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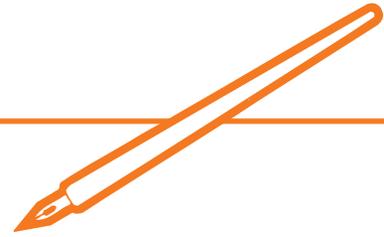


Christian Education in Timor

INSIDE:

- *The Evaluation of Divergences*
- *Good Intentions*
- *Persecution in Indonesia in General*





By Cl. Stam



The Evaluation of Divergences¹

The Doctrine Concerning the Covenant

An ambiguity?

The second point of divergence which our Deputies discussed with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and evaluated in 1986 was the teaching concerning the *covenant*. Our Deputies stated that there is “an ambiguity in the Westminster Standards with respect to the question with whom the covenant of grace [was] made.”

Notice the choice of the word “ambiguity.” An ambiguity is not a heresy. It simply means that the Westminster Standards speak in *two* ways about the covenant, and that this dual manner of phrasing may be unclear or even lead to heresy. It should be noted that we, too, use ambiguities when we try to clearly formulate difficult matters.

I think, e.g., of the way in which we use the Latin terms “*congregatio*” and “*coetus*” to explain different aspects of the church. This confessional distinction is not clear sometimes to our own members, let alone to those outside our churches. It is clear to me, but not to all, and my understanding of it is not shared by everyone in our churches.

There will always be a certain ambiguity in our speaking and writing, because it is not easy to formulate things clearly in such a way that there is no room for any misunderstanding. The Bible tells us that “we all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man. . . .” (James 3:2). This is true of any human formulation, in speaking or writing.

Of course, we must avoid ambiguities and strive for clear and simple formulations.

Of course, we must avoid ambiguities and strive for clear and simple formulations. This is precisely what our Deputies have been discussing with the OPC delegates for many years. It may be clear that the two churches have come to a better understanding of each other’s viewpoint in this matter.

The Deputies of 1986 concluded that “although also in this respect continued discussion is desirable, since weaknesses and imperfections in the Westminster Standards could benefit from a careful emendation, the divergency (should be: divergence, Cl.S.) now discussed was not an impediment to recognizing the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as a true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

With whom is the covenant made?

The issue at stake here is the answer to the question: with whom is the covenant made? The answer to this question can impact on the use of the sacraments and the organizing of the liturgy of the church. It is not merely an unimportant theoretical question.

The Westminster Standards state that the covenant “was made with Christ as the second Adam and in Him with all the elect as His seed.” (*Larger Catechism*, answer 31). The Canadian Reformed churches prefer to say that the covenant is made with “believers and their seed.” In the Westminster construction the covenant and those who are in it become rather nebulous and unclear. Who knows the elect, except God? We come here close to the first divergence about the invisible church. The OPC delegates and our Deputies noticed and mentioned this parallel.

There was no valid reason not to enter into a sister church relation with the OPC because of the divergent doctrine of the covenant.

To bring this down to a simple, practical matter, the OPC would have to say that *Esau* was not in the covenant but *Jacob* was. Hence people like *Esau* could not be covenant breakers. This view seriously undermines the responsibility and position of disobedient covenant children. The OPC does not wish to say that. There are some other concerns here as well. The Westminster view on the covenant leads to undue tolerance for those who want to be called Reformed but yet reject infant baptism. It also has a bearing on the question who shall be admitted to the Lord’s Supper celebration.

The OPC is well aware of the importance of the matter. They answered our Deputies as follows, “Together with you we would seek to avoid the misappropriation of the doctrine of election by proper attention to the doctrine to the covenant of grace which is *made with believers and their seed*” (Italics mine, Cl.S.). It is a positive response with which we can work.

Essential agreement

In essence, then, when it comes to the point of doctrine, we have much common ground on the question: with whom is the covenant made? Children of believers are seen as covenant children with all the incumbent privileges and obligations. There was no valid reason not to enter into a

sister church relation with the OPC because of the divergent doctrine of the covenant.

The OPC Delegates remarked that “there is no doctrine of the covenant in the Three Forms of Unity, *except by implication.*” I think that this is partly true. Our understanding of the doctrine of the covenant was shaped and sharpened by the conflicts about baptism and other things in 1939-1944, the time of the *Vrijmaking* (Liberation). The OPC never had this struggle. Remember that we then pleaded for tolerance, not any binding beyond our confession. *We should show the same graciousness in 2003 to others as we have asked for ourselves in 1939.*

It is also true, however, that our confessions do give a clear answer to the question who belongs in the covenant. I think of answer 74 in the Heidelberg Catechism: infants as well as adult belong to God’s covenant and congregation. Notice the parallel usage here of the terms “covenant” and “congregation.” The congregation of believers and their children is the covenant people of the LORD. This understanding impacts greatly on how we preach and how we address the congregation. I think we need to discuss this with the OPC on an ongoing basis. Also the *Free Reformed Churches of North America* could benefit from such a discussion. In preaching and sacraments is where the rubber hits the road.

We’ll have to work with the ambiguity which our Deputies noticed. In this respect our Deputies even wrote about “careful emendation” of the Westminster Standards. Imagine how we would react if the OPC said the same to us. Yet the matter is of such importance that “careful emendation” must be pursued.

Our Deputies and major assemblies did not gloss over the divergences. The agenda for the future has been set. It will not be an easy road, but we owe it to the Lord and one another to travel together as we ponder these weighty matters. We will have to walk *humbly* with our God (Mic 6:8).

†This is a continuation of Rev. Cl. Stam’s editorial in issue 4.

Rev. Cl. Stam is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton, Ontario. clstam@canrc.org

What’s inside?

Rev. Cl. Stam’s editorial continues his evaluation of the divergences between the CanRC and OPC. In this editorial, he evaluates the doctrine concerning the covenant.

We often talk about the persecution of the church. A graduate from our Theological College who is now minister in Indonesia, Rev. Yonson Dethan, writes about the horrible persecution which his people face continually. He also speaks about the comfort and hope which they have in the Lord God. A report is also attached to this by his mother-in-law, sister Ann DeBoer.

The meditation in this issue is by Rev. P. Aasman. We also have our column, *Ray of Sunshine*, along with several press releases.

A reader’s forum and a letter to the editor show that our readers do not always agree with what is written in *Clarion*. We like to keep an open forum. See what you think.

RA



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IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – The Evaluation of Divergences — Cl. Stam	182
Treasures, New and Old — P. Aasman	184
Ray of Sunshine — C. Gelms and E. Nordeman.....	185
Persecution in Indonesia in General — Yonson Dethan.....	186
Christian Education for Reformed Children in Timor — Ann DeBoer	188
Reader’s Forum	190
Press Releases – Combined committees of the CanRC and URC; Classis Pacific; Classis Manitoba and Classis Alberta.....	192
Letters to the Editor	196

By P. Aasman

Good Intentions

“Abba, Father,” He said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

Mark 14:36

Suffering brings out the very best, or the very worst in people, and the difference between the two is razor thin. Many are the people who have good intentions, but who abandon them when they are obliged to suffer for them. We easily abandon what is right when the pain of doing it becomes too great for us.

Cain intended to worship God, for he offered a sacrifice to Him. But when worship toward God demanded of him a certain price, he gave up his good intention. God demanded of Cain to give up his pride and to humble himself before his majesty. The price was too high for Cain. Judas, too, had very good intentions as a disciple of Jesus. He had so distinguished himself that the disciples appointed him their treasurer. Yet when he realized with a sinking feeling that Jesus would not bring about political glory for the Jews, and instead that He was leading them on a path of suffering, he rejected it. His good intentions perished when he realized he would have to suffer to fulfil them.

But no person can escape suffering. Philosophers come back to it again and again as the fundamental principle of human life. The historians discover it again and again as the central lesson of history. Technology forever pursues the elusive dream of alleviating suffering, and succeeds only in transforming and deepening it.

To be human is to suffer. The question is: How will you face it? Will it bring out the worst in you, or the best?

Jesus Christ fully participated in the human condition, so He also suffered. But how did He suffer? We are fond of the image Isaiah uses of the suffering Messiah: “He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.” Indeed, Jesus passively

yielded to his arrest and was silent before his accusers. But we should not get from this the idea that Jesus suffered in quiet serenity. He did not look upon his suffering as a Stoic, insensitive to the rejection of the people and immune to the pain of crucifixion. Nor was He like the Buddha who sought to transcend suffering by withdrawing into himself to become oblivious to the pain of the outer world.

His solution to the problem of pain was not to escape into himself nor to dull the pain, but to endure it fully. One of the writers in the early church named Ambrose wrote, “He would not have taken so much for me if He had not taken upon Him my *feelings*. The praise of fortitude is not for those whose wounds are dull but for those whose wounds have pain.” Christ’s wounds had pain. That is why He asked the Father to take the cup from Him. There would be no avoiding the agony of crucifixion itself. That suffering would multiply when the people whom Jesus had loved so deeply would reject Him and demand He be crucified. He would not protect Himself from the agony of rejection. He would not dull the pain of rejection by hating them back. Nor would He lessen the pain of suffering the wrath and abandonment of his Father by hating the Father back.

His wounds had pain. That is why He prayed, “Take this cup from me.” But He did not permit suffering to corrupt his good intentions. He had come into the world to save God’s people. So He adds, “Yet not what I will, but what you will.” And then He did the Father’s will.

And so can you. You have good intentions. Do not disappoint them. Christ held fast to his good purpose

despite his suffering and as a result, He won glory, power and dominion. He will give you power to live up to your good intentions too, so that when you suffer, it will only bring out the best in you.



Rev. P. Aasman is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in Grand Valley, Ontario. paasman@canrc.org



Examined by Classis Niagara of March 19, 2003 and declared eligible for call:

Candidate E. Dethan



Called by the church at Smithville, Ontario for mission work in Indonesia:

Candidate E. Dethan



Called by the Free Reformed church of Rockingham, Western Australia for mission work in Indonesia:

Candidate E. Dethan



Please note that the phone number for Rev. W.B. Slomp was incorrect in the Yearbook, it should be:

(780) 486-2721

more Church News on page 198.



By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

“Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the LORD your God.” Leviticus 26:1

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.” When we read this second commandment, we may wonder what is really the difference between this commandment and the first. In the first we are taught *who* we are to serve, namely the one and only God. In the second commandment we are instructed *how* we must serve the LORD our God.

This commandment contains both a warning and a promise. The manner in which we serve the LORD is so important that it either leads to a blessing or a curse.

How then must we serve the LORD? Let us go to God’s Word in Deuteronomy 4:15-19. The warning is given; “You saw no form of any kind the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape.” God wants to be worshipped through our hearts by faith and not by any mere image in whatever form. We are commanded to serve God wholeheartedly. We may not make a visible image of God in any way, or to serve God through them.

Deuteronomy 4:23,24 teaches us; “be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that He made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” Time and again we have seen how the Israelites had gone astray from worshipping Him alone, and worshipped through images or other means; and God became very angry and jealous. Already at Mount Sinai, they made a golden calf, and later Jeroboam made golden calves at Dan and Bethel (1 Kgs 12:28-30).

We too must be careful that we do not worship God in a selfish manner, and that we do not form wrong mental images of God. We must be very careful that our human imagination does not rule over God’s holy revelation. For He remains the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, incomparable, and exalted above every creature.

God has blessed us by giving us the covenant. He makes himself known through this covenant. Through the working of the Holy Spirit we may confess Him truly

with our lips. Through this we may grow in knowledge and in serving Him in no other manner than commanded in his Word.

He wants his people to be taught; not by dumb images – but by the living preaching of his Word. Remember also our ministers in prayer that the true preaching of God’s Word may continue to grow. For the manner in which we serve the Lord is indeed of great consequence for our children and grand children.

Let us continue to be diligent and faithful, showing our thankfulness to Him alone. For the Lord has also promised to show his love to thousands of those who love Him and keep his commandments. Continue to pray for the Holy Spirit to work mightily in our hearts, so that we may live in accordance with God’s Word, and also show fruits of faith. Then this too, will receive God’s blessing!

*You shall not serve a graven image:
A jealous God am I, the Lord,
Who punish evildoers’ offspring
But cherish those who heed My Word.*

Hymn 7:3

Birthdays in May:

4: DEBBIE VEENSTRA will be 29

RR 1, Sherkston, ON L0S 1R0

10: ROB DE HAAN will turn 38

Anchor Home

361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

30: BERNIE DE VOS will be 28

40 Kerman Avenue, Grimsby, ON L3M 3W5

Congratulations to you on this your special day. May our heavenly Father continue to surround you with his love and care in this new year. Have an enjoyable day! Till next month,

Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman
548 Kemp Road East
RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
905-563-0380

P.S. Last month Marinus Foekens celebrated his birthday. As of recent he has been diagnosed with cancer. Marinus really enjoys receiving cards, and maybe he can be remembered through this way, and also in prayer.

Persecution in Indonesia in General

By Yonson Dethan

Many of you may have heard about the persecution of Christians in Indonesia. First of all, before I tell you about the persecution in my country Indonesia, I should let you know that Indonesia is quite a large country and it has the fourth largest population in the world. We have about 120,000,000 people living in Indonesia, and about ninety percent of the population is Muslim (both moderate and radical Muslim).

Indonesia is an archipelago (it has lots of islands). It has more than 1,500 islands and more than 600 languages/dialects. This easily opens the way for war, which includes persecution.

There are lots of kinds of persecutions that happened in Indonesia, but I would like to focus just on the places that have had the most persecution, including my home province in Indonesia. Those places are in Java, Ambon, Selebes and Timor (East and West). I hope to give the solution to face this lesson of faith and its conclusion based on God's Word.

Java

Java is one of the five biggest islands in Indonesia beside Sumatera, Kalimantan, Selebes and Irian/Papua. This is the island where we have our capital city of Indonesia (Jakarta). Here we have all kinds of Muslims both radical and moderate. We do have some Christians there but only as a minority. Thus it is easy for them to be persecuted there. Many churches there have been bombed and destroyed by the radical Muslims. It is interesting that after the bomb in Bali last October 2002, many of those that were being caught were also found as the ones who bombed the churches in Java and on the other islands. While I write this, I learned in the latest newspaper that the policemen caught these people. Also, I heard on a cassette about some radical Muslims who had been trained to be radical leaders and had destroyed some churches. These Muslims suddenly repented and became

Christians. In their speeches they said that they were the ones who bombed this church or that church.

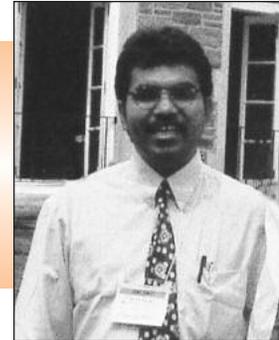
Up until now the churches in Java (both Christian and Catholic) are still being the targets of radical Muslims. In 1992 there were about twelve churches being bombed and from those bombed there were some people in the congregation and ministers who died with their families. However we also heard that after this, a few of them who did it repented and became Christian. They gave witness that they were the ones who went to destroy this or that church.

Tertullian's words "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church" are very true.

Is not that amazing? Sometimes when we hear this, again we remember that Tertullian's words, "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church" are very true.

Selebes and Ambon/Maluku

I would also like to let you know about persecutions that happened in Poso, Selebes and Ambon where there were lots of Christians who died and churches that were destroyed. The Christians in Poso Selebes suffered as much as those in Ambon. Up until now we still have some refugees from Ambon. Some of them are still coming to our churches very faithfully but still are refugees. They have been coming to us since the year 2001. We are trying to help them materially but also spiritually. When we see this we remember what happened to the people of Israel in the Bible times, when they had to go out from the Promised Land to go to a strange land and live there as refugees. If you go on the Internet to the Ambon and Poso persecution then you can see and read there how terrible the persecution was. We have some information in the newspaper here too but seeing it



on the Internet was quite something; people were being slaughtered, pregnant women were being cut and also a baby in front of the husband was burned up by fire, etc.

When the brothers and sisters from Ambon arrived in West Timor, we asked them to come to church and we let them speak in front of the congregation. They told us about how they were being persecuted. All their churches were bombed and burned up. Whoever was found in their houses, they would kill or rape. Some of them were being raped in front of their husbands or parents. Some of them were scared and climbed up to the ceiling to hide themselves, but then forgot about their wives and children and just saw from above how their family was killed. The students in the university were being persecuted. The persecutors even tried to kill them. These brothers and sisters also told us about how their families were hanged and were burned up and they just saw it happen from far away.

Many of these people ran away to the forest to hide themselves in order to save their lives. We heard from the brothers and sisters from Saparua/Ambon that when they ran out, there were some enemies trying to help them and told them to go to a big factory. Thus there were about 250 people who went there but it was a trap. When they went in some of the men were asked to go out one by one, being told that somebody outside needed them. When they went

out they never came back. Some of them hid themselves in the ceiling and were able to get out. The others could not. When there were not many captured men left in the factory the enemies came in and raped the girls and women in front of their husbands or parents and then killed them off after that.

Some of the Ambon refugees in Timor could not go home any more because their land was not theirs anymore. The government tried to make peace but it is always hard for the Christians over there to live in their homeland.

We heard before that Ambon was a Christian province. Thus we from Timor were surprised when we heard about this. Finally we got an answer from our brothers and sister from Ambon that, yes, Ambon was a very strong Christian island but the numbers are decreasing. Slowly the Muslims came from Java and Selebes for trading. This is a strategy. Once they see in a Christian district that it is twenty percent Muslim and eighty percent Christian, they try to get their Muslims' friends, brothers and sisters to come to that specific district in order to make an equal population, thus fifty/fifty or at least forty percent Muslim and sixty percent Christians. Once they know it is at this level then they make a war or what they called "Jihad" or holy war!

The brothers and sisters from Ambon told us that they already tried to go back to their homeland, but they could not stay there any more because their houses had already burned up and the land was not theirs anymore. Or if their house was still there they could not stay there anymore because it was not safe. When they left their homeland, the enemies came and picked up all their goods and took them away.

Let me continue to my homeland.

Persecution in East Timor

In Timor we have not had such bad experiences like ours brothers and sisters in Ambon. However we have had some trouble in East Timor. In East Timor we heard that the Muslims were not persecuting the Christians but instead the Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholics did this to the Christians because they thought they were the majority thus they wanted to dominate everything there. They did not like the Christians growing there in East Timor. Thus the Christians in East Timor suffered persecution before the big war. However the persecution there was not as bad as in Ambon, Selebes or in Java.

Persecution in West Timor

By the government

I should let you know that we in West Timor suffer different persecutions, specifically us, the Reformed churches. Since 1995 our government did not recognize our churches (GGRC) as legal churches and that goes up until now. It is so interesting that in our province we can say it is a Christian province, for Christians are the majority, but our churches are still having difficulty from this Christian government. You would probably think that as a Christian province, things like this should not happen. But that is what we are experiencing. We have been trying to ask our government here to register our church federation but they do not seem to give in.

By religion

Radical Muslims were not able to do bad things in our province here. Why? Because they are not the majority here. There are only about twenty percent of them. The rest of the population in West Timor is Christian, Roman Catholic or others. Thus if the Muslims do something bad they will probably have a hard time here in West Timor.

Persecution brings double blessings for Christians.

By the state church

This church still thinks that it is the biggest and the majority. Thus it has to organize everything. We always have a hard time and have lots of problems if we want to build or establish a church or a school. But for their federation it is not too hard. Why did this happen? Because they have some access to the government. All the positions in government are in their hands. The head of the village, head of the district, head of the religion and head of the province is in the hands of this state church. Thus it is not easy for us to deal with the government for our churches.

By other churches

Our church was also having some problem with other churches here in Timor. After the split in our federation in 1995, the other part of our federation was still trying to get all our assets, saying these belonged to them. They used intimidation; they beat us up and even tried to kill us. Some of our ministers were being beaten up and had to go to the hospital. One of them lost two of his teeth. Up until now these people

are still trying to give us some problems and still try to fight with us and persecute us physically.

Solution: facing it in the Lord

After seeing, hearing and experiencing the persecution we conclude that there is only one way to face the problem of persecution. This is by faith, by prayers (Eph 6:17-18), by singing praise to God (Phil 3:26); and by hope in the Lord based on God's Word such as in 2 Timothy 3:15, Philippians 1:29, Romans 8:28 and Revelation 1-3. Of course I would like to hear from you all here how to face it too but this is what we can think of and we use it in order to face this lesson of faith.

Conclusion

Persecution does not happen by chance (Rom 8:28). We believe that nothing happens by chance including this persecution. God is the one who controls and rules over all and has the power over everything as the Alpha and Omega God. Thus we know that this was allowed by the Lord with a specific purpose for us, as Roman 8:28 says: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his purpose" (NIV).

Persecution brings double blessings for Christians. We believe that through this persecution comes blessings from the Lord, even double blessings. This reminds us of the Word of God in Philippians 1:29, that we are granted not only to believe but also to suffer. "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him" (NIV).

Also we remember the word of God in 2 Timothy 3:12 where it says: "In fact every one who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse deceiving and being deceived" (NIV).

Thus persecution is:

For testing our faith (Phil 1:29).

For purification (Rev 2).

For building us up.

For the glorification of God's name (Rom 11:36).

"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."

Romans 11:36 (NIV). 

Rev. Yonson Dethan is minister of the Calvinist Reformed Church in Kupang, West Timor, Indonesia.

Christian Education for Reformed Children in Timor

By A. DeBoer

The GGRC and efforts to establish a school

First a bit of history about the church. The GGRC (The Calvinist Reformed Churches) is a federation of churches which was not too long ago called the GGRM (The Pilgrim Reformed Churches). It is a sister church of the GGRI (the Reformed Churches of Indonesia) and the Liberated churches of Holland, and also has contact relation with the Free Reformed churches of Australia. Rev. Yonson Dethan graduated and received his Master of Divinity at the Theological College of Hamilton on September 6, 1997 and is now minister of the GGRC in Kupang, West Timor, Indonesia. (For his ordination, etc. see *Clarion* Volume 47, No. 21).

Send us some wood and we will make them into arrows.

The report tells us that ever since the church federation had been established in 1950, their children had to go to public, Roman Catholic or even Muslim schools. The funds were not there but a desire to educate their children on the basis of the Scriptures and Reformed Confessions grew. With much prayer for wisdom and the help of many people in Canada they were able to first start a kindergarten in one of their church buildings, namely in Tarus. Then in 2001 they started collecting funds from their own members. They worked very hard cooking and selling meals as well as selling calendars and book dividers with the name of their school on them. They also organized a sale of items made from traditional cloth, such as ties (which the ladies sewed themselves), Bible covers,



*Unveiling the school sign.
To the left of the sign – head of the region;
to the right of the sign – head of the M.P.s in the province.*

purses, etc. These items were brought to Canada by Mrs. Mary-Lynn Dethan and sold there. This created much awareness about the school building project and as a result, many donations were received from people in Canada, from both east and west. The construction of a Junior High School could begin.

Open house of the junior high school

On July 10, 2002, the Head of Kupang Region, Mr. I. A. Medah opened the new school building. It was very encouraging to see him as well as some other local members of parliament of Kupang in their midst, even though the government does not support the school financially. The opening program was well attended by approximately 200 people from the GGRC churches in Kupang, Bolok, etc., from some neighboring Protestant churches, and a few reporters. Rev. Petrus Loka (from the GGRC church in Bolok) led the people in singing and prayer to the Triune God and read Proverbs 12:1-3. In his ser-

mon, Rev. Loka said that if we hold on to God's teachings then we and our children will be strong in our daily lives. This new school should be based on the Bible and the Reformed confessions. Only then may we hope for our children to grow in love and obedience to our God. He concluded: "We hope that the young generation of the church can be prepared for the future of the church, the family, and the nation." Rev. Loka then ended with prayer.

After the sermon by Rev. Loka, Rev. Dethan welcomed all in attendance. He started his speech by giving thanks to the Triune God for his love and his care in making this event possible. Without his will this school cannot exist and our plans would be in vain. He went on to explain that in 1999 with the permission of the government they formed an organization called Yayasan Rindu Sejahtera (YRS). Through this foundation they could start many kinds of activities in order to help people grow both spiritually and economically. One of these activities was to build a school.

This plan came about from their study of the Scriptures on Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and various other texts in the Bible, plus learning experience from the Reformed Churches in Australia, Holland and Canada. Rev. Dethan expressed the hope that besides this junior high school, if the Lord wills and the government allows it, they will also establish some other schools such as a high school and an elementary school. Proverbs 22:6: "Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it," and the words of John Calvin: "Send us some wood and we will make them into arrows" now have become the symbol and logo of their school.

May God bless this Reformed education in Timor.

Finally, Rev. Dethan expressed his thanks first of all to God for all his blessings. He thanked all those who gave of their time and energy and the many brothers and sisters in Canada who gave their generous donations for the school. He also thanked the planning committee for all their work for the opening program. Rev. Dethan closed his



Front of school. Church on the right.



Side and back view of school.

speech with these words: "May the Lord our Triune God bless you all."

Mr. Medah, the Head of Kupang Region, also had a speech and congratulated the foundation for taking this big step. He then signed the inscription stone and unveiled the school sign. Everyone had a chance to view the classrooms af-

ter which they all enjoyed coffee and cake and socialized with each other. Then Rev. Madah Biha from GGRI (The Reformed Churches in Indonesia) closed the program with prayer.

SLTP "Plus" Reformasi Noelbaki

Thanks be to God, on July 14, 2002, classes could begin, consisting of forty-eight students in grade 7, coming from both Timor and Rote Islands. They hope to add grade 8 in 2003 and grade 9 in 2004, the Lord willing. The school building consists of two classrooms, one room divided into three small areas (for the principal, counsellor and office), and a bathroom. They have one small typewriter, one stencil machine, three cupboards, study tables and chairs, a few blackboards etc. For now, the children who come from far away are staying with relatives or friends. This is causing some problems, e.g., these people are not all members of our church and the children are not always being looked after very well by their relatives. This problem the Yayasan hopes to solve, D.V., by building a small dormitory for the children that come from far away. Hopefully they can raise enough money to do so.

May God bless this Reformed education in Timor, so that it may prepare the future generation of the church for the upbuilding of the body of Christ. To Him be all glory. Soli Deo Gloria! 

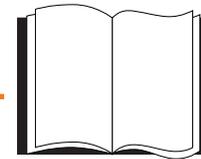


Opening program of the junior high – the guests.



Applying for a building permit. Rev. Y. Dethan and Mary Lynn Dethan on the right.

Ann DeBoer is the mother-in-law of Rev. Yonson Dethan.



Fair, Balanced, and Representative? Please judge for yourself.

By Apko Nap

Since my wife knew that I intended to write what you read below, she handed me one of our Cloverdale liturgy sheets and pointed to the text on the cover:

And let not any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. . . Be kind and compassionate to one another. . .

Keeping that Pauline and spousal corrective in mind, I will follow the good example of the Bereans. In Acts 17:11 we read that the Jews in Berea checked out Paul. They did so in a fair and balanced way. I want to see whether Rev. J. Huijgen used a similar measure when he wrote in *Clarion* about our sister churches in the Netherlands. Do his articles present a fair, balanced, and representative image? Rev. Huijgen summarized his impressions from a recent visit to Holland, as follows:

We suspect the Dutch churches to be relying on the same practices the Christian Reformed Church in North America embraced fifteen or twenty years ago. We noticed a general trend among the Dutch churches which we summarize as a fear. This fear involves being identified as a type of church with exclusive truths. The Reformed character is almost unrecognizable. The Dutch churches are attempting to reinvent themselves in hopes of establishing an identity.

While I read these observations, the one question tumbled over the other.

- . . . **comparison with the CRC**
Which practices is Rev. Huijgen referring to? Did the Dutch churches accept the CRC practices with regard to women in office?
- . . . **fear of being identified as a church with exclusive truths.**
This is a puzzling statement. Since our Dutch sister churches wholeheartedly accept the exclusive truths

of the gospel, Rev. Huijgen must be targeting something else. Are the Dutch churches less exclusivist than Rev. Huijgen wants them to be?

- . . . **the Reformed character is almost unrecognizable.**
Is this an impression or an accusation? Is it not mandatory, especially in the context of such serious charges, to provide ample proof for such a far-reaching statement?
- . . . **hoping to establish an identity.**
Wouldn't it be paramount to consider the potential negative effects of impressions, as presented in these articles, by an official representative of the Canadian Reformed Churches? There are members of our churches who claim repeatedly and with clear transatlantic insight, that "Holland" is on a slippery slope. Now, based on Rev. Huijgen's observations, these members will conclude that "Holland" has approached the bottom of such a slope.

After reading the articles of Rev. Huijgen, I decided to react publicly for the following reasons:

- Many readers of *Clarion* do not have access to Dutch language resources and are therefore unable to form a fair and balanced opinion.
- General acceptance of Rev. Huijgen's evaluations may lead to profound and prolonged distortions in our sister church relationship with the churches in Holland.
- If the situation in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands is as bad as Rev. Huijgen described, should we not extend a brotherly hand to those churches in need?

This article has not been written as an attempt to deny that our sister churches in Holland are grappling with major challenges. Nevertheless, the examples Rev. Huijgen presented to show the poor state of affairs in the Dutch churches, can easily be countered with an equal or greater number of positive samples. Such

an approach, however, fails to provide our readers with the information they need to make up their own minds. In an attempt to offer adequate information, I sent a copy of the articles to three brothers in Holland and asked whether, in their opinion, Rev. Huijgen's findings are fair, balanced, and representative.

One of the brothers is a former chairman of a synod, the second is the editor of a Dutch periodical called *De Reformatie*, and the third was a member of Synod Zuidhorn 2002/2003. This brother wrote weekly synod impressions.

Before we summarize their reactions, I will give the floor to Rev. K. deVries, a grandson of Prof. Dr. K. Schilder. Rev. deVries recently wrote an article entitled "When will we again become positive about the church?" (*De Reformatie*—Jan. 4/03). In a somewhat free translation, we quote part of his observations about the present situation in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands:

Abuse from the right

For some time in the past, criticism from the conservative wing has been forbearing and moderate. As of late, however, the criticism has become sharp and harsh. On a national basis, this criticism has been mobilized in the association *Reformanda*, a group which works behind the scenes under the name 'Information with regard to ecclesiastical developments.' They publish a periodical *Aanvullingen* (= Supplements). In these organizations there is a convergence of all kinds of suspicions concerning almost any development in the Reformed churches. First the churches are victimized. They are accused of deliberately and consciously allowing deviations in issues like: the selection of new hymns, unity talks with other denominations, and discussions about the fourth commandment. Additionally, the integrity of specific people and titled individuals is attacked in the public press.

Professors and ministers are tarred in newspapers and brochures. The synod and specific representatives are occasionally accused of cowardice. If there is criticism about their initiative, they eagerly project themselves as the (only) watchers on the walls of Zion. Though no one called them to this office, they willingly put on Jeremiah's cloak.

Rev. deVries continues to describe some extreme examples of ways in which critical church members express their frustrations. It is evident that *Reformanda* specializes in cataloguing concerns. It becomes clear that *Reformanda* majors in expressing and presenting criticism, but does little in providing contributions for the development of Reformed churches living in the twenty-first century. But, we have to be fair. One could sympathize with *Reformanda*, not with its tactics, when one reads what Rev. deVries writes about:

Abuse from the left

Criticism has also been lodged from the opposite side of the church. Often this criticism has a different tone. Usually it sounds less or not at all aggressive. On the contrary, you hear disappointment, lack of surety, a hunger for something else. These feelings are expressed across the country in a wish for newer forms of preaching and confession (often stated without specifics). They want preaching that appeals to them, congregational and church life in contemporary forms and structures, completely differently structured church services and a subdivision into small groups. The church should be more evangelical and/or charismatic. The church should stop talking about doctrine. Differences between churches are not important. The church should completely abandon its passion to be in control, and abandon its desire to rule over everything, and simply let the Spirit find its way. As we mentioned above, the tone is often soft and searching. But with some, you can find frustration, impatience, bitterness, and a controlled rage because their wishes and ideals have not been recognized by the church. Or they may have been recognized, but not realized. Discussions have become heated, contrasts have become sharper. House visitations and Bible study groups are tense because of the differences in outlook. Activity groups are struck to lead the consistory and minister in another direction. And if all these efforts fail to

yield their expectations, people lose patience. Some leave the church.

No third ghetto

The three Dutch brothers whom I contacted are keenly aware of the present challenges in Holland. The challenges coming from secularization, indifference, and an up-rootedness inherent to post-modernity, are almost overwhelming. They consider these threats more dangerous for the churches than the samples of unreformedness Rev. Huijgen presented.

However, these brothers and many others refuse to ghettoize, because that is not what the church of Jesus Christ is about. They refuse to allow criticisms to preoccupy and drive their agendas, since that restricts the growth of Christ's body. They desire to emphasize contributions which will promote the development of the church in the twenty-first century, because the Scriptures command such an attitude: ". . . the men of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do" (1 Chron 12:32).

They show patience, are firm and flexible, and allow for mistakes, as they realize that growth of the body is a process. All three brothers thought that Rev. Huijgen was too negative, that he presented unsubstantiated generalizations. One of the brothers inquired whether Rev. Huijgen perhaps acquired a pair of *Reformanda* glasses during his short trip to Holland. All three brothers expressed as their opinion that Rev. Huijgen did not do justice to a church situation in which there is far more faithfulness than Rev. Huijgen depicts.

A quick overview

In conclusion I will include a number of brief remarks about the present situation of the Reformed churches in Holland, which may help our readers to make up their own minds:

The Word:

- With great faithfulness, the full gospel of Jesus Christ is preached Sunday after Sunday.
- It should also be mentioned that one of the contacted brothers complained about a lack of depth in quite a number of sermons.
- In open, beneficial articles in *De Reformatie*, those complaints about sermons were frankly discussed.
- Faculty members of the Theological University in Kampen continue to serve a wide audience with their work. For example, a recent publication from Kamphuis, Trimp, Doedens, and DeBruijne about the authority of Scripture is very helpful and stimulating.

Liturgy:

Synod Zuidhorn has provided a Reformed framework for liturgy. With this framework, freedom for liturgical innovation has been returned to the local congregations. Synod Zuidhorn did, for the time being, not accept proposals for another substantial increase in the number of hymns.

Fourth Commandment:

Historically speaking, the Reformed churches have for hundreds of years lived with differing views on the Sabbath/Sunday. Recent Dutch synods have decided to not favour one side over the other. It was decided to stick with the traditional approach of accommodating both views.

Synod Zuidhorn:

The Dutch brother, a delegate to the synod at Zuidhorn, suggested to Rev. Huijgen that he should have attended the synod sessions for a longer period of time. He comments, "If that had happened, Rev. Huijgen would have written differently about his brothers who, in total submission to the Lord and his Word, struggle to have the church sail on his compass."

Lifestyle:

Many faithful families are challenged by the influence of secularization and indifference which continue to make inroads. Just like in Canada, consumerism and materialism often shape lifestyles.

Postmodernity:

Postmodernity has also made deep inroads in Dutch society. The influence of fragmentation, relativism, and up-rootedness can easily be detected, also in the lives of church members.

Schools:

In the wake of a decision to allow parents from the Free Reformed churches to become members of Reformed school societies, the schools are revisiting the relationship between church, home, and school.

Identity:

The gold of old truths must be re-coined for use in the twenty-first century. Some snowed-under parts of our heritage may have to be dug up. This effort of exploration and exposure will lead to the discovery of old and new treasures. All explorers need steady hearts and discerning minds because, at times, claims to bogus treasures are presented. By the grace of God, their search, whether in Holland or in Canada, will lead to the discovery of treasures of great value.

Enough said.





Press Release of the meeting of the combined committees of the Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches to propose a common church order held February 13-14, 2003 at the Trinity United Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI

Present were: Dr. Nelson Kloosterman, Rev. William Pols, Rev. Ronald Scheuers, Rev. Raymond Sikkema and Mr. Harry Van Gorp, representing the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), and Dr. Jack DeJong, Mr. Gerard J. Nordeman, Rev. John Van Woudenberg and Dr. Art Witten of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC).

Dr. Kloosterman opened the meeting with reading Isaiah 12 and prayer. He extended a word of welcome and acquainted the committee members with the beautiful facilities of the Trinity URC. The minutes of the meeting of December 11-12, 2002 were reviewed and adopted with some modifications.

A motion to re-appoint Dr. Kloosterman as chairman, Rev. Sikkema as recorder of the minutes, and Mr. Nordeman to prepare the Press Release for this and subsequent meetings carried. An agenda and timetable for the two days were adopted.

The Common Church Order articles provisionally adopted at the previous meeting were carefully reviewed and refined where necessary. Completed are the articles with the following headings: The Three Offices, Duties of the Minister, The Calling of Ordained Men within the Federation, Bound to a Particular Church, Bound for Life, The Support and Emeritation of the Minister. The article dealing with "Ordained Men without a Congregation Entering the Federation" was for the most part completed, including the requirement of an examination by classis, but still requires a discussion on which assembly would declare such men eligible for call. A final review and appropriate numbering will be done at the completion of the whole Church Order.

Once again, a vigorous discussion took place regarding jurisdiction; how does a "broader" assembly relate to a "narrower" assembly. Both committees

had brought proposals to the table. It was decided to adopt a simple statement as follows: "The broader assemblies shall exercise jurisdiction only and exclusively relating to matters properly before them." Wording specific to delegation and the binding character of decisions will be formulated later in article for that purpose.

As requested at the previous meeting, the Rev. Scheuers presented a proposed introduction to the Church Order. Again, an extensive discussion took place regarding the exact wording of the four components of this introduction: 1) Biblical and Confessional Basis, 2) Historical Background, 3) Foundational Principles and 4) Broad Divisions. The Committee decided to include in the Press Release the full wording of the adopted Introduction. The first sentence in the proposed Foundational Principles will serve to clarify the status of the Foundational Principles in relation to our Church Order.

Introduction

Biblical and confessional basis

We Reformed believers maintain that the standard for personal, public, and ecclesiastical life is God's Word, the inspired, infallible, and inerrant book of Holy Scripture. As a federation of churches we declare our complete subjection and obedience to that Word of God. We also declare that we are confessional churches, in that we believe and are fully persuaded that the Three Forms of Unity, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, summarize and do fully agree with the Word of God. Therefore, we unitedly subscribe to these Reformed Confessions.

Both the Word of God and these Reformed Confessions demand that in our ecclesiastical structure and rule we openly acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the supreme and only Head of the church. Christ exercises His headship in the churches by His Word and Spirit through the ordained offices, for the sake of purity of doctrine, holiness of life, and order in the churches. The churches of our federation, although distinct, willingly display their unity and accountability, both to each other and

especially to Christ, by means of our common Confessions and this Church Order.

Historical background

Our Church Order has its roots in the continental European background of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformed churches desired to be faithful to God's Word in practice and life as well as in doctrine. Therefore, as early as the mid-sixteenth century, and even in the midst of persecution, the Reformed churches set down the foundation of the Church Order at various synods beginning in 1563, including those in Wezel, the Netherlands (1568), and in Emden, Germany (1571). For the most part, the decisions of the assemblies in this period leaned heavily on the church orders already in place and used by the Reformed churches in France and Geneva.

The Church Order adopted at Emden was revised at the Synods of Dordrecht (1574 and 1578), Middelburg (1581), and the Hague (1586), before being adopted by the well-known Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619). Our Church Order follows the principles and structure of the Church Order of Dordrecht.

Foundational principles

The following list of foundational principles, though not exhaustive, provides a clear Biblical foundation for, and source of our Church Order.

1. The church is the possession of Christ, who is the Mediator of the New Covenant.
Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27
2. As Mediator of the New Covenant, Christ is the Head of the church.
Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24; Colossians 1:18
3. Because the church is Christ's possession and He is its Head, the principles governing the church are determined not by human preference, but by Biblical teaching.
Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:18, 2 Timothy 3:16, 17
4. The catholic or universal church possesses a spiritual unity in Christ and in the Holy Scriptures.
Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Timothy 3:15; 2 John 9

5. The Lord gave no permanent universal, national or regional offices to his church. The offices of minister, elder and deacon are local in authority and function. Therefore, a broader assembly governs the church only by way of delegation, and exists only when it is in session. Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; Ephesians 4:11-16; Titus 1:5
6. In its subjection to its Heavenly Head, the church is governed by Christ from heaven by means of his Word and Spirit with the keys of the kingdom, which He has given to the local church for that purpose. Therefore, no church may lord it over another church, nor may one office bearer lord it over another office bearer. Matthew 16:19; 23:8; John 20:22, 23; Acts 20:28-32; Titus 1:5
7. Although churches exist in certain circumstances without formal federative relationships, the well-being of the church requires that such relationships be entered wherever possible. Entering into or remaining in such relationships should be voluntary; there is however a spiritual obligation to seek and maintain the federative unity of the churches by formal bonds of fellowship and cooperation. Acts 11:22, 27-30; 15:22-35; Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10; Revelation 1:11, 20
8. The exercise of a federative relationship is possible only on the basis of unity in faith and in confession. 1 Corinthians 10:14-22; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 4:16-17
9. Member churches meet together in consultation to guard against human imperfections and to benefit from the wisdom of many counselors in the broader assemblies. The decisions of such assemblies derive their authority from their conformity to the Word of God Proverbs 11:14; Acts 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 13:9-10; 2 Timothy 3:16-17
10. In order to manifest our spiritual unity, churches should seek contact with other faithful, confessionally Reformed churches for their mutual edification and as an effective witness to the world. John 17:21-23; Ephesians 4:1-6
11. The church is mandated to exercise its ministry of reconciliation by proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth. Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21
12. Christ cares for and governs his church through the office bearers, whom He chooses through the congregation. Acts 1:23-26; 6:2-3; 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1, 8; 5:17
13. The Scriptures require that ministers, elders and deacons be thoroughly equipped for the suitable discharge of their respective offices. 1 Timothy 3:2-9; 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:14-16; 3:14; 4:1-5
14. Being the chosen and redeemed people of God, the church, under the supervision of the consistory, is called to worship Him according to the scriptural principles governing worship. Leviticus 10:1-3; Deuteronomy 12:29-32; Psalm 95:1, 2, 6; Psalm 100:4; John 4:24; 1 Peter 2:9
15. Since the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, it is called through its teaching ministry to build up the people of God in faith. Deuteronomy 11:19; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 2:2; 3:16-17
16. Christian discipline, arising from God's love for his people, is exercised in the church to correct and strengthen the people of God, to maintain the unity and the purity of the church of Christ, and thereby to bring honor and glory to God's name. 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:13; Hebrews 12:7-11
17. The exercise of Christian discipline is first of all a personal duty of every church member, but when official discipline by the church becomes necessary, it must be exercised by the consistory of the church, to whom the keys of the kingdom are entrusted. Matthew 18:15-20; John 20:22-23; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:13; 1 Peter 5:1-3

Broad divisions

Since we desire to honor the apostolic command that in the churches all things are to be done decently and in good order (1 Corinthians 14:40), we order our ecclesiastical relations and activities under the following divisions:

- I. Offices (Articles 1-)
- II. Assemblies (Articles -)
- III. Worship and Ceremonies (Articles -)
- IV. Discipline (Articles -)

We again discussed at some length the question whose responsibility it is to declare a man a candidate for the ministry. We agreed that, as in the deposition of a minister, in this matter the classis is also to be involved. The student must sustain a classical examination. We also discussed the necessity for, and procedure of consistorial involvement in the preparation and nurturing of a man for the ministry. We agreed that each committee, starting with article 4



Left to right around the table: Rev. J. VanWoudenberg, Mr. G.J. Nordeman, Dr. A. Witten, Dr. J. DeJong, Dr. N. Kloosterman, Rev. R. Scheuers, Mr. H. VanGurp, Rev. W. Pols, Rev. R. Sikkema.

of Dort, writes a proposal for discussion at our next meeting.

The committee took some time to review the need for an article dealing with admitting men to the ministry who have not pursued the regular course of study (old Dort article 8). This article could be helpful in times of calamity or distress. However, with a view to past abuse of this article in some Reformed churches, and the potential for abuse of such an article in the future of the united churches, it was agreed by both committees that the churches will be better served by omitting such an article.

The issue of the role of regional synod and the role of the regional synodical deputies received some attention. Information was exchanged and a better understanding gained by this discussion. More time is needed to come to a final agreement. Also the method of delegation to broader assemblies received attention. The suggestion was accepted for both committees to prepare suitable adaptations of articles regarding the broader assemblies, including classes, regional and general synods, working from Articles 41, 44, 45, 47, 49 and 50 of Dort.

The next meeting will take place D.V. August 5-7, 2003 in Burlington, Ontario, Canada. In the mean time both committees will continue to study the remaining articles. Any proposals should be shared with other committee members at least one month prior to the next meeting. The Press Release was presented and approved. Rev. John VanWoudenberg closed the meeting with a brief meditation on John 12:1-8. He led in prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God, our heavenly Father, for another meeting that could be conducted in brotherly harmony.

*For the Committee
Gerard J. Nordeman*

Press Release of Classis Pacific East March 6, 2003, held at Aldergrove, B.C.

On behalf of the convening church at Aldergrove, brother H. VanDelft called the meeting to order, requested the singing of Psalm 90:1,7 and 8, read Philippians 2:1-11, and led in prayer. Brother VanDelft extended a special welcome to Rev. J. Moesker, who was present at Classis Pacific East for the first time as a delegate from the Church at Vernon.

The delegates from the Church at Abbotsford checked the credentials and found them to be in order. All

churches were represented by "primi" delegates, except the church at Vernon, which had sent an alternate delegate. The Church at Aldergrove had delegated two elders because Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer had been delegated by a previous Classis to attend the Western Classis of the Reformed Churches in the United States which was meeting at the same time. There were no instructions from the churches.

Classis was constituted.

The moderamen consisted of: Rev. R. Schouten – chairman; Rev. C.J. Vander Velde – vice-chairman; Rev. W.M. Wielenga – clerk.

The chairman of Classis thanked the convening church for making the arrangements for Classis. The agenda was established.

Since the book containing the Subscription Form for ministers serving churches within Classis Pacific East was not present, Classis decided to have Rev. J. Moesker sign this Form at the next Classis.

Three appeals were declared admissible; a fourth appeal was declared inadmissible. The three appeals were discussed in several rounds and committees were struck to deal with them. The committees presented their reports, with the result that all the appeals were denied.

A report from the treasurer of Classis Pacific East was received with gratitude.

A report from the Fund for Needy Churches was received with gratitude. The church for the inspection of the archive reported that it had not inspected the archive in time to report to this Classis.

Question Period according to Article 44 of the Church Order was held. The ministry of the office bearers is being continued in all the churches, the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured, and no church needed the judgment and help of Classis for the proper government of the church.

The next Classis will be held, the Lord willing, in Chilliwack, on Thursday, June 5, 2003, starting at 9:00 a.m. Alternate date: September 18, 2003. Suggested officers: Rev. C.J. Vander Velde – chairman; Rev. W.M. Wielenga – vice-chairman; Rev. J. Moesker – clerk.

The following appointments were made:

- Committee for Examinations: Rev. M.H. VanLuik, Rev. R. Schouten
- Examiners for the examination of candidates for the Ministry: exegesis

OT: Rev. W.M. Wielenga; exegesis NT: Rev. M.H. VanLuik; knowledge of Scripture: Rev. W.M. Wielenga; doctrine and creeds: Rev. R. Schouten; church history: Rev. C.J. VanderVelde; ethics: Rev. J. Moesker; church polity: Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer; diaconology: Rev. C.J. VanderVelde

- Church visitors according to Article 46 of the Church Order: Rev. M.H. VanLuik (convener), Rev. J. Moesker, Rev. R. Schouten; alternates: Rev. W.M. Wielenga, Rev. C.J. Vander Velde
- Church for taking care of the archive: Abbotsford
- Church for inspecting the archive: Yarrow
- Treasurer of Classis: br. R. Leyenhorst
- Church for auditing the books of the treasurer: Vernon
- Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry: br. K.F. Huttema, br. J. Schutte, Rev. M.H. VanLuik (convener)
- Committee for Needy Churches: br. G. Boeve, br. K. Louwerse (convener), br. B. Vane
- Deputy for preaching arrangements: Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer.

There were no questions for Question Period. Censure according to Article 34 of the Church Order was not necessary. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved. The chairman requested the singing of Ps 133:1 and 2, and led in prayer. The chairman declared Classis closed.

*C.J. VanderVelde,
vice-chairman at that time*

Press Release of Classis Manitoba convened in the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg on March 10, 2003

1. On behalf of the convening Church at Denver, Rev. D.M. Boersma called the meeting to order. He read Isaiah 49:1-7, led in prayer, and requested that the brothers sing Hymn 46. He welcomed all present, in particular Br. Peter Verbeek from the Providence Reformed Church (URCNA) in Winnipeg. Rev. Boersma noted that he had been installed as minister of the church in Denver on February 16, 2003. Rev. P.G. Feenstra declined the call to the church of Carman East. Rev. Boersma also congratulated the churches in Winnipeg with the fiftieth anniversary of the institution

- of the Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg.
2. The delegates of the Church at Denver reported on the examination of the credentials. All was found to be in order. There were no churches with instructions.
 3. Classis was constituted. The following officers were appointed:
Chairman: Rev. T.G. VanRaalte
Vice Chairman: Rev. A.J. Pol
Clerk: Rev. D.M. Boersma
 4. Rev. VanRaalte thanked the Church of Denver for the preparations involved in convening the classis.
 5. The agenda was adopted after a few adjustments.
 6. The Certificate of Release from the classis FRCSA (CO 5B1) pertaining to Rev. D.M. Boersma was provided as promised at the previous classis Manitoba.
 7. Rev. J. VanRietschoten and br. P. Verbeek were invited to be seated as advisors.
 8. Br. P. Verbeek was given the floor to address the classis. He thanked classis for the invitation, brought greetings from the Providence Reformed Church and wished classis the Lord's blessings. Rev. VanRaalte thanked br. Verbeek for coming. This is a fruit of the growing contacts between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Providence Reformed Church in this classical region.
 9. A report was given concerning the inspection of the Classis Archives. Classis noted that it is the task of the church responsible for the archives to ensure that the archives are complete and that if items are irretrievable, notice of this is given to classis by the church for the inspection of the classis archives. Rev. K. Jonker reported on contact with the provincial government concerning arrangements for officiating at wedding ceremonies. In closed session there were also church visitors' reports of visits to the churches of Carman East and West, and Winnipeg (Grace and Redeemer).
 10. A proposal from the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church at Winnipeg concerning the revision of certain articles of the Classis Regulations was dealt with and accepted.
 11. Question Period according to Art 44 CO was held. The Church of Carman West requested advice regarding a position paper brought forward by another church in our

- federation. Only one of the churches in the classical region has adopted the position paper. The consensus was that Scripture and our confessions can be brought to bear where applicable. A request from another church for advice was dealt with in closed session.
12. Correspondence: A letter was received from the Providence Reformed Church asking about the possibility of requesting pulpit supply from the churches in the classical region "as the need may arise and is mutually convenient" given the fact that Ref. F. Folkerts has accepted a call to Listowel, Ontario. Given the decision of Synod Neerlandia with regard to the URCNA and the local developments in this classical region, classis concluded that there are no objections to this, but emphasized that this is a matter of the local churches.
 13. Appointments.
 - a. The convening church for the next classis is the Grace Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg. The classis is scheduled to be held on June 2, 2003. Alternate date: September 22, 2003.
 - b. The suggested officers for the next classis are:
chairman: Rev. K. Jonker; vice-chairman: Rev. T.G. VanRaalte; clerk: Rev. A.J. Pol
 14. Personal question period was held.
 15. No censure according to Art 34 of the Church Order was necessary.
 16. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release approved for publication.
 17. The chairman requested that the brothers sing Psalm 92:1,6 and led in closing prayer.
*For Classis Manitoba,
March 10, 2003
A.J. Pol, Vice-chairman at that time.*

Press Release of Classis Alberta held March 11, 2003 at Coaldale, Alberta

On behalf of the convening church at Coaldale, br. H. Lubbers called the meeting to order. He welcomed the delegates and guests. He asked the delegates to sing from Hymn 2: 1, read 1 Peter 5:1 -11 and led in prayer.

The credentials were examined. All the churches were duly represented. There were four instructions, one from Neerlandia, and one from Coaldale. The church at Taber and the Providence church at Edmonton sought advice on

discipline matters. Classis was then constituted.

The following officers were appointed: Rev. R. Aasman, chairman; Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar, vice-chairman; Rev. W.B. Slomp, clerk.

The chairman thanked the church at Coaldale for the preparations made for hosting this meeting. He welcomed the students from the Coaldale Christian School. The following memorabilia was noted: the call and decline of Rev. T. Lodder to Bunbury, Australia; the extended calls by the church at Neerlandia to the Rev. D. Agema and Rev. P. Feenstra which were both declined; the twenty-fifth anniversary in the ministry of Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar; the difficult circumstances in the church at Coaldale; the health of Rev. J. Van Popta; well-wishes to Coaldale church and Rev. Van Popta. He addressed the student guests as to how classis functions.

Adoption of the Agenda. After a few additions, the agenda was adopted. Due to the audience in attendance, classis decided to deal with a request for the institution of a new church in St. Albert. After a brief discussion Classis in gratitude gave approval to the request for the institution of a church in St. Albert. The Rev. R. Aasman was appointed and will become counsellor when this church is instituted.

Reports from Committees. Classis dealt with the following reports:

Classis Treasurer Report. This report was received. It was noted that the bank balance was missing as well as a fair mileage rate. The report was approved with thankfulness.

Church for Inspection of Books of the Treasurer. The Providence Church reported that the books were found to be in good order.

Church for Inspection of Classis Archives. The Immanuel Church at Edmonton reports that it did not make the required inspection.

Contact with Provincial Government. The Rev. E. Tiggelaar reported that he could serve the churches in Alberta by requesting temporary authority on the part of out of province ministers to solemnize marriages in the province. He also reported that he could submit an annual list of ministers to the government.

Classis received a letter from the contact person with the OPC of the Dakotas, the Rev. R. Aasman recommending that we concur with the decision of the OPC of the Dakotas to recognize Classis Manitoba as the

contact Classis and in the future to receive reports of ongoing activity in the OPC of the Dakotas from Classis Manitoba. Classis concurred with this decision. In the discussion it was noted that the URC should be invited to the next meeting of Classis. The Providence Church was asked to report on the status of the Free Church of Scotland and to report to the next classis.

The church at Neerlandia questioned the accuracy of the Regulations of Classis as recorded in the Acts of Classis Alberta, October 8, 2002. Classis deemed the Regulations accurate. Classis adopted some changes suggested at the Classis meeting held in Barrhead as this was not done previously.

The church at Taber requested that pulpit supply be given to vacant churches once every four weeks instead of every three weeks. This was not granted. Classis decided that ministers not able to participate in a given rotation should inform the vacant church

about their inability to come. Classis decided to grant both the new church to be instituted at St. Albert and the church at Neerlandia pulpit supply every three weeks.

Classis met in closed session. Church Visitors reports: reports were read of visits made to the churches at Taber, Coaldale, Barrhead and Neerlandia.

Correspondence: Classis dealt with several appeals from members of the Coaldale church in closed session.

Question Period according to Article 44 of the Church Order was held. All the delegates on behalf of the churches gave positive answers to the first two questions asked by the chairman. Several churches in Classis requested and received concurring advice regarding matters of discipline.

Appointments:

Church for the next Classis: the Immanuel Church in Edmonton is appointed.

Suggested executive officers for the next classis: Rev. R. Eikelboom, chair-

man; Rev. R. Aasman, vice-chairman; Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar, clerk.

Date: June 24, 2003

Alternate date: October 21, 2003

Rev. R. Aasman is appointed to represent Classis at the institution of the church in St. Albert.

Rev. R. Eikelboom is appointed to make up a preaching schedule for the vacant churches.

Personal Question Period is made use of by several brothers. Brotherly Censure (Art 44 CO) was deemed by the chairman as not necessary. Adoption of Acts and Press Release. The Acts of Classis are read and adopted. Press Release is read and approved.

Closing: the chairman expresses gratitude for the brotherly harmony. He previously thanked the ladies for the work they did. He requested the singing of Psalm 122:1 and lead in prayer. Classis was declared closed.

E.J. Tiggelaar, clerk e.t. 

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

This is my position as opposed to Mr. J.A. Roukema in regard to women voting as published in the 2002 year end edition of the *Clarion*.

It is my contention that voting in the church is very much a matter of headship and authority. The Christian Reformed Church for a long time and maybe still, would count their numbers as "so many families." The families are the building blocks of church and society. Through families the internal growth of the church is realized. The heads and future heads of families should be very much interested in which direction the church is headed, and that also means electing the right persons. By marriage the man becomes the head of the woman as Christ is the head of the church and God willing that marriage will be blessed with children. That headship comes with responsibilities as providing for and protecting his family and taking a direct interest in the government of the church. According to article 3 of the Church Order the elders and deacons shall give opportunity to the congregation to give names to be

considered for elder or deacon. The subsequent voting for elders or deacons is not a matter of advice given to the council. How could it be? The elders and deacons vote with the congregation! They don't give advice to themselves. The elders and deacons are bound to honour the results of the election. If after two weeks of approbation before the congregation, one or more are found to be subject to discipline, then the office bearers as servants of the Lord cannot proceed but must take action. But if the approbation does not present problems, then the council can proceed with the appointment and subsequent installation and ordination of the brethren to their respective offices.

Mr. J.A. Roukema asserts that church members reject woman voting because it will lead to woman in office, and reject it out of fear. I do not deny there is a certain amount of truth in that, but I have stated my reasons based on Scripture, and also I do look to other churches for trends. Most Christian Reformed Churches had women voting for something like thirty to forty years. But they lost sight of

headship and the authority that comes with it (1 Tim 1:12) and many now have women in office. Should that not tell us something?

Synod Neerlandia instructed the delegates to Synod Zuidhorn to investigate the new marriage form. Rev. Huijgen wrote in the year end edition of *Clarion*, "Your deputies presented us with the practical issues of living in a secularized society which led up to the formation of the new marriage form. We urge you to consider that the pressures of the world can only be addressed by obedience to Scripture."

I know that the world regards headship of the husband and the woman being subject to her husband as archaic and outdated. If that kind of thinking has made its inroads into the new marriage form, then that does not bode well for the church in Holland. And since I believe that headship and the authority that flows from it has everything to do with the voting in the church, is it then too farfetched to think that in a future discussion about woman in office this marriage form will have its impact?

R. Bosman, Orangeville, Ontario