are separated, both attend the Lord's Supper. It is understandable that such concerns are expressed. The consistory also very much struggles with this very thing. However, when both parties are willing to be reconciled, and willing to work out their differences, then we cannot withhold any one from the Lord's Supper. The Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper clearly states that those who "refuse to be reconciled" to one's brother or sister in the Lord cannot attend the table of the Lord. But, if both parties are willing to admit their sins, and do not want to live in them, and want to be reconciled to each other, then there is no reason to keep them from the table."

\*\*\*

Churches who supported the "Minister at Large" project in Grand Rapids were informed that the Consistory of the American Reformed Church there decided to disband the MAL board and to abandon the goal of calling a minister-at-large at this time since the project has declined due to Rev. Kingma's retirement and health problems, and due to the fact that contributions from the supporting churches have declined. The GR consistory believes that under the present circumstances the original task description for a minister-at-large can be fulfilled by the consistory." (Quoted from a letter from the American Reformed Church in Grand Rapids).

\*\*\*

It appears that growth in the area of Hobart, Tasmania, is not developing as anticipated. The Consistory of the Church at Launceston decided to advise the members in

the Hobart area "that the number of Sunday meetings taken by the elders will be halved during 1996. Also, the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated in Hobart only in February and August. The members are encouraged to attend the Launceston worship services more frequently."

\*\*\*

A new Church to be born? The Council of the Rehoboth Church of Burlington received a letter from a group of brothers from the Flamborough area informing Council about their efforts to institute a Church in Flamborough.

\*\*\*

In the same Church the Home Mission Committee was to hold an introductory evening on a new exciting project: "Neighbourhood Bible Studies." This project is being put together to help members of the congregation invite their neighbours to study the Word.

\*\*\*

Both congregations in Tasmania held a special meeting together for prayer and reflection after the horrific massacre in Port Arthur, Tasmania, the end of April.

\*\*\*

The Consistory of the Church at Legana (Tas) expressed concern regarding the isolation some members put themselves into. "Regard must be given to the situation you find yourself in especially on Sundays. Decisions on living away from the church shouldn't be taken lightly. Committing your whole life to the Lord's service as a living member of His church is a struggle at the best of times, let alone when you are in isolation!"

\*\*\*

The Consistory of the Church at Kelmscott (W.A.) discussed the wording of the announcement for the withdrawal of members. It was decided that the congregation should also be reminded of the seriousness of withdrawing and informed of the manner in which they should treat that person. The following will be added to the announcement: "As long as he/she persists in his/her sins, he/she is excluded from the fellowship of Christ and all the spiritual blessings and benefits which God promises to and bestows upon His church. We exhort you, beloved Christians, not to look on him/her as an enemy. On the contrary, try to warn him/her as a brother/sister. But do not associate with him/her, that he/she may be ashamed and come to repentance."

\*\*\*

Twelve young people, volunteers of various Canadian Reformed churches are scheduled to depart for the Dominican Republic in July as a project of the C.R.W.R.F. called "Faith Works." They will be constructing a church-building for a Reformed congregation in a small Haitian

community in the middle of the country. They also plan to set up a children's Bible School serving the community around the construction site. Various fundraising activities are being organized.

\*\*\*

"In the first week of June I hope to bring the catechism tests to your home (if you have children in catechism class)." So writes one of our pastors and teachers. A good opportunity to discuss the results with the parents or is it because it is doubtful that the children themselves will bring the test home??

\*\*\*

In Grand Rapids the Consistory decided to eliminate the offering at the Lord's Supper table. Several reasons led to this decision. "Some have suggested that it gives the appearance of paying to sit at the Table; the openness of the receptacle precludes privacy in giving; although there is historical precedent for offerings connected with the Lord's Supper celebration, there is no Scriptural principle which requires it being taken at the table."

\*\*\*

It seems that most churches already have or will be changing to the NIV translation of the Bible. The transition does not always go smoothly as we noticed in a number of bulletins. One sample: "The Consistory reviewed and studied numerous letters received from members of the congregation containing concerns of the NIV Bible translation. Consistory has found that no compelling reasons were brought to her against the use of the NIV in the worship service."

\*\*\*

In Toronto the Children's Saturday Morning Bible School concluded for the season. It appeared quite successful with an average of 20 children attending, having a range of 7 - 18 children present from outside the congregation.

\*\*\*

The Council of the Toronto Church decided that Rev. H. Versteeg (missionary from Irian) will be available for call as of Feb. 1, 1997 with duties to commence on July 1, 1997.

\*\*\*

The Ebenezer Church of Burlington has obtained a Christian copyright license. This allows them to legally print the words to 1000's of copyrighted Christian songs. (For song books, programs, VBS etc.) Something for more of us to look into in order to be "legal?"

\*\*\*

The Church at Smithers, BC commemorated its 40th Anniversary of the institution of the Canadian Reformed Church in Smithers. A special program was held on May 26th.

\*\*\*

Mr. Stephen 't Hart, Australian student at the College in Hamilton, and his wife will be spending the summer months on the mission field in Papua New Guinea. Seeing they are short-staffed there will be plenty of work for them.

\*\*\*

Now that we are back in Australia: I received some comments concerning some highlights relating to this part of the world. A clarification was given about the "puzzle" that the prayer and thanksgiving service were combined in one. Since planting and harvesting is car-

ried on throughout the year in their climate it was decided that these two services therefore would be combined. Makes more sense now?

\*\*\*

We also received some critical comments on the news item relating to *Una Sancta* and the departure of some of its editors. We simply passed on the news of their resignation and their reasons without giving a judgment one way or another. Those were the reasons given. In the meantime some "letters to the Editor" gave the other side.

\*\*\*

Have a good summer or winter wherever you happen to be!

The article  
"The House of Commons and the Church of God"  
(Vol. 45, No. 13) was incorrectly attributed to G.Ph.  
van Popta. The author was J.L. Van Popta.  
*Clarion* apologizes for this error.





## CLASSIS ONTARIO SOUTH OF JUNE 12, 1996

Br. R. Van Anandel of the convening church, Lincoln, called the meeting to order. Psalm 18:16 was sung, 1 Corinthians 15:1-13 was read and prayer was offered. The delegates and some of the students from the John Calvin School were welcomed.

All the credentials were found in order. Br. Van Anandel asked the officers to take their places. They were: Rev. J. Ludwig, Chairman; Rev. B.R. Hofford, Vice-Chairman; Rev. K.A. Kok, Clerk. Some matters of memorabilia were mentioned. The agenda was adopted.

Brs. R. Eikelboom and J. Van Vliet submitted themselves to preparatory examinations after Classis reviewed the proper documents. Sermon proposals were presented and approved. These brothers were examined in O.T. exegesis, N.T. exegesis, and doctrine and creeds. The Classis declared brs. Eikelboom and Van Vliet eligible for call, and they promised faithfulness to the Word of God and the confessions. After song and prayer the members congratulated the brothers.

Br. R. Pot presented himself to be examined in order to receive consent to speak an edifying word. The required documents were reviewed. A sermon proposal was presented, and br. Pot was examined in doctrine and creeds. The Classis granted this brother permission to speak an edifying word until June 12, 1997, after he pledged his faithfulness to the Word of God and the confessions. The members congratulated br. Pot.

Three appeals were dealt with in closed session.

In response to the relevant questions of Article 44, C.O., Ancaster requested that br. T. Lodder's permission to speak an edifying word be extended for six months (until December 14, 1996). This was granted.

The Church at Smithville requested advice in a matter of discipline. Advice was given.

A letter from the Church at Smithville regarding the use of the "Regulations of Classis" for the admission of visitors to closed sessions of a classis was received for information.

A letter from the Church at Ancaster regarding Rev. H.M. Van Essen's withdrawal from the congregation and some relevant communications for the archives were presented. This material was received for information.

The Classical Treasurer's annual report was presented. The 1996 assessment was set for \$4.00 per communicant member for classical expenses and \$1.00 per communicant member for regional synodal expenses. The auditor's report was favourable. Br. D. Van Amerongen was reappointed as Treasurer.

The Church at Watford reported that the inspection of the Classical archives revealed all was in good order.

The annual financial report of the Fund for Needy Students was presented. The auditor's report was favourable.

The next Classis is scheduled to be convened by the Church at London on September 11, 1996, at their building. The proposed officers for that Classis are: Rev. Cl. Stam, Chairman; Rev. K.A. Kok, Vice-Chairman; Rev. J. Ludwig, Clerk.

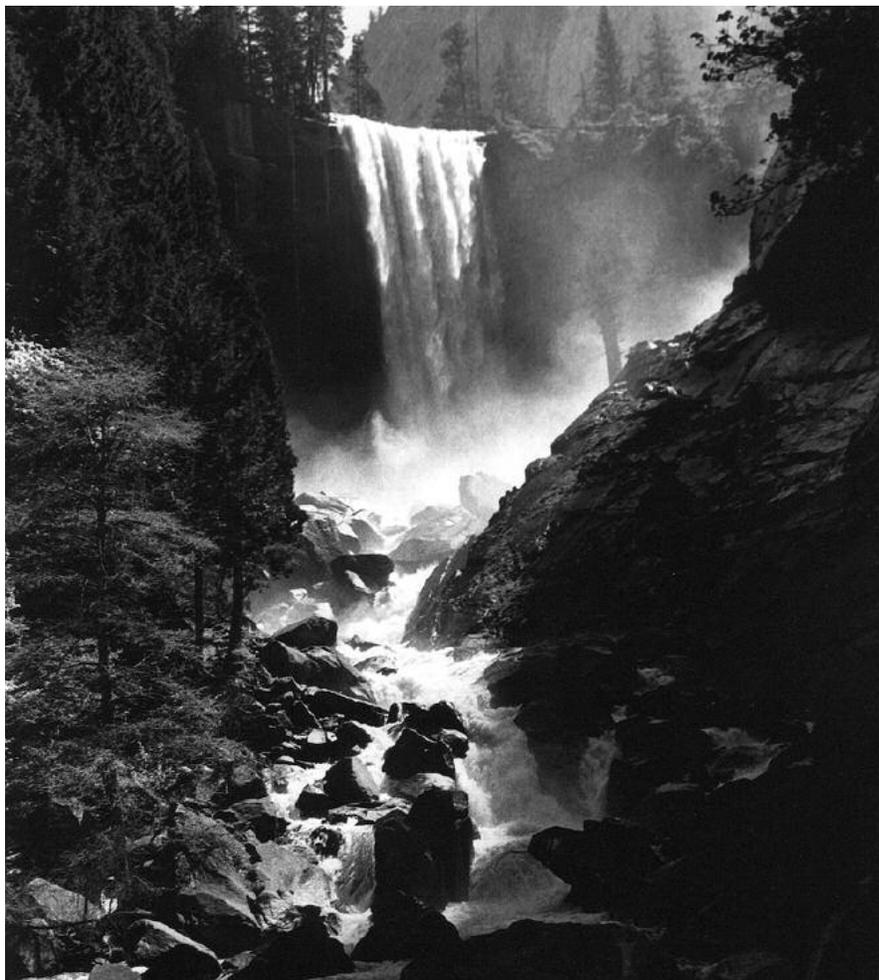
Some of the members of Classis made use of the personal question period. The Chairman judged that no censure was necessary.

The Acts and Press Release were read and approved.

Classis sang Psalm 128:1, and Rev. Hofford led in prayer of thanksgiving. The Chairman closed the Classis.

For Classis Ontario South  
of 6/12/96,

Rev. B.R. Hofford,   
Vice-Chairman



# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



## Dear Busy Beavers,

It's summer time again! I hope you are all enjoying yourselves! Here's a lot of puzzles to keep you busy on a rainy day.

## SUMMER PUZZLE FUN!

### MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

The prophets wrote and spoke of the coming Messiah. Tell which prophet made the following prophecies.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ said the Messiah would be born of a virgin.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ said the Messiah would be taken out of Egypt.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ said the Messiah would be a mighty prophet in word and deed.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ said the Messiah would have His hands and feet pierced.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ said the Messiah would be despised and rejected.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ said the Messiah would make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ said the Messiah would be made an offering for sin.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ said soldiers would cast lots for the Messiah's garments.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ said the Messiah would be betrayed and sold for thirty pieces of silver.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ said that Jesus would suffer in silence.

(answers at the end)

### BOOK PUZZLE

by Busy Beaver *Michelle Linde*

Clues

1. The Word of God.
2. A way to set up your books in, an \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Just a \_\_\_\_\_ book. Plain.
4. You \_\_\_\_\_ the place in your book.
5. The whole set to books. A \_\_\_\_\_.

1. B \_\_\_\_\_.
2. O \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_ O \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ K \_\_\_\_\_.
5. S \_\_\_\_\_.

## ANIMAL WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Danielle Ostermeier*

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

Can you find these words?

- |        |        |          |      |
|--------|--------|----------|------|
| dog    | lion   | pig      | deer |
| hog    | monkey | elephant | cat  |
| kitten | puppy  | cow      | calf |
| horse  | pony   | goat     | kid  |
| bird   |        |          |      |

## CRACK THE CODE

by Busy Beaver *Rachelle VanVeen*

- |       |       |       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| A = ☉ | F = ⚡ | K = ⚡ | P = □ | U = ◆ |
| B = Ω | G = ♋ | L = ● | Q = □ | V = ♠ |
| C = ♯ | H = ⚡ | M = ○ | R = □ | W = ◆ |
| D = Ω | I = ☉ | N = ■ | S = ◆ | X = ☒ |
| E = ℳ | J = ⚡ | O = □ | T = ◆ | Y = ☒ |

◆ ♯ ℳ □ ■ ● ☒ • ☉ ⚡ ℳ ☒ ■ Ω • ◆ □ ℳ

• ☉ ☒ ◆ □ Ω ℳ • ◆ □ □ ☒ ☒ ■

ℳ ■ ℳ ○ ☒ ⚡ • ◆ □ ○ ☒ ⚡ ℳ ♯ ⚡ ○

☒ □ ◆ □ ⚡ □ ☉ ℳ ■ Ω

### WHAT FOOLS!

1. He exchanged his birthright for red pottage.
2. He tore down his barns and built bigger ones.
3. He thought they could lie to God.
4. He built his house upon sand.
5. He wanted forgiveness, but refused to forgive.
6. They tried to hide from God.
7. He tried to flee from God.
8. He told his innermost secret to a woman.
9. This biggest fool of all thought he could mislead the Saviour.
10. How ridiculous they were to think that they could seal Christ's tomb.

(Answers at end)

### BIBLE NAMES

Remember that puzzle from Clarion #7? Putting the missing letters in to complete the words? Here are some more!

her, mar, and, tar, can sam, dam

1. SUS, ARISCHUS, ASHOTH, SHISH.
2. SON, UEL, ARIA, OTHRACIA.
3. A, ASCUS, ARIS, AAH.
4. OD, EST, MON, CITH.
5. AAN, DACE, A, NIOR.
6. K, Y, THA, SAIA.
7. REW, CACE, ALEXER, RONICUS

(answers at end)



### FROM THE MAILBOX

Hi, *Michael Janssens*. How was your field day? Did you have good weather? I hope you have a good summer vacation. Bye, Michael.

Hello, *Sarah Schulenberg*. Do you have lots of nephews and nieces? That must be exciting. I hope you have a fun summer! Bye, Sarah.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Ainsley VanVeen*. Do you enjoy drawing or reading? I hope you enjoy being a member. Do you live in town or the country? Hope to hear from you soon. Bye, Ainsley.

Hi, *Michelle Linde*. Was your birthday party fun? How are your summer holidays? It's good to enjoy reading sometimes, and other times to enjoy being outside. Bye, Michelle.

### Answers

#### Messianic Prophecies!

1. Micah, 2. Isaiah, 3. Hosea, 4. Moses, d. David, 6. Isaiah, 7. Zechariah, 8. Isaiah, 9. David, 10. Zechariah, 11. Isaiah

#### What Fools!

1. Esau
2. The rich man in Christ's parable in Luke 12.
3. Ananias and Sapphira
4. Man in Christ's parable of the builders (Matt.7)
5. The unforgiving servant
6. Adam and Eve
7. Jonah
8. Samson
9. Satan (Matt. 4)
10. The priests and Pharisees

#### Bible Names

1. Tarsus, Aristarchus, Ashtaroth, Tarshish
2. Samson, Samuel, Samaria, Samothracia
3. Adam, Damascus, Damaris, Adamah
4. Herod, Esther, Hermon, Cherith
5. Canaan, Candace, Cana, Nicanor
6. Mark, Mary, Martha, Samaria
7. Andrew, Candace, Alexander, Andronicus

That's all for this time!

Love, Aunt Betty



## AUNT BETTY

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