

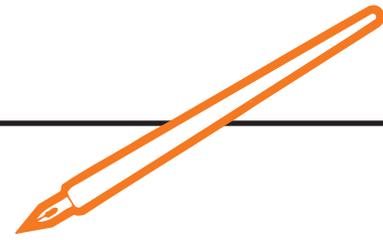


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
VOLUME 45, NO. 15/16 JULY 26, 1996

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the sea, and all that is in th
and rested the seventh day;
therefore the LORD blessed
and hallowed it.
5. Honour your father and you
that your days may be long
in the land which the LORD
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adulter
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness
10. You shall not covet your ne
you shall not covet your ne
his manservant, or his
or his ass,
what is you

*The law as
instruction in faith*



The law as instruction in faith

The previous *Editorial* paid attention to the calling of the church to preach Christ, and not experience or the law. True experience of faith and obedience to God's commandments can only be found in the living fellowship with Christ. A new, regenerated life, worked by the Holy Spirit, comes from Christ. That is why Christ must be preached as Saviour and Lord. This agrees with that Christ is the content of both the Old and the New Testament. We can give the proper and legitimate place to both experience and the law only within the framework of preaching Christ.

Herewith we do not abolish the law but we maintain it. Christ is the end of the law. That does not mean that after Christ there is no law anymore. It means that Christ has fulfilled the law. Christ has taught us the law of God in its ultimate, full consequence, as the law for those who live in communion with Him through His Holy Spirit. The law must not be separated from Christ. The law flows forth from Christ and must be preached as such.

I like to work this out in two ways and show that God's law teaches us how we can live in a true faith and, at the same time, how we can live in a true faith and, at the same time, how we can live as image of God.

When the law is preached apart from Christ and faith in Him so that it does not flow forth from Christ as Redeemer from sin, it becomes a (Christian) moral code with a number of commandments and prohibitions, with dos and don'ts. Not only in the secular world, but also often by Christians, transgressing a commandment is not seen and experienced as something that is really terrible. It is often regarded lightly as just transgressing a rule or code. There are not many who care when transgressing the speed limit! Many deal with commandments of God like they do with traffic regulations. When the Word of the Lord teaches us that God hates divorce, man is inclined to say: this may be true; however, there can be situations that husband and wife just do not agree and cannot get along anymore. The conclusion is then that a divorce is the only way out. "No divorce" is just one of the commandments!

However, when the law is seen as flowing forth from Christ as the Redeemer from sin and as instruction in faith and in being image of God who, through Christ, is our Father, then transgressing a commandment of Christ becomes a matter of lack of faith and of not living as image of God. It becomes a matter of not living in the holy communion with Christ. And transgressing a commandment weighs much heavier.

Now, it is necessary to show that God's law comes to us as the law of Christ, the law of redemption, the law of faith. I do not mean to say that the law leads to redemption. I speak about the law as it points out how redeemed people who live in fellowship with Christ through the Holy Spirit conduct themselves.

In Christ Jesus God made His covenant with His people. The blood of Christ, shed in His sacrifice at the cross, is the blood of the new covenant. It covers sins and made atonement. On the basis of that sacrifice for sin God says to His people: "I am the LORD, your God, and you are My children."

When we believe that Christ makes us children of His Father, the just requirement of the First Commandment of the covenant: "You shall not have other gods before Me." is obviously still in force in the new covenant. A person who believes in Christ does not want to have and serve any other god but the LORD. That is a matter of faith. And if a person serves other gods, he does not live out of a true faith in Christ. He does not live in communion with Christ.

When a person believes that, through Christ as his Saviour, the LORD is his God, this faith will automatically mean for him that he seeks to live in accordance with the just requirement of the Second Commandment. He will listen to what his God and Father says. He will serve God not in a self-conceived human way, but in the way which God has revealed in His Word. Christ came to do God's revealed will. To live in the fellowship with Christ is to follow Him.

Further, being God's child through grace in Christ, the believer seeks to honour the holy Name of the LORD with his whole life, in his words and works. It is for him a matter of faith to pray with his whole heart: "Father, hallowed be Thy Name." Swearing and speaking wrongly about the LORD is for him not just transgressing a commandment. It becomes for him, more and more, not living out of faith, not living in fellowship with Christ, holy for the LORD.

When we believe in Christ Jesus as He comes to us in the Scriptures, we believe that He gathers, defends, and preserves a church through His Spirit and Word in the unity of a true faith. We believe that Christ gathers a people for the LORD that fears and worships Him. In this way, not attending the Sunday worship services, or attending only once when called twice, while there is no valid reason not to attend, is not just taking it somewhat easy with the Fourth Commandment. And posing the question: "Where has God commanded that we have to go to church twice on a Sunday, or even that we have to go to church at all" is not just an effort to justify not keeping one of the commandments. No, such an attitude becomes sin against Christ who calls and gathers and preserves His church by His Spirit and Word. It becomes a lack of obedient faith. It becomes a refusal to live in close communion with Christ, and in the fellowship, the communion of His saints.

We can work out the same principle with regard to the "Second table" of the law. I shall not pursue that here with respect to all the commandments, but take only the Seventh and the Eighth Words of the covenant as examples.

We believe in Christ as Redeemer. This means that we believe that Christ restores what God has created good, but

what man has destroyed and is destroying through sin. We believe that Christ also restores marriage as the basic unit and building stone with which God meant to build human society as well as His church. Therefore, faithfulness in marriage is not just a matter of the Seventh Commandment. It is a matter of faith in Christ; it is a matter of living in the communion with Christ, through His redeeming power. Also marriage as such becomes a matter of faith. Marrying an unbeliever, someone with whom you cannot serve the LORD in the same faithful church, is then not just transgressing a rule of the church. It becomes a matter of unbelief and disobedience. How can you live in fellowship with Christ through the Holy Spirit, and, at the same time, have the most intimate relationship with someone who does not (want to) live in that same fellowship with Christ? The apostle Paul said that it is good to marry, if only it is done in the Lord, in His communion.

When you believe in Christ, you believe that He is the Heir and Owner of all things, the Lord and Master. You believe that you and everything that you possess is Christ's, and that this counts for everybody. You believe that God has entrusted part of what is and remains His to you and to others. Thus stealing as well as greed is no longer just a matter of transgressing the Eighth Commandment. Stealing and building up your own possessions just for yourself becomes sin against Christ, not walking in faith, not living in fellowship with Christ.

We must have the same Christological and Christ-centered approach when we read and explain other parts in Scripture, like, for example Proverbs, where we find the revealed wisdom of God for a truly God-fearing, Christian life.

Let me take here Proverbs 15:1, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." This proverb can be explained in a humanistic and moralistic way. We can use it to admonish each other to practice kindness. We can tell each other not to get so easily upset and irritated. We can urge one another by this proverb to practise self-control and to build up nobility of character. In this way not giving a soft answer but replying with a harsh word becomes just a matter of specific character, of human weakness, of remaining sinful. And it is not so bad anymore, in our eyes.

However, when we let this work of wisdom flow forth out of Christ, it becomes a different matter of much greater weight. Christ Jesus revealed Himself as meek: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matt. 11:29). The Greek word that is translated with "gentle" is also used in the third Beatitude: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). Being meek, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers (Matt. 5:5, 7,8,9) is not a matter of character, but of faith in Christ and of living in His fellowship through His Holy Spirit. It is a matter of being truly disciples of Christ. (See also Gal. 5:22-24 and Col. 3:12-16.)

In Christological light, replying with harsh words becomes a matter of not living out of Christ through His Spirit. We see giving soft answers that turn away wrath as something that is found not in our own human strength and nobility of character, but in the fellowship with Christ through faith. We see it as a gift, and therefore a commandment, that flows forth out of Christ. We see it as the result of being ingrafted into Christ as a branch into the vine. And we pray for it.

Christ must be preached. He is the only and the complete Redeemer. Only in the framework of preaching Christ can we learn to give the proper place to preaching the law. It has to flow from Him – from fellowship with Him – for the renewing Holy Spirit comes from Him as well.



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

| SUBSCRIPTION RATES | Regular | Air |
|--------------------|----------|----------|
| FOR 1996 | Mail | Mail |
| Canada* | \$33.00* | \$59.00* |
| U.S.A. U.S. Funds | \$38.00 | \$52.00 |
| International | \$53.00 | \$84.00 |

* Including 7% GST – No. R104293055
Advertisements: \$11.25 per column inch

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Publications Mail Registration No. 1025
ISSN 0383-0438

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~ In Memoriam ~

Rev. Piet Kingma

May 1926 ~ July 1996

by J. Geertsema

On Monday, July 8, the Rev. Piet Kingma was taken Home by the Lord. He was 70 years old. For many, including the family, his death still came suddenly and unexpected. We all knew about his illnesses: a weak heart and cancer. A few times during the past few years his departure seemed near, but recuperation and improving health were received. Then, sudden complications were used by the Lord to bring his life and task here on earth to an end. To us the words of the apostles Paul (Philip. 1) and Peter (2 Peter 1), he departed to be with his Lord whom he had served with his whole heart during his entire life.

Piet Kingma was born on May 18, 1926, in Echtenerbrug, close to Lemmer, Friesland, the Netherlands. He began his studies for the ministry in Kampen at a somewhat later age than most students and became minister of God's Word at the age of 30 in Noordbergum, Friesland, in November 1956. During his second year as minister in this congregation, he received a call for mission work in Irian Jaya. While still considering this, the church at Fergus-Guelph made things more difficult with its appeal: "Come over and help us." This latter call was accepted, and in August 1959 Rev. Kingma began his ministry in Canada in the church at Fergus - Guelph, Ontario.

Almost five years later, in May 1964, the Kingma family moved to the West, to the congregation at Smithers in the Bulkley Valley in British Columbia. In August 1971, the call to the church in Smithville was followed up. Smithville was one of the largest churches in the federation in those days. Rev. Kingma became the second minister, beside the Rev. H. Scholten, until the latter's retirement from active ministry in October 1973. From January 1978

till his retirement in May 1991, Rev. Kingma was minister of the American Reformed Church at Grand Rapids, Michigan, in the United States. This retirement was more or less forced upon Rev. Kingma because of health problems. These problems remained during the last five years of his life. Besides the health problems, and worse than them, were afflictions within the family. Our brother, however, placed all his afflictions in the hands of His Father in heaven.

Rev. Kingma did not always have an easy life as minister. On the one hand, he thought quite low of himself. He suffered under difficult situations in the churches and thought himself not good enough and not the right man to solve problems. He was a kind and caring man in relation to others. This made pastoral work in controversial situations a difficult task for him, just as it is for all officebearers. The pastoral work of supporting and comforting the flock in days of suffering, in grief and illness, was right in line with his kind nature. Guiding the sheep in the ways of the Lord was his joy. Time and effort spent for the sheep was never too much for him. As shepherd under the chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, he gave himself with his whole heart to the flock entrusted to him, and was afraid to demand things for himself from the flock. He did not seek his own material self-interests. His love for the Lord and for His flock drove him.

This does not mean that Rev. Kingma did not have his convictions or that he did not try to bring those convictions across to others. On the contrary, he was an outspoken man, strong in his convictions. Others did not always agree with him. For instance, his ideas about and rules for a personal Christian lifestyle were

sometimes (and not always without good grounds) considered conservative, or rather, old-fashioned, and not fitting in the reality of daily life.

He also had strong convictions about and rules for the life of the churches. One of the more important issues in this regard is our relation with other church federations. Churches that call themselves Reformed must show themselves Reformed. To him this meant simply abiding by the Three Forms of Unity and the adopted Reformed Church Order. Some, however, considered his interpretation of the term Reformed too narrow and restricted.

Because of his strong convictions, he often felt compelled to oppose what he considered to be wrong directions. But also in such situations his kind nature was evident. When he was involved in a debate with others and had stated his views over against those of others, he often, afterward, went up to the persons he had opposed and made sure that they understood that he had nothing personal against them. It was not against persons that he contended but for the right cause.

To Rev. Kingma the right cause was the cause of the Lord. He wished that the churches, each and in federation, and the church members, each and all together, would live for the Lord in the loving obedience of a thankful faith. Such a true faith, to him, meant abiding by God's Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. Son of a solid Reformed home and of the Liberation in 1944, and student of the school of K. Schilder and B. Holwerda, he aimed at keeping the churches to their Reformed heritage and on the Reformed track. This was the goal of his ministry. It is in this light that we have to place his life and work as well as his views. He always based his convictions

about a Christian lifestyle and about church life on the teaching of Scripture and confessions.

In this way Rev. Piet Kingma was engaged in the struggle of faith as a person and as a minister of God's Word and a pastor of the flock of his Lord. Indeed, he struggled as the specific person he was: Piet Kingma. To this struggle and to the way it was

fought there cleaved weaknesses and sins and shortcomings. He would be the first to acknowledge this. But this does not take away the fact that it was a struggle of faith. And the final judgment on this struggle, too, and on the way it was fought, is not ours but the Lord's. We can say: the struggle came to an end. The Lord said: it is enough. "Come in, you

faithful servant, and enter into the joy of your Lord." And also his works will follow after him.

Let us remember also this leader. And may the Lord comfort us with His promises. May this comfort and the care of the Lord be specifically with Sister Kingma and the family.

MEDITATION

By H.J.J. Feenstra

BE WISE WITH WISDOM!

Living under God's Guidance in His World – Proverbs 3:11-20

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

Living under God's Guidance

Life is not always a bed of roses. God's children might experience sufferings and trouble. The Lord may test His children; He might keep them on a tight rein. He may discipline them, or even punish them.

*My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline
or be weary of His reproof.
for the Lord reproves him whom
He loves,
as a father the son in whom he
delights.*

Also in discipline and punishment He shows His loving guidance, because

*If you are left without discipline,
in which all have participated,
then you are illegitimate children
and not sons.*

It is important to recognize that these passages show the Lord comes first, and that He actively concerns Himself with us. Also in these matter, He is the First!

From Scripture

Proverbs 3:11 - 12
Hebrews 12:4 - 13
James 1:1 - 18
Romans 8:28

Living in God's World

*Happy is the man who finds
wisdom . . .*

Again it is made clear that wisdom is not the privilege of a select few, an elite. Wisdom reaches out to all people; it has, therefore, world-wide significance.

*Happy is **the man** who finds
wisdom,
and **the man** who gets
understanding.*

Wisdom brings all of human life to bloom. It enriches life, it fills it with non-material wealth which is far more valuable and far more satisfying than all material wealth together. Perhaps we may even say that wisdom opens paradise again for us. Was the tree of life not found in paradise? And is that tree not the tree of the future, pointing to the throne of God and to the new Jerusalem? Listen to the description of wisdom:

*She is a tree of life to those who
lay hold of her;
those who hold her fast are called
happy.*

Pay close attention to the following thought:

*The Lord by wisdom founded the
earth;
by understanding he established
the heavens;*

*by his knowledge the deeps broke
forth,
and the clouds drop down the dew.*

The Book of Proverbs jumps from *human life* to God's *creation* to His *providence*. It links the wisdom which governs human life with the wisdom with which God created the earth and maintains it. This link is most important. Human life and God's creation are not two separate matters; we do not find here two kinds of wisdom. We find here the one wisdom of the one God who has bound together human life and His created world.

We discover here the created reality which is governed by God's wisdom. In that reality fits human life which is also governed by that same wisdom. Therefore it is no surprise that we are called to listen to that wisdom, because only in that way will we begin to live a truly integrated life in this world, that is, within all of God's created reality.

All of this is even more important in a world in which sin brought along foolishness. One of the words used for *sin* in Scripture may also be translated by a *bad shot*, or a *flop*. It is connected with a verb which means *missing the target*.

That is one of the aspects of sin: going against the nature and meaning of things; dealing with things in unnatural ways, in ways which God had not intended. Pollution and common-law relationships are such *flops*: misusing God's created reality.

Read through a daily newspaper and mark every story that confirms this. You will be dismayed! But there are elements in created reality which are more stubborn and more real than things invented and tried in attitudes of disbelief and revolution. It has been attempted to replace the seven-day week by a ten-day week, but this attempt failed badly. It did not work. People became unsettled. The economic benefits aimed for did not come about, and the attempts were dropped.

God instituted marriage, and this ordinance is not readily changed. In drunken stupor, Ahasuerus demanded that Queen Vashti entertain him. She

refused and he rejected her. But when he was sober, he thought of her again.

A prostitute shamelessly tells her story to a newspaper reporter. But in the middle of that newspaper report we read this remarkable paragraph: *Once I really fell in love with a man. I was so madly in love that I only wanted to be alone with my white prince, and my heart's desire was to have as many babies as possible. Yet that relationship was overshadowed by conflicts and irritations, mainly because of dissatisfaction with myself and with the position in which I found myself. That badly rattled me. I had never thought that pure love could make me adopt such an awfully traditional role.*

Notice those conflicts and irritations, the dissatisfaction with the "awfully traditional role." You discover here the pull of the reality which God created by His wisdom. This prostitute tasted some of that wisdom; she stared reality in the face. If only she had sought answers in the right direction.

Despite the destruction and disruption caused by sin, we continue to discover how wisdom and reality belong to each other.

From Scripture Proverbs 3:13 - 20
 Esther 1:1 - 2:1
 Genesis 1 and 2 (: 9, 18 - 25)
 Revelation 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19
 Psalm 8 

Pursuing federative unity: obstacles, possibilities and strategies⁽²⁾

By J. DeJong

Text of a speech (part 2 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.

POSSIBILITIES

2.0 Possibilities

With the obstacles as discussed in the last article, the call to unity remains. And there are a number of possibilities open to us. There have been extensive discussions on the local level. How do we work to overcome obstacles? Do

we simply continue on the local level? How do we at present approach the federating churches?

It is clear that from the side of the Fellowship churches not much will change. Judging by the proposed Church Order, these churches have a looser concept of federation than we do. Local churches can enter into their own cross-federative relationships without all member churches being aware of it, much less giving some form of approbation. We have a different concept of federation. We must be faithful to each other and must seek to keep the promises made and to uphold them with each other to the best of our ability. This is the model of federative co-operation given in the Scriptures.¹

I would like at the outset to distinguish two main possible courses of action, and then focus more closely on the strategies necessary to follow any one of them and implement their points.

2.1 Immediate federation

The adoption of the church order of 1920 provides us with a golden opportunity to work towards immediate federation. The strategy here is: union now. The adoption of this church order shows a definite willingness to hold to older forms of church government, and to be careful with regard to adopting new ones. However, we need to know whether the return to 1920 is a true return indeed. There is a good way to find out. Churches can be addressed imme-

What's inside?

With this issue, *Clarion* goes into summer mode. We combine Nos. 15 and 16, and take a month off. There's lots to read again.

- Prof. Geertsema on the relationship between the law and faith.
- A meditation.
- The second part of Dr. De Jong's speech on church unity.
- Rev. Schouten on the question whether Reformed people ought to speak about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Mr. Art Witten about who may address a broader assembly.
- Various press releases and press reviews.

Lots to read.

Enjoy yourself.

And have a good summer! See you in the Fall.

GvP

diately with the request that they urge all member churches in the Uniting Federation to temporarily desist from adopting the proposed church order. There is simply too much at issue in this new church order to gain any substantial agreement in the near future. It would require some years of dialogue and discussion to resolve the differences in all areas of the proposed church order.

However, we all can work with the Church Order of 1920. Of course, some discussion on the role of the regional synod would be necessary.² But here if necessary we could live with different practices for some time. We all can immediately offer a federative union on the basis of the Church Order of 1920, as long as discussion would be held on several key points. We would probably best see a number of basic conditions fulfilled on our side, and consider what conditions they might set on their side. For our part, these would include: a. the liturgy, and the book of worship used. b. admission to the Lord's Supper; c. pulpit exchange; d. use of the Heidelberg Catechism for preaching.

Let me say a few words about each of these four areas.

2.1.1 The *Book of Praise*

With regard to the *Book of Praise*, I think the federating churches can allow us to hold to the *Book of Praise*, while we can allow the federating churches to hold to the *Psalter Hymnal*. However this should be seen as a temporary arrangement, and committees should be appointed with representatives from both sections or traditions in order to work towards the convergence in worship. I agree with those who say that we should not easily sacrifice the gains we have made re the *Book of Praise*. On the other hand, we cannot reject unity with the Fellowship of Uniting Churches simply on the basis of the book they use, especially when in other respects it is very close to ours. They are very attached to many of their psalms and hymns just as we are attached to ours. Many of them do not understand the need to conserve a continental Reformed tradition regarding Genevan tunes. While I would not like to see any of our psalms lost, I would not be adverse to either expanding our hymn section, or (more preferably) adding a supplement of hymns. But we should not go in the direction which Rev. De Cock warned about in 1834. We have a common heritage with the former independents on the point of hymn singing as well. De Cock was warning against the scenario that has taken place later in Dutch-American church history: with

the new hymns the believers sang the gospel out of the church, and brought in the principle of emotional appeal.

2.1.2 Admission to the Lord's Supper

The Fellowship churches have a different practice than we do with respect to the admission of guests to the Lord's table. Generally, they find the restrictions that we have imposed as being too forced. We operate with a system of signed attestations, not only for members who are moving but also as for guests who come from other churches in the federation, or churches with which we have a sister church relationship. This is the rule according to Article 61.

Now we do not have a fixed rule with respect to the admission of guests from churches with which we do not have a sister church relationship. Given that this is an exception to the rule, I do not think that we need a special rule for this. Several of our ministers have pointed out that the admission of guests from other churches after an interview is not contrary to the spirit and intent of Article 61, and I concur with this judgment.³ If someone from say a Uniting church is in the city and requests admission the Lord's Supper, it does not appear to be following the way of love to refuse this admission to the table. It would make a difference if the person in question is only visiting or will be present at the worship services on a more regular basis. A one time visit does not require admission to the Lord's Supper. But if more frequent visits are planned due to employment or other reasons, a consistent refusal of admission to the Lord's table seems an unhealthy road to follow.

On the other hand, the suggestion that the Canadian Reformed practice is cold and formalistic should be the subject of more discussion. For, as Rutgers points out, there are two aspects to the admission to the Lord's Supper: doctrine and life.⁴ We must know whether a person surely believes that which the church confesses, but we must also know whether he actually lives in accordance with that confession. And though we acknowledge with the Fellowship churches the right of the local church to undertake an investigation, simple logistics makes an accurate investigation well nigh impossible. To adequately determine one's walk requires an extended period of observation.

Thus we should not lose sight of the benefits of an organized system of supervision. We can maintain the right of the local church to conduct an investigation, but with Rutgers must say: the

federational ties make this investigation superfluous. That is precisely the beauty of a federation. You accept each other as members of one federation that practices the same discipline and supervision. The letter is a testimony that proper discipline is being maintained.

I think the progress made in the St. Catharines area is instructive for all of us here. The Immanuel church in St. Catharines has adopted a provision paper re supervision of the Lord's table, and the consistory now lives by this position paper. It finds the attestation system as we practice it somewhat cold and formalistic.⁵ The Consistory has drafted a five point confession to which any given guest must be able to respond in a positive way. The points include: acceptance of the Three Forms of Unity or an equivalent confession (including the Westminster standards).⁶ The positive element here is that one is not immediately inclined to refuse the table to guests coming from other churches.

A remaining weakness in this approach is that there are no safeguards regarding one's conduct. Personally I think the St. Catharines project offers some sound proposals to us, but I would like to add a requirement that the local consistory pursue contact with the guest's home church. And local churches should adopt a principle by which guests must announce themselves to a member of the consistory at least two days before the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Let us not forget that in the 16th century the brothers did not possess all the means of communication that we have today. Let us make full use of these means and willingly bear the cost, because I share the opinion of those who suggest that refusing someone access to the table often comes over as showing a lack of love. It may not be intended as such, but who can suppress the initial feelings here?

The main point in the discussion is that the table remains a supervised table. The step towards an open table implies an entirely different concept of the church and the sacraments. An open table weakens the call of the gospel, and weakens the call to maintain discipline. It blurs the distinction between church and world, and church as gathered by Christ versus a counterfeit church.

This is a matter which should be dealt with as a federation of churches, and not simply by local arrangement. Art. 61 CO clearly indicates that the supervision of the Lord's table is a matter that concerns all the churches, and therefore alteration in policy and approach should incorporate the approbation of all the churches.⁷

2.1.3 Pulpit exchanges

If we could find churches ready and willing to move together with us on the basis of 1920, we would need to discuss the process of pulpit exchanges. I would place some restrictions on this for the first five years, let us say: a maximum of once every two or three months. Why? There is a need to discuss the issues of training and expectations regarding the pulpit. There is a wide diversity of backgrounds among the ministers in the federated churches. On the other hand, the training of the Theological College in Hamilton has resulted in a marked homogeneity with respect to the ministers in our federation.

We would need to work out an established protocol for the training at the two institutions. Hopefully we could come to some agreement with regard to admission requirements and standards of training. In this regard I would propose that the faculty be mandated to share a one to two day meeting with the faculty at Mid America Reformed Seminary. And, as Prof. J. Kamphuis has suggested with regard to the contacts with the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* in Holland, we also might consider contact at the level of the Board of Governors as well.⁸

We would also need to work out a protocol for dealing with the supervision of the preaching, and issues and questions arising out of the preaching. Ministers who preach in congregations of the other uniting party should be prepared to discuss their views openly with the consistories of those churches, and if problems should arise be willing to submit to the decisions of those consistories. In other words, some elements of the subscription form as applying to ministers today should also apply to guest ministers in a uniting federation.

2.1.4 Preaching Heidelberg Catechism

According to Art. 68 of the Church Order of 1920, the Heidelberg Catechism should be preached regularly in the churches "so that as much as possible the explanation shall be annually completed, according to the division of the catechism itself, for that purpose." On this position we really do not need much discussion, as long as the churches practice that to which they have agreed. There is a good deal of variance among the churches on this point, and if they are serious about their adherence to the 1920 Church Order, this practice must be streamlined.

2.2 Long term federation

The other alternative that may be considered is that as churches we simply hold back and wait until the new federation has got on its feet. For all sources and reports, there will not be much of a movement to contact with other churches immediately. Some members are more willing to pursue this course than others, but on the whole, this looks very long term indeed. However, this may be the default course of action which we will need to follow!

2.2.1 Committee contact

If this route is pursued there is no other way but that synod charge the committee for ecclesiastical unity to be the regular contact agency with the uniting churches. In the light of what I have recently written, I would propose that the Committee also be mandated to pursue contact with the External Relations Committee of the Free Reformed Churches. The mandate they have received from the Synod of 1995 indicates a willingness to move to closer contact with the Canadian Reformed churches.⁹ Once again, this varies from place to place.

2.2.2 Setting a schedule

The only way of preventing stagnation in discussions leading to ecclesiastical unity is the adoption of a time schedule or fixed frame of reference with a mutually agreed target date for federational unity. Ideally such a schedule would stay on track. This to my mind is the practical result of the mutually confessed truth of Art. 27, BC that true believers are united in heart and will. If there is a unity of will, this must also be put into practice.¹⁰

Some people have suggested that Article 28 BC obligates the Fellowship churches to join us immediately. Personally I would welcome this, but I do not think this is necessarily the route that must be followed. Considering what happened in 1892, we ought to allow the brothers the opportunity to organize themselves and get on their feet. On the other hand, the *Doleantie* churches in 1886 did not want to form a new "denomination." And I fear that this is the direction in which the Fellowship churches are heading. They have not explicitly stated that they want to form a new federation. I have even heard (and read) voices that are skeptical regarding that approach. Yet this is what appears to be happening, and the forces of what I would call an unhealthy conservatism are pushing the churches in that direction. On the other hand, there are voices pushing in the direction of a loose umbrella of various churches

banding together, each group having their own distinctives. A conservatism harking back to older CRC forms coupled with a progressivism reaching out to other Reformed and Presbyterians of many colours: this is how I evaluate the present situation in the fellowship churches. In situation like this we need to remind each other of the obligations of Articles 28 BC.

For who among us can be pleased with the formation of yet another body of Reformed churches on this continent? This to me represents unnecessary splintering in the Reformed camp. In 1886 the brothers of the *Doleantie* formed a "provisional" federation. Right now we have a uniquely similar situation, for there is something distinctly provisional in the present situation. But our churches should be urging the Fellowship churches that this *provisional* situation be maintained and that it become immediately a vehicle for pursuing full federative unity.

¹I. De Wolff, *De plaats van het kerkverband in Schrift en historie*, (Enschede: J. Boersema, 1952), 10-23

²There should ideally be some reference to historical development as well. God gathers His church in history. Hence we should be willing to adopt a statement asserting that just as the legitimacy of the reformation of 1944 was required according to Scripture and confession, so we recognize the secessions of 1991 and following as required. I think we would say the same for the OCRC secessions, and we would want to include them in our discussions. With regard to the Free Reformed, we should be able to agree that a different history since 1892 should not form a stumbling block on the road to unity today.

³See G. Van Popta, "Admission of Guests to the Lord's Table" Vol. 42, #20 (October 3, 1993) and C. Van Dam, "Fencing the Lord's Table" Vol. 41, #9 (May 8, 1992).

⁴F.L. Rutgers, *Kerkelijke Advies* Vol. 2, 159-166

⁵*Position Paper: Supervision of the Lord's Table*. The statement says: "In this connection, our problem with legislating the use of "travel attestations" is that it seems to tend toward a cold and formal handling of affairs," 14.

⁶It is noteworthy that Rutgers does not mention the Westminster Standards in this context, cf. 162

⁷J. Kamphuis, "Om de rechte gemeenschapsoefening" *De Reformatie*, Vol. 40, #38 (April 13, 1963), 215. At the time Rev G. Visee defended the proposition that the local church is more than the church federation, c.f. 215. Visee took the church federation as strictly an organizational tool. Kamphuis argues that it is more than an organizational connection. The church federation is a bond of fellowship, an expression of the communion of saints. If the bond of the communion of saints is ignored, we are left with local arbitrariness, and that is a yoke as ruthless as that of hierarchy.

⁸J. Kamphuis "Van 'enigheid' tot eenheid" *Nader bekeken*, January 1996, 10

⁹See my article "Signs of Hope" *Clarion* Vol. 45, #7, April 5, 1996), 146-147

¹⁰Note that this also marks the disposition of the leaders of the *Doleantie* movement. Despite their views they persisted in the desire to form a unity in according with the line of Art. 27 and 28 B.C.



The 1996 General Assembly of the OPC

The 63rd General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) met June 6 to 13 at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pa. What follows are selected items of special interest to readers of *Clarion*. The information comes from an unofficial report of the Assembly prepared by Dr. Terry M. Gray who was a ruling elder commissioner to the General Assembly.

Report of the statistician

One of the very first reports presented was from Mr. Luke Brown, Statistician of the OPC.

The number of local churches grew from 181 to 189 with 11 new churches coming from mission works being organized. The number of home mission works grew from 35 to 36 with 11 of these being new works. The total number of works now is now 225. The total membership of the OPC is 21,131 (355 ministers, 14,355 communicant members and 6,421 non-communicant members) which represents an increase of 4.9 %.

Report on missions

The Committee on Foreign Mission presented a report which clearly showed the diverse and widespread nature of the work of foreign mission that the OPC is involved in. Mr. Mark Bube, General Secretary of this committee

reported on the work of Sam Folta in China, the medical work in Kenya (which is in desperate need of a medical doctor – by the end of the Assembly it appeared that someone had stepped forward to meet this need), and the work of Tony Curto in Uganda. He reported on the following additional needs for labourers: a third evangelist in Eritrea, a Bible school instructor in Muruu, Kenya, a second evangelist in Mbale, Uganda, and a second evangelist in the Middle East. Missionary to Eritrea, Charles Telfer, reported on his work. He issued a

Macedonian call to the Assembly speaking of the great need for workers. Hailu Mekonnen, missionary to Ethiopia, told of God's answer to prayer in his recent success kidney transplant; he also spoke of his translation work and plans to return to Ethiopia. Victor Atallah, working out of Cyprus with Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF), spoke about the state of church in the Middle East and the training ministry of MERF.

The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension also presented its report. Rev. John Hilbelink reported that

10 new mission works, receiving financial assistance from the committee had begun during 1995 (Boise, Idaho; Cumming, Georgia, Eureka, California, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Gwynedd, Pennsylvania; Indiana, Pennsylvania; Ionia, Michigan; New Lenox, Illinois, Mansfield, Ohio; Oak Harbor, Washington. He also mentioned the work of several regional home missionaries.

In order to finance its mission efforts the General Assembly approved a budget of \$1,760,000. This represents all aspects of its worldwide outreach (including the production of educational materials and the church's official publication, *New Horizons*) and works out to \$120 per member. The 1997 budget was an increase of 6 % over the previous year's budget.

The OPC is also now on the World Wide Web (<http://www.opc.org>).

Relations with the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) suspended

In light of the CRC's 1995 Synod decision to allow classis (and consistories) to open the office of elder, minister and evangelist to women, the General Assembly voted to suspend the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CRC. The General Assembly also decided that

unless the 1997 regular General Assembly determines that interven-

ing actions of the Synod of the CRC warrant a reversal of this action or a continuation of the period of suspension, the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CRC shall be terminated with the close of that assembly.

This is a historic decision. As United Reformed News Service noted

The OPC has had close relations with the CRC since its founding and has had relations with the CRC longer than any other North American denomination. Only the CRC's mother church, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN), and a few of the GKN's other daughter denominations have continuously maintained ties with the CRC longer than the OPC has maintained fraternal relations with the CRC.

The OPC decision follows similar decisions last year by the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken (sister churches of the Free Reformed Churches in North America) and the Reformed Churches in New Zealand. Since the OPC's relation to the CRC has been an issue between the OPC and us, we welcome this decision.

Gray appeal

Dr. Terry M. Gray, a ruling elder from Grand Rapids, Michigan, had been charged with

"stating that Adam had primate ancestors, contrary to the Word of God (Genesis 2:7, 1:26, 27) and the doctrinal standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (Westminster Confession of Faith IV.2, Westminster Larger Catechism 17)" and had been found guilty in a trial held at the Session of Harvest OPC in Grand Rapids. An appeal to the Presbytery the Midwest had been denied.

The General Assembly also denied his appeal thus quite properly denying liberty to speculate about pre-human ancestry for Adam.

Synod 1996 of the Christian Reformed Church

From June 12-23 the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) met at Grand Rapids and debated and decided on a wide variety of subjects. What follows is a selection of their decisions. Quotations are from official news releases made available on the Internet unless otherwise indicated.

CRC and GKN

Last year Rev. Richard Vissinga, fraternal delegate of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) and chairman of the synod of these churches, had told delegates of the synod of the CRC that in the GKN they held that "where believers are true to each other in love, and are committed to the edification of Christ's church, the apostle's words become true that in Christ there is neither male nor female, slave nor freeman, Jew nor Greek – and, I might add, neither hetero nor homo." In spite of the protest that followed the CRC synod last year decided not to sever the relationship with the GKN.

Also this year, Synod did not sever the relationship, but further restricted it. The process of restricting the relationship started in 1983 when pulpit and table fellowship with the GKN was suspended. This year

Synod decided to discontinue exchanging fraternal delegates at major assemblies and not to initiate new joint ministries. At the same time, synod voted to intensify communication with the GKN on issues of concern and to continue to promote basic Christian unity.

What sort of basic Christian unity is to be promoted is not clear, but unfortunately the trend has been to go ever further from the clear demands of Scripture, in the GKN and also a little later in the CRC. It is clear that there is not a strong will to break ties with GKN but only a realization that in order to blunt the vehement criticism from within the CRC against the GKN connection something had to be done.

Nederhood bids farewell

After thirty-five years with the Back To God Hour, Rev. Joel Nederhood said farewell.

Delegates gave Nederhood a standing ovation after an emotional farewell in which he expressed his thanks for being a part of the CRC's broadcast ministry. He said, "It's been a marvellous thing to experience the wonder of God's word and to present it over the airwaves."

Also those outside the CRC share in the gratitude for the work Nederhood was allowed to do for the glory of God. The labours of this preacher have been a great blessing to many.

Women can continue to be ordained

Synod did not accede to 24 overtures challenging last year's decision to give classes the right to allow churches in their region to ordain women as ministers, evangelists, and elders. Synod also reaffirmed the right of any local church to ordain women elders if they choose.

For the first time, Synod was presented with women candidates for ministry in the CRC. Dr. James De Jong, President of Calvin Theological Seminary introduced the twenty-three candidates (including the three women) and called it a "historic moment."

The matter of women's ordination is far from settled in the CRC and conservatives who remain are more and more restless. An issue like this underlines the different approaches to interpreting Scripture that divide the CRC.

Choice of classis?

Although Synod did not grant any of the overtures to change the Church Order that would have allowed conservative churches to form their own classes, Synod did decide that

churches may request transfer to another classis on grounds that go beyond geographic proximity and that synod may consider such ground in granting such a request. . . . This makes it possible for a church to affiliate with a classis more congenial to the congregational temperament. Synod rea-

soned that since at least 1922, churches have had the freedom to request a transfer to another classis. The decision yesterday served as a reminder that churches can move to another classis for reasons other than geographic proximity.

Although not all aspects of this decision are clear from the press release, it would appear to this observer that ultimately the final result of this decision may very well not be too far off from what the conservatives originally wanted. Conservatives who wish to stay within the CRC should of course realize that while they may feel more comfortable in a classis more to their liking, they do remain co-responsible with others in the CRC for synodical decisions taken, including those allowing for the ordination of women in office in the CRC. 



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The Council of the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto, in consultation with the Board of Foreign Mission and with the Reverend Henry Versteeg has decided that:

Rev. H. Versteeg will be made available for call on February 1, 1997, with duties to commence on July 1, 1997.

The address for the Reverend H. Versteeg is:

19 Cygnus Drive
Richmond Hill, ON
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* * *

ADDRESS CHANGE:

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Is it Reformed to speak about a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ?”¹

By R. Schouten

If you are asked the question, “Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?” it is possible that you may start to squirm a little in your nice seat on the pew. Maybe somebody has asked you this question – perhaps a friend from Trinity Western University or from some evangelical church.

The question about a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus can make you feel uncomfortable. It may be that such a query makes you feel inadequate. You start to wonder if perhaps you are missing something.

If somebody asked you, “Are you a church member?” or, “Do you belong to God’s covenant,” your positive answer would likely come quickly. Of course you belong to God’s church and of course you are included in God’s covenant of grace. You may even become indignant with such questions and respond by saying: “Don’t you know that? Don’t you see me in church? Don’t you know that I’m baptized? And that I go to Catechism or have made a profession of faith?”

Thus, questions about church membership and covenant status are easier to answer. We don’t feel threatened by them. But what about this “personal relationship” question? What do people actually mean when they ask us whether we have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus?

It’s clear that before we can answer the question whether it is Reformed to speak about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we need to back up and ask a more basic question: *What do you really mean when you speak about a personal relationship to Jesus Christ?*

After all, the term “personal relationship with Christ” is not altogether familiar to many Reformed people. The term as such is not part of our Reformed heritage. You will not find it in the *Catechism* or in the *Belgic Confession* or in the *Canons of Dort*, or, to best of my

knowledge, in any of the Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th centuries. Nor can it be found in the writings of Calvin.

As a matter of history, the term has its origin and predominant usage in American Evangelical religion. For American Evangelicals, the dominating religious concept has not been church or covenant, but personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Thus, simply because of the origin of the term, Reformed people often feel uncomfortable with it, since they know that American Evangelical Christianity is dominated by individualism and by an Arminian concept of salvation. In this type of Christianity, human beings are all too often seen as establishing a relationship with Christ by their own act of “deciding” for Jesus, a decision made by their own “free will.” There is little eye for God’s preceding and regenerating work of sovereign grace in the lives of His elect people.

Given this somewhat dubious origin of the term “personal relationship with Jesus,” there is all the more reason to find out what we mean by it. After all, the term is not self-evident in its orientation. The Bible describes our relationship with Christ as believers in many ways, for example as Teacher/disciples, Head/body, Cornerstone/living stones, Bridegroom/bride, Vine/branches, High Priest/people, Shepherd/sheep – to mention only some. Which of these images, if any, do people have in mind when they speak about a personal relationship with Christ?

Related to Christ through faith

To help us along, I want to point out that the most common way of speaking about our relationship with Christ is the term “**faith**.” Christians are portrayed in the Bible as people who have faith in Christ. They believe in Him. This is the basic, defining charac-

teristic of a Christian. Christians believe in God’s Son and so find forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Thus, the large question emerges: what is meant by faith?

Lord’s Day Seven of the Catechism gives us a wonderful starting point.

True faith, we confess is both a **sure knowledge** and a **firm confidence**. Faith involves knowing God’s promises and personally trusting in them.

We can add, then, that faith is not simply knowing **about** God and His Christ. True Biblical faith is not simply intellectual agreement with the facts of the Bible. It does not simply mean that you say: I believe the Bible is the true Word of God.

Nor does faith mean simply that you turn to God when the going gets rough – that in the crisis you appeal to Him for help and strength – as a kind of heavenly Emergency Center.

No, Biblical faith is something more. Faith means confidence and trust in Christ. It means **renouncing** yourself and **relying** upon Christ.

As a believer in Christ Jesus, you no longer put your trust in your own performance (works, achievements), but now you put your trust in the **performance** (works, achievements) of Christ Jesus. Faith then means a transfer of trust – away from self, away from all idols to Christ and His work in your place. Believing in Christ means **accepting** in your heart that He is the Answer for all your sin and guilt.

Article 22 of the *Belgic Confession* beautifully describes the character of true faith. We read: *In order that we might obtain knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts a true faith. This faith embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, makes him our own, and does not seek anything besides Him.* Thus, faith establishes a bond between the believing person and Christ Jesus.

So we may note in passing already now, that faith is a **deeply personal matter**. No one can believe on your behalf. Your church can't believe for you.

Your parents can't nor can your boyfriend or girlfriend. To be saved and enter God's Kingdom, you must personally place the trust and confidence of your heart in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that necessary believing in Christ is something for which God gives you the greatest possible incentives! Each week, His Gospel is proclaimed to you. This is the Gospel of Christ! The promises you hear are earnestly and seriously meant for you. To make the Gospel even more sure for you, God has confirmed the promises of salvation in Christ through baptism. Baptism does not mean: you are surely saved. Rather, it means: the promises of God are most surely meant for you, too!

Now, when the God of all truth, who never lies, declares His promises to you in the preaching, in Bible reading and underlines His Word with your baptism, what ought we do but to believe those promises? What should we do if not accept those promises, and so make the Christ proclaimed to us our own?

United to Christ by faith

We've seen, then, that faith means personal trust and confidence in Christ. The next point which we need to consider is this: **What is the result of faith?** The answer of the Bible to this question is really astonishing. According to Scripture, faith is the instrument through which we are united to Christ. Faith establishes unity between us and Christ. A bond is created between His Person and our person. This sound very much like a "personal relationship with Christ!"

Our Reformed Confessions, so deeply Biblical as they are, give abundant testimony of our unity with Christ through faith. This can be illustrated from just a few examples.

First, we may turn to *Lord's Day Seven of the Catechism*. **Question:** *Are all men, then, saved by Christ just as they perished in Adam.* **Answer:** *No, only those are saved who by a true faith are grafted into Christ and accept all His benefits.*

The word "grafted" points to a unity and oneness with Christ. Just as the branch of an apple tree can be grafted to another stock and made one with the other tree, so believers are made one with Christ.

The same word is found in *Lord's Day 24, Q.A. #64*. **Question:** *Does this teaching not make people careless and wicked?* **Answer:** *No. It is impossible that those grafted into Christ by true faith should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.*

Also *Lord's Day 30* uses the word "graft." Here we read that "through the Holy Spirit, **we are grafted into Christ.**"

Lord's Day 20 uses a different word but conveys the same message. Here we confess about the Holy Spirit that He is given to me **to make me by true faith share in Christ and all His benefits.** Sharing in Christ means becoming one with Him and having communion with Him. Sharing in Christ also means that we participate by faith in all His wealth, that is, in all His righteousness, obedience and holiness. Just as a poor girl marrying a wealthy man shares in all his wealth, so we share by faith in all the works and accomplishments of Christ as Mediator. What is His becomes ours by faith.

The evidence is clear: the Reformed Confessions view faith as the instrument by which we are connected to Christ Jesus and made one with Him. Through faith we have communion with Christ. Again, that sounds to me like a "personal relationship with Christ Jesus!"

Let's turn now to the Scriptures to find the basis for what our Confessions state about union with Christ through faith. The truth is that once you are alerted to this aspect of God's revelation, you start to notice it throughout the Old and New Testaments! Over and over Scripture shows that we are one with Christ by faith, united to Him in His person and united to Him in all His works. I would like to bring forward only the following examples.

First, we can mention a passage which is also quoted in the *Form for Baptism of Infants*, Romans 6:3ff. It reads as follows: *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.*

Many remarks could be made about this passage. For now, I only wish to highlight how the Lord's apostle speaks here about believers as people who are

united to Christ in His death and in His resurrection. It's also beautiful to see how Paul here describes baptism as sign and seal of the promised unity with Christ in His death and resurrection. We are baptized into the Name of Christ. This means: "God the Son promises us that He washes us in His blood from all our sins and unites us with Him in His death and resurrection. Thus we are freed from our sins and accounted righteous before God" (*Form for the Baptism of Infants*).

Being "baptized into Christ Jesus" has been compared to the act of a pedestrian boarding a bus. In a way, that pedestrian merges with the bus. You see the pedestrian embark. Then the bus passes by. You say: "There goes the bus." When you speak of "the bus," you include all the passengers. So, just as the "passengers" are identified with the bus and share in all its travels and destination, so those baptized into Christ share in all His redemptive accomplishments. Baptism shows our unity with Christ in His entire redemptive work. Baptism is the seal to God's promise that He will include us in the redemptive program of Christ. The point is that God is pleased to include believers in the work which the Lord Jesus did. He looks upon us who believe as if we went through it all ourselves! The redemptive history of Christ is our history because God includes us in Christ. This is what we mean by being united to Christ.

The thought of Romans 6 finds a close parallel in Eph. 2:4ff. There Paul writes: *But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. . . .*

Once again, the basic thought is clear. We learn that God unites believers to Christ in all that He did. His Resurrection and Ascension also involve us as people united to their Saviour. We are included in Him as our Substitute and Representative. Thus, God sees us as being "in Christ." (For further reference, I would like to mention Rom. 8:1; 16:7, 11; 2 Cor. 5:17, 21; 1 Cor. 1:9, 30; Phi. 3:9; Col. 2:12, 13; 1 Pet. 5:14)

Summarizing the above material, both from Confessions and Scripture, we can say that when people trust in

Christ as Saviour, putting all their confidence in His performance (works), then God sees such people as one with Christ, joined to Him, included in Him, sharing in all His perfect righteousness and obedience and holiness – acceptable to God in the Beloved (Christ).

This, folks, is a magnificent, liberating concept. It is normal Christian truth, but, perhaps, not often thought about, not often meditated upon. Yet, unity with Christ is the hinge on which our Christian identity turns! If we are not united to Christ by a true, personal faith, then we have no salvation. Then we remain dead in our sins and cannot enter God's Kingdom.

By faith, however, that is, by personal trust in and embracing of Christ, God unites us to the Saviour. All the blessing of the covenant flow from Christ, the Saviour, the Mediator. We cannot have those blessings apart from union with His person – by faith.

What does this have to say for us?

We have to ask ourselves some questions. Hard questions. Searching questions. We have to let others ask us those same questions.

Where is our faith? In what do we put our trust? Have we received Christ as exclusive and completely sufficient Saviour? Do we accept the promises? And, if we have received Christ, do we continue in Him? (cf. Col. 2:6-7)

Most of you have been born and raised as members of God's people. This means that you were born in a position of covenant holiness. God set you aside from the world, made a claim upon you and so made you His own. He addressed you personally in your baptism. But all this will only be for your greater condemnation if you do not make Christ your own – if you do not turn in humility to accept the Lord Jesus Christ. Also to covenant youth goes the call of the Gospel: repent and believe!

We in Christ and Christ in us

We have seen that by true faith, believers are "in Christ." God includes them in Christ and so God accepts them into His presence – on the basis of what Christ has done. We go on to also notice that the Bible and confessions speak of **Christ as dwelling in us. We are in Him** and **He is in us.** These two aspects go together. If we are in Him as our Mediator and High Priest, then He is also in us – by faith.

Young people, this is astonishing mystery: that Christ would dwell among us by sending His Spirit to dwell in our hearts. This is the exciting secret and the hidden power of Christian living. Jesus lives in us by His Spirit – through faith. Between Him and His believers, there is a deep and warm spiritual union. The result is that we feel love and affection for our Saviour.

In fact, in Col. 1:27, the apostle describes and summarizes the mystery of the Gospel with these words: *Christ in you!* He writes: "To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, **which is Christ in you,** the hope of glory.

And, for the Ephesians, Paul prays that "Christ may dwell in your hearts **through faith**" (Eph. 3:17). Yes, the way in which Christ comes to dwell in our hearts is the way of faith! There is no other way! Similar thoughts are expressed in many places of the New Testament (e.g., Rom. 8:9-10).

In summary, when we believe the promises of God, a great miracle happens in our lives. Christ comes into our lives and unites us to Himself through the Spirit.

What is the result of Christ dwelling in and among His people? The answer is: a fruitful and obedient way of life. As the Lord Jesus said in John 15: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

When we sometimes have to hear sad and persistent accounts of godless behaviour among young people of the church, or when we see how they in some cases feel so completely at ease and at home in places of worldly entertainment and so forth, then it may be asked of those young people: do you have true faith? Did you receive Christ? Did you make Him your own by faith?

And if you did, are you continuing in Him? Do you persevere in Him? For the truth is that if you are joined to Christ and if He dwells in you – by faith – then it is impossible for you not to have a changed life, a life of growing obedience.

So, what we need to do is cut through all the layers of excuses and evasions and ask the question: do you believe the promises? Are you resting your life on Christ? And if so, where is the evidence of the power of Christ in your life?

An answer to the question

We come back to our original question: can we, as Reformed people speak about a personal relationship with Christ? I think the answer is by now obvious. We not only can, but God help us if we don't. We must believe in Christ and this faith establishes a relationship of union and fellowship with Christ. This union and fellowship is the motor and the heartbeat of Christian life. It is our union and communion with Christ that allows us to draw near to God the Father.

It goes without saying: God is in charge here! God takes the initiative. It is He who works faith in our hearts by the Spirit. Not our actions, but God's actions are central. And yet, we must act. We must work with the promises and we must embrace them in personal trust and conviction. We must look outside of ourselves in faith to Christ.

When we do this, then covenant life becomes a very great thing for us. Now we're not just going through the motions. No longer are we mere pew-warmers. But now our religion comes alive in personal and congregational unity with God. And that is the greatest fulfillment for a human being.

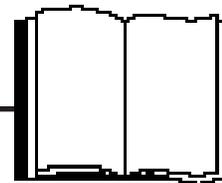
¹This article is the written version of a speech held for a young people's study weekend, May 19th, 1996



RAY OF SUNSHINE

Change of Address for
Marsha Moesker

New Address is: 18955 Sunrise Avenue
Surrey, BC V3S 7M5



Who may address a broader assembly?

By Art Witten

A previous discussion came to mind when reading Rev. E. Kampen's article, "A Question of Admissibility: Who has the right to address the broader assemblies?" (*Clarion* March 8, 1996). Rev. Kampen's position, which he wished to bring into discussion, is that 'broader assemblies are assemblies of the churches and not individuals.' Consequently, he suggests that 'Broader assemblies should only accept submissions from individual members who complain and can prove that they have been wronged. They should declare inadmissible any submission from individuals about issues with which they personally have nothing to do. . . .' (p.106). This position is contrary to that historically held in the Reformed churches.

Most recently the late Rev. J.D. Wielenga (*Clarion* Sept. 11, 1987) defended the view that the right of appeal is given with the responsibility of all the members of the churches to see to it that the churches are governed by the pure Word of God. Prof. K. Deddens (*Clarion* Jan. 20, 1989, p.35) maintains the same position. He wrote: "Now the question is, is an appeal to a broader assembly inadmissible when it comes from someone who is not personally wronged? Not really! If there is injury, injustice, wrong in the church, everybody must have the right to appeal with regard to that evil." Prof. S. Greijdanus (quoted by Dr. Deddens) also highlighted that the freedom of each member must be honoured in the Church. This freedom or right according to the Church Order Article 30, to directly approach a broader assembly in an ecclesiastical manner about matters that pertain to the churches in common has been a proper biblical position held by many for many years. To correct a wrong is an obligation, consistent with 1 Corinthians 12: "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you . . ." We are one body, if one member suffers, all suffer together.

There is ample precedent to suggest that personal submissions, and of course submissions by consistories, dealing with not only an appeal of a decision of a previous General Synod but also submissions dealing with topics that belong to "its Churches in common" should be declared admissible. My own experience (in 1989, 1992) has been that this does not create, due to practical concerns, a "chaos" as Rev. Kampen suggests. On the contrary, issues such as our contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are clarified and elucidated for the delegates by the variety of submissions. The volume of submissions and their quality may differ but help a delegate in his understanding of the issue. Submissions by individual members or a consistory making an overture have certainly not been experienced by everyone as "practically a problem" (as Rev. Kampen suggests) at General Synod or elsewhere. I cannot perceive of any "practical" reasons to declare submissions from individual members inadmissible. The authors, Ds. H. Meulink and Ds. I. de Wolff (*Short Commentary on the Church Order*, 1967, p. 76ff), with reference to Dr. H. Bouwman an expert on Church Order, intimate a position based upon Article 30 that is opposite the conclusion reached by Rev. Kampen. Not only personal appeals but all submissions dealing with matters such as the "Psalms and Hymns," "training for the ministry" and "churches abroad" may be placed on the agenda of a General Synod.

The Church Order, as suggested by Dr. F. L. Rutgers, pronounces principles. Restrictive rules for admissibility limit those principles. The expert on Church Order, during the time of the "Doleantie," stressed that for each of us, being members of a federation of churches brings with it certain obligations. He highlights that God's Word has more authority than all the authority of ecclesiastical assemblies (see

Clarion Jan. 20, 1989, p.33). Each of us should not only read the Acts of General Synod (thankfully we do all get a copy) but also have access to the various Synod Committee Reports. Direct access to broader assemblies, by individuals as well as by consistories in an ecclesiastical manner, presupposes an obligation and general principle which should not be removed. Each of us, not just the assemblies (consistory, classis, regional synod and general synod), has the obligation, by common accord, to maintain good order and decency. The Church Order, which was written for all members of the church, and the broader assemblies of the churches, pertain to all members.

As indicated by Dr. K. Deddens and Rev. G. Van Rongen in *Decently and in Good Order*" (p. 13ff) generally speaking our Church Order is based on the "Spiritual Order" which we are taught in the Scriptures. With an open Bible we need to examine decisions by broader assemblies and maintain general principles. We must not appeal to a broader assembly too rashly or change precedent too easily. Rev. Kampen's further conclusions suggest a need for additional specific regulations and rules:

1. Consistories should be diligent in keeping up to date with developments in the life of the churches, listening to concerns expressed by the members. Decisions are either accepted or defended, or effort should be made to have decisions changed.
2. Every member who feels compelled to say something about decisions of broader assemblies should address his or her consistory. If the member convinces the consistory, then the consistory can put the matter on the table of the broader assemblies.
3. If a consistory refuses to take up one's cause, there is the route of appeal, although it must be proven that one has been wronged by the

consistory's decision not to take up the cause.

These conclusions will raise many practical questions about the need for detailed specific rules and regulations. Some denominations have thick "law books." How do we determine whether a consistory is diligent? Who determines whether someone has been personally wronged? How convinced does a consistory need to be? Why should

the consistory act as a screening house? Why not pass on the submissions of individuals to General Synod without comment? Will an individual's submission dealing with a General Synod Standing Committee report already on the agenda of General Synod only be put on the agenda of a General Synod if one or more consistories agree?

I suggest we simply leave Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order as gen-

eral principles and live with existing precedent which has served us well for many years.

The views expressed in Reader's Forum are not necessarily those of the editorial committee or the publisher. Submissions should not exceed 900 words. Those published may be edited for style or length.

PRESS RELEASE



Synod Kelmscott 1996 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia(2)

Monday 17th June, 1996 – Day Session

Synod completed its deliberations on Bible Translation. In the last and final round of the discussion most of the attention was given to two questions viz., whether at this point of time the New King James Version (NKJV) should already be nominated as the translation for the churches, and whether this Synod already can recognize the New International Version (NIV) as a faithful and reliable translation. Both questions were decided in the affirmative. On the ground that past Synods have judged the NKJV acceptable for use in the churches and endorsed this translation, Synod indeed decided to recommend the NKJV as the translation for use in the churches. Seeing that the trial period of the NIV has finished and that Deputies indicate in their report that the last Canadian Synod has judged the NIV to be a faithful and reliable translation, Synod recognized the NIV as a faithful and reliable translation. At the same time Synod decided to alert the churches to the uncertain future of the NIV since a letter signed by the Executive Director of the NIV Translation Centre (dated 10th May, 1996) states that "it is true that some time after the turn of the century an updated text of the NIV will appear. It will use a balanced approach to inclusive language." It is not clear what the phrase "a balanced approach to 'inclusive language'" means and

what implications this has for the reliability of the upcoming edition.

There was also a request of the church of Armadale asking Synod "to decide to aim for the recommendation of one Bible translation in our Australian churches." To support this request Armadale brought forward a number of reasons:

- a. the physical proximity of congregations, combined with the transience of the members, means that one Bible translation is highly desirable,
- b. using one version builds unity whereas two or more versions can have the effect of dividing the churches.
- c. the use of multiple versions in the churches complicates memory work amongst catechism students,
- d. the same version should be used in both the home and at school.

Synod acceded to Armadale's request by deciding that the Australian churches should indeed aim for one translation

An appeal of the church of Kelmscott that Synod 1994 erred in instructing Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad to gather information regarding the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines (FRCP), was upheld on the basis that this decision was in conflict with Article 30 C.O. and with previous synod decisions. New matters should be prepared by the minor assemblies, i.e. consistories.

A number of churches, however, had written to this synod that contact with the Free Reformed Churches in the

Philippines should be sought. On the basis of these requests synod decided to instruct deputies to continue to gather information regarding FRCP, e.g. received via Acts of Synod of our sister churches or correspondence received, with the aim of seeing whether official contact should be opened with them.

As regards the Evangelical Churches of Singapore (ERCS), Synod decided to discontinue the contacts with the ERCS since there is no improvement in contacts and there does not seem to be a desire from the ERCS to develop the contacts towards possible mutual recognition and relations with each other.

As regards the Reformed Churches of Sumba, Savu, Timor (GGRI) Synod decided to continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules.

It was also decided that deputies should encourage the individual Free Reformed Churches and their members to provide financial support for the completion of the study of Yonson Dethan and possibly for another student. Synod also expressed its thankfulness that a number of the Musafir churches on the Island of Savu/Timor (GGMM) decided to remain reformed in the face of hierarchy. Synod decided to assist the GGMM in their continuing desire to remain reformed, by way of visiting the GGMM as need and opportunity arise. In their last synod GGMM recognized the FRCA as sister churches.

On the matter of Civil registration synod decided to appoint new deputies.

Monday 17th June, 1996 – Evening Session

In the evening Br. J. L. van Burgel received the opportunity to respond to the address on Friday evening by Rev. Fangidae. He stated: "It is with thankfulness we note that your latest Synod could make an affirmation to remain faithful and truthful to God's Holy Word and also to protect and defend our church's Confession in the Three Forms of Unity. That this affirmation could be made after severe attacks on the GGMM by those which moved away from these Confessions and sought to introduce hierarchy into the GGMM, is an indication of God's grace. For with you we can acknowledge that the separation of the nine churches occurred only because God allowed it to happen in order to lead the church into the paths of obedience. Previous deputies had reported the reluctance of some of the GGMM to adopt Reformed practices after the decision of 1992, and the reluctance to act on matters such as women elders and certain hierarchical tendencies. God gave you reformation, he gave you liberation from those who would draw you away from obedient service to the Head of the Church. That you recognized the tyranny of synodical hierarchy when the synod of 1995 tried to change the name of your federation from Gereja Gereja (churches) to Gereja (church) when it was only in 1992 that the Church order of Dordt was adopted in your churches, is evidence of the work of the Spirit who guides and enlightens us through the Word."

As regards the matter of sister relations, Br. van Burgel said: "We are very thankful that your 1996 Synod could accept the Free Reformed Churches as sister churches. You ask us to reciprocate, to also accept the GGMM as sister churches. This request we cannot formally deal with at this synod as it was not placed on our agenda by the churches." More study is necessary to come to a better understanding of each other. Yet "we do want to be a hand and a foot to you, to encourage you to stay close to God's truths." That's why we have decided to: "continue support to your churches by way of visits and Reformed literature. Our support for Yonson will also continue."

In conclusion Br. van Burgel said: "You spoke of carrying a Reformed torch, to keep it burning so before we can from our side accept you as sister churches we must be sure that the Reformed torch which you are carrying, does keep burning and the fire does not go out."

After this address Synod completed its discussion regarding the Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA). Synod 1992 had given the following mandate to deputies: to observe what the next Synod of the RCA will do with the report which their deputies for dialogue with the FRCA will submit, and to report to the next Synod of the FRCA with their recommendations as to whether and how to proceed.

In the considerations leading to this mandate reference is made to the dialogue which resulted in a common report being adopted by both the deputies of the FRCA and RCA. The translation of the official Dutch material and the dialogue about it proved fruitful. The 1992 Synod thanked the deputies for their work done, and considered that their work was finished, for the synod discharged them without issuing the mandate again. The real question in 1992 was what the Synod of the RCA would do; would it support the agreed conclusions, the stand taken by their deputies?" Synod 1994 of the RCA indeed accepted the agreed statement, which said "that their sister relations with GKN (synodical church), seen in the historical light of the doctrinal and church political controversies and the subsequent Liberation of 1944, were unjust and inconsequential and the express cause for lack of unity."

In its decision regarding the RCA, Synod accepted this statement saying that this ends the discussion concerning the events of the fifties and sixties. All the doctrinal and church-political matters leading to the Liberation have been acknowledged. This acknowledgment "allows them to understand our objections against their sister relations with the GKN (synodical church). They acknowledge their neglect of biblical justice and their inconsequential manner in dealing with the important matter of sister relations, and that they placed 'serious obstacles in the way of union with the FRCA.'"

In 1982 the RCA indeed ceased their sister relations with the GKN (synodical church). The question now is does all this "heal the rift?" Deputies wrote in their report, that according to the RCA "unity ought to be possible especially between the RCA and FRCA as churches sharing the Reformed Confessions" and therefore we should "work for a joint proclamation of the gospel of reconciliation in Australia and the world on the basis of Scripture and Confessions." To this end the RCA expressed as its desire to have a "closer and further meaningful dialogue between our churches."

Deputies in their report ask the question: "Seeing that the RCA sees its acceptance of the agreed statement in this light, is there evidence for this to materialize? In the view of your deputies there is no such evidence. On the contrary, the 1994 Synod took the RCA in a direction of being more broadly Christian and less Reformed. This makes your deputies reluctant to accept this agreed statement with a great deal of practical enthusiasm. In our view it is impossible to forget what is happening inside the RCA. If the 1994 Synod of the RCA had given a reformational direction, then their adoption of the agreed conclusions could have led us to recommend further contact. However, as it is, the decisions, for example, about "Word and Spirit," about liturgical practices, about the REC, and about women in office alarm the deputies and give them legitimate concerns about the non-reformatory, even unreformed, and more general, 'Christian' approach taken by the RCA."

It is on this basis that Synod decided: "not to enter official contact (which has sister relations or union as its aim) with the RCA at this time." The following ground was given to support this decision. "The current trends in the RCA, which have been in part imported by their past sister relations with the GKN (synodical), give cause for alarm, and show that they and we travel in a different direction. (The decisions by the RCNZ confirm this). Further contact would thus not be meaningful but frustrating for both parties." Nevertheless deputies also wrote: "Since the RCA has endorsed the agreed conclusions, we should however not just cut off the contacts, especially now that we have achieved a worthy goal. Their decision should rather cause us to pursue the matter at least one step further. To do this the deputies recommend that the 1996 Synod approve a mandate which authorizes deputies to send a letter of appeal to the RCA, its sessions and synod, stating our thankfulness for their decision but also explaining why we cannot fulfil their desire for further meaningful contact. The appeal should deal with current issues and decisions and explain why they alarm us and cause us to say that we are headed in two different directions. Under those circumstances we cannot expect meaningful contact. They must change their direction, desiring to be wholeheartedly reformed in confession and practice. This appeal should be sent to their 1997 Synod and to all their sessions." Synod indeed authorized deputies to be appointed to write such a letter of appeal.

Prior to its adjournment on Monday evening Synod arranged a schedule for pulpit exchange between the ministers of Western Australia and the ministers of Tasmania. It was felt that since as yet no classes have been formed it is still advantageous for the well-being of the bond of churches to have pulpit exchanges particularly for those churches and ministers who reside in comparative geographic isolation.

Tuesday 18th June, 1996 – Day Session

Synod commenced its discussion on two appeals (viz., from the FRC Byford and Bedforddale) and a proposal (from the FRC Rockingham), all dealing with the ICRC. After two rounds of discussion as yet no consensus could be reached.

Synod dealt with the Report for the Training for the Ministry. It decided to again request the churches to contribute \$38 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton. Since the Korean churches are able to support their own Theological Seminary, as deputies for sister churches reported, Synod decided no longer to encourage the churches to collect for the Theological Seminary in Pusan.

Tuesday 18th June, 1996 – Evening Session

Synod dealt with a few minor items, among others, a report of FRC Kelm-scott regarding the Revision of Ecclesiastical Documents. Next, synod commenced a discussion regarding a proposal of the FRC Armadale concerning the Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons. Armadale requested Synod to delete from this Form the words "Do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith" which are found in the charge of the deacons on page 633 of the *Book of Praise*. In the supporting material Armadale states: "Consistency with deacons had several discussions on the validity of this quotation of Galatians 6:10 in the charge to the deacons. After due consideration we decided to make a submission to Synod 1996 to have this sentence deleted from the Form or alternatively have it relocated to the section of Form which addresses the congregation."

One of the grounds for this proposal was that in Galatians 6:10 the apostle Paul addresses the congregation and not in particular the deacons. The content does not allow us to use this text in particular to deacons. It can therefore not be used as a Scriptural basis for this charge to the deacons of Christ's Church.

After two rounds of discussions the matter was referred to a committee.

Wednesday 19th June, 1996 – Day Session

During the morning session Synod spend another lengthy round on the matter of the ICRC. This discussion continued into the afternoon without reaching any decision. After this Synod went into a closed session to discuss the church visit reports.

Wednesday 19th June, 1996 - Evening Session

With respect to the proposal of FRC Armadale concerning the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons, Synod decided to add the following words to the charge to the deacons "Encourage the congregation to . . . do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith." Synod decided not to accept the request of West Albany "to change the roster of convening churches from the present alphabetical mode to a cycle of two synods in the Perth-metro area, then one in Tasmania, followed by two in the Perth-metro area, then one in Albany ad so on." Synod decided not to accede to this request since the Rules of Synod are under revision anyway, whilst there is no problem with deciding where to hold the next Synod, which will be in Tasmania.

Next Synod started a discussion on the interim report of Deputies for Relations with Presbyterian Churches.

Thursday 20th June, 1996 – Day Session

After another lengthy round of discussion, Synod decided to terminate membership in the ICRC. The Ground for this decision was the membership of the FRCA in the ICRC has not promoted harmony and unity in the churches. With a view to this decision, Synod did not deal with the appeals of Byford and Bedforddale, since in fact these two churches requested Synod to terminate membership in the ICRC. Thus there was no need for Synod to deal further with these appeals. Another ground for Synod's decision was also that in light of past history it would be unrealistic to expect new deputies to come forward with an agreed conclusion or recommendation.

Synod concluded its discussion of the report of Deputies for Presbyterian Churches. Since this report was an interim report Synod renewed the mandate given by Synod 1994 and encouraged deputies to fulfil their mandate for the next Synod. Synod also mandated deputies to incorporate in their study

the progress there has been in the synodical reports and decisions by our sister churches.

In closed session Synod concluded the discussion of the Church Visit reports.

Friday 21st June, 1996 – Morning Session

Synod dealt with the report of deputies for ICRC and the request of Albany concerning the organization of a regional conference of the ICRC. Since in a previous decision, Synod terminated membership in the ICRC, no action was required on deputies' report and for the same reason Synod did not accede to the request of the church of Albany.

After some minor alterations Synod also accepted the draft budget and the cost sharing arrangement for the individual churches as proposed by the Synodical Treasurer.

In the question period according to Article 41 CO the delegates of the local churches affirmed that the ministry of the office bearers is being continued and that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured.

In closed session Synod dealt with the appointment of deputies.

Friday 21st June, 1996 – Evening Session

In the closing session on Friday evening, the chairman, Reverend W. Huizinga expressed his gratitude for the brotherly atmosphere that could continue during Synod. Delegates spoke cordially on controversial items without the tension experienced in previous Synods. He thanked his fellow delegates. We have worked hard together, struggled and prayed together. We really became acquainted with each other. That develops a bond between us. A special thank you went to the kitchen staff for the way they daily provided the members of synod with lunches and refreshments.

On behalf of Synod, the vice-chairman, Reverend A. Veldman thanked Reverend W. Huizinga for his capable leadership. He requested the assembly to sing Hymn 46:1,2, after which he led in thanksgiving.

The 19th Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia was closed.

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 RELEASE OF THE JUNE 14, 1996 CLASSIS ONTARIO NORTH

On behalf of the convening Church of Brampton, Rev. B.J. Berends welcomed the brothers, and invited all to sing Psalm 107:1,12, he read Titus 2:11 - 3:15, and asked the Lord for a blessing on the Classis in prayer.

After the delegates from the Church of Toronto (appointed to examine the credentials of delegates to Classis) reported that each of the churches was represented, the Classis was constituted. Rev. C. Bosch was appointed as chairman, Rev. B.J. Berends as clerk and Rev. P. Aasman as vice-chairman. The chairman thanked the Church of Brampton for their preparation for this Classis, and the Church of Burlington East for providing their church building for this Classis. Rev. W. den Hollander had accepted the call extended to him by Toronto. The Church of Orangeville was entrusted to the Lord's care in her upcoming vacancy. It was thankfully observed the Rev. P. Aasman had declined the call extended to him by Calgary. The Church of Burlington West and Fergus had been disappointed when Rev. W.M. Wielenga declined the respective calls extended to him. The Church of Fergus has since extended a call to Candidate R. Eikelboom. Sadness was expressed at the withdrawal of Rev. H.M. Van Essen, minister of the Church of Ancaster, from the Canadian Reformed Church.

The agenda was adopted with some adjustments. The call of Rev. W. den Hollander to the Church of Toronto was approbated by Classis so that Rev. den Hollander may be installed as minister of the Church of Toronto.

Reports were given on church visitations to the Churches of Burlington East, Burlington South, Fergus, Grand Valley and Orangeville. These reports were gratefully received. In accordance with Article 34 of the Church Order, the chairman asked the brothers whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of the church. The Churches of Burlington East and Toronto sought the judgment and help of Classis before proceeding to the second public announcement in the process of Christian discipline. The Church of Or-

angeville requested monthly pulpit supply for the vacancy which begins in July. This was granted.

The Church of Chatsworth proposed that a committee be formed to change the manner in which delegates are selected to major assemblies. Classis decided to do so and appointed brothers H. Faber and C. Lindhout, and Reverends C. Bosch and G. Nederveen to form this committee (with br. L. Jagt as alternate). An appeal from one of the churches was declared inadmissible.

The next Classis was scheduled for September 20, 1996 at 9:00 a.m. with the Church of Burlington East as convening church. The suggested officers for the next Classis were Rev. W. den Hollander as chairman, Rev. C. Bosch as clerk and Rev. B.J. Berends as vice-chairman. Classis appointed Rev. den Hollander as Counsellor for the Church of Orangeville. The Church of Brampton was appointed to arrange for Classis to be represented at Rev. den Hollander's installation as pastor of the Church of Toronto. Question period was held. It was not necessary to apply censure according to Article 44 of the Church Order. The Acts of Classis were adopted. The press release was approved for publication. After inviting all to sing from Psalm 147:4 and 6, Rev. Bosch closed the Classis with a prayer of thanksgiving.

CLASSIS PACIFIC (CONTRACTA) JUNE 4, 1996, CHILLIWACK, B.C.

On behalf of the convening church at Yarrow, Rev. C.J. VanderVelde opened the meeting. He extended a welcome to all present for the purpose of granting Rev. P.K. Meijer release from his office as missionary of the Church at Surrey to take up the call in the Church at Hardenberg-Oost, the Netherlands.

The delegates from Chilliwack found the credentials to be in good order. Delegates were present from Chilliwack, Surrey and Yarrow. Rev. C.J. VanderVelde was appointed chairman and Rev. M.H. VanLuik as clerk. Classis was constituted.

The documents necessary for the release from office were present and found to be in good order. A certificate of release from his services in Classis Pacific was granted to Rev. P.K. Meijer. Copies of the certificate were signed by the officers of Classis. The clerk will send a letter on behalf of the Churches in Classis Pacific at the occasion of the installation of Rev. Meijer.

The acts of Classis were approved. Rev. M.H. VanLuik led in prayer and the chairman closed the meeting.

For Classis:
M.H. VanLuik, clerk.

THE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

**The Twenty-seventh Anniversary Meeting
and the Twenty-second Convocation
of the Theological College**

will be held D.V., on

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1996 AT 8:00 P.M.
in the auditorium of Redeemer College
(Hwy. 53, Ancaster)

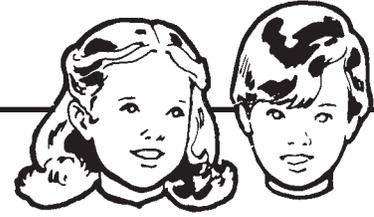
Dr. J. De Jong will give an address on
NEW DIRECTIONS IN MISSIONS

The Master of Divinity Degree will be conferred on
Richard John Eikelboom Theodore Edwin Lodder
Jason Philip Van Vliet

*A collection will be taken for the Theological College
Building Expansion
(tax receipts available)*

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

I hope you are all enjoying your summer holidays. May God be with you in all you do, at home, or on vacation. Enjoy the puzzles!

Quiz Time!

1. This wonderful thing shall be accomplished for all true believers. (Luke 21:27,28)
2. They shall gather together His elect from the four winds. (Matt. 24:31)
3. He will receive His own into this place. (John 14:3)
4. These shall be judged. (Matt. 7:22,23)
5. These shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the clouds. (1 Thess. 4:16,17)
6. These shall pass away with a great noise. (2 Pet. 3:10)
7. These shall rise first from the dead. (1 Thess. 4:16)
8. It will be a much of a surprise to them as to us. (Mark. 13:32)
9. His coming will be like this phenomenon in nature. (Mark 24:27)
10. These books shall be opened. (Rev. 20:12)

(Answers at end)

WHOSE WAS IT?

What is usually linked with, or need to complete, the following?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Aaron's _____ | 7. Mars' _____ |
| 2. Balaam's _____ | 8. The _____ of Solomon |
| 3. Naboth's _____ | 9. The _____ of Babel |
| 4. Noah's _____ | 10. The _____ of the Lord and of Gideon! |
| 5. The _____ of Tarshish | |
| 6. David's _____ | |

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

May all you Busy Beavers who celebrate their birthdays in August have a wonderful day. May God bless the coming year of your life.

| | | | |
|----------------------|----------|--------------------|----|
| Hannah Verhoeff | August 1 | Art Smit | 19 |
| Lydia Kingma | 1 | *Margriet Snip | 17 |
| Melissa Tuininga | 4 | *Rebecca Bethlehem | 18 |
| Laura Dalhuisen | 7 | Devon Van Veen | 22 |
| Danielle Ostermeier | 8 | Laurence Kingma | 22 |
| Ryan Linde | 9 | Christa Agema | 22 |
| Tim Burger | 10 | Arnold Kanis | 26 |
| Tamara VanderBruggen | 15 | Aaron Hordyk | 28 |
| **Amanda Tamminga | 19 | Katrina Meerveld | 31 |

NUMBERS

1. "And God blessed the _____ day and sanctified it."
2. "Now upon the _____ day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the sepulchre."
3. "And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the _____ year, as I was in Susa, the palace."
4. And the Lord called Samuel again the _____ time. And he rose and went to Eli, and said "Here am I."
5. "The _____ book of Moses, called Deuteronomy."
6. "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the _____ day since these things were done."
7. "Men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the _____ is like a son of the gods."

(Answers at end)

NAME THE WOMAN

1. Opening his eyes from a deep sleep he saw the woman who was to be his wife.
2. Twice God sent His angel to this woman to teach her how to raise her child.
3. This woman was told that two nations were in her womb.
4. This Hebrew's wife lived for a time in the palace of the king of Egypt.
5. A king restored to this woman her house and land.
6. Christ praised this poor woman before His disciples.
7. On a sad day Christ brought great joy to the sorrowing heart of this woman.
8. She was his sister, the daughter of his father, but not the daughter of his mother, yet his wife.
9. The perseverance and humility of this pagan woman stood here in good stead.
10. This young mother and her babe had to make their flight at night.

(Answers at end)

Answers to

Whose was It?

7. hill, 8. wisdom, 9. tower, 10. sword
1. rod, 2. donkey, 3. vineyard, 4. ark, 5. ships, 6. harp,

Numbers

7. Fourth
1. Seventh, 2. First, 3. Twentieth, 4. Third, 5. Fifth, 6. Third,

Name the Woman

Matt. 15:21-28, 10. Mary and Jesus - Matt. 2:11-24
7:11-17, 8. Sarah - Gen. 20:2,12, 9. The woman of Canaan - Luke poor widow - MK 12:38-44, 7. The widow of Nain - Luke 12:10-20, 5. The Shunammite - 2 Kings 8:1-6,4:1-37, 6. The Rebekah - Gen. 25:19-23, 4. Abraham's wife, Sarah - Gen. 1. Eve - Gen. 2:21-25, 2. Manoa's wife - Judges 13:3-9, 3.

That's all for this time,

Love to you all, Aunt Betty 