

Clarion

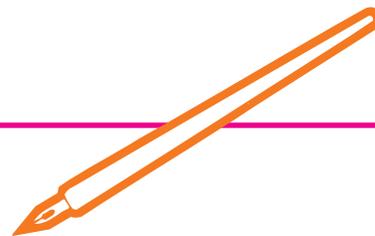
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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*"Give to Caesar
what is Caesar's . . ."*



By J. De Jong



The Baptist Error

Current trends

Anyone who is not a stranger in Jerusalem will have noticed that in the past few years the kinds of resources which are being used in our circles go beyond the borders of what can be called Reformed literature. Whereas in previous periods people emphasized a “closer to home” policy with regard to the things we read and discuss, the current climate is one of branching out in many different traditions and backgrounds with regard to our regular reading material. While in itself this is not a bad thing, it at the same time increases the danger that we uncritically absorb teaching contrary to Scripture.

*The ground for baptism is
always the promise of the
covenant of grace
in Jesus Christ.*

One such area that has surfaced in more recent contexts in our own press is the Baptist viewpoint with respect to faith, sanctification, and also the baptism of infants. For this reason, this is an area where we can benefit from common reconsideration and reflection concerning our stand. There are several congregations (also in Australia) where these matters are being discussed, and we must be honest also in warning each other, even if errors are not made deliberately or knowingly.

Our history

In one editorial, we cannot examine the entire Baptist point of view.¹ Let me only give some consideration to the way in which Baptist theology has been dealt with in our own history. In the history of the Reformed churches in Holland, much attention was paid to the teaching of the Baptists, in part because of its persistent influence among specific Reformed groups. One significant tract was written by Rev. K. J. Pieters of Franeker, in Friesland, one of the figures who promoted a view of the covenant in the tradition of Rev. Hendrik de Cock.² He was supported in his approach by the Rev. J.R. Kreulen of Ferwerd. The standpoint of the Revs. Pieters and Kreulen later became the topic of much discussion in the churches, and in the late 19th Century gained greater and greater influence. It also influenced the preaching of Rev. L. Hulst, the well known American secession preacher who brought the same Calvinistic view of the covenant to American shores.³ Thus the doctrinal struggles of our forbears with the Baptists can also assist us as we seek to hold to the rich heritage we have received.

The counsel of God

In his tract Rev. Pieters describes the Baptist error as follows: the basic fault is the confusion of the hidden and revealed counsel of God. God’s hidden will or counsel is His plan of redemption, His counsel that always stands and never changes (see Isa. 46:10). God’s revealed will concerns the obligations which God imposes on us in His word, obligations which change in accordance with the times and dispensations, but in essence always remain the same: follow the LORD and live! These two wills must always be kept distinct. The basic error of Baptist thinking is: confusing these two wills in a way which identifies the revealed will of God with His hidden will.

In reality, says Pieters, there are not two wills but one will in God. However in revelation and in our thoughts there are and must be two divine wills: the hidden and the revealed will of God. Pieters says: God controls these two wills and the relationship between them in a way that has not been revealed to us. What are now the typical errors with regard to the two wills as revealed by God? The boundaries that God has set are not respected. The Remonstrants take the hidden will and identify it with the revealed will of God, giving room for free human response. The hidden will then becomes dependent on man’s participation and his role. The Baptists, on the other hand, bring the revealed will back to the hidden will of God, and they make the hidden will of God the starting point of all their assertions. In other words, while the Remonstrants pull forward the hidden will of God and reduce it to His revealed will, the Baptists take the revealed will and mix it up with the revelation about God’s hidden will, putting all emphasis on the experience of God’s work in one’s heart. All their further errors with regard to the doctrine of sin, and the exalted place of human reason can be traced to this one fundamental distortion, according to Pieters.

What effect does this have? In the end, the gospel message is really only for those to whom the Holy Spirit has given the experience of repentance, sorrow for sin, and conversion. There is no general offer of the gospel in the real sense of the term. The gospel may be preached to all, but it really only applies to those who are the “saved.” The saved are “the chosen,” those who share the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and are appointed to share it from eternity.

The view of the Church

In this view, the church becomes exclusively the body of those who are elected, i.e. only those ordained to life, the body of regenerated Christians. The church is seen as a spiritual body of only regenerated, converted and holy people. For these believers, being engrafted into Christ precedes regeneration and conversion. The church is invisible in the sense that it begins with the hidden work of the Spirit. The church is visible as well, but the visible church is composed

only of the believers, the enlightened, the company of the redeemed throughout all the world and all of history. And the sacraments really only apply to this kind of people. The sacrament is based on faith rather than the other way around. Hence infant baptism must be rejected. That is the heart and marrow of the Baptist position.⁴

Pieters says: the Baptist seeks the unity of the church in a subjective ground, namely faith. The unity of the church is found in the moral qualities of the heart: conversion, spiritual life and the subjective renewing work of the Holy Spirit. Here they not only set a standard for the unity of the church which is beyond human powers of recognition and discernment but in this way they also confuse the church with the *personal* unity of the believer with Christ, making the latter the standard of all judgment. Moreover, the church is seen fundamentally as a New Testament reality. Hence the Old Testament is seen as but a preliminary or lower stage to the essential reality of the New Testament.

From this perspective the whole approach to the Scriptures is determined. The Old and New Testaments are severed, and the covenant order of the New Testament is seen as entirely different from that of the Old. Ultimately, the personal relationship with Christ takes a predominate position in the new covenant. It is frequently compared to a marriage covenant in which the offer to marriage from the bridegroom (Christ) really does not have any legal validity until the offer is accepted by the bride (the believer).⁵

The Reformed response

It is interesting to note how in his 19th century context, Rev. Pieters answers the Baptists.⁶ For in his answer to the Baptists, he helps to crystallize the Reformed view of the covenant! He begins with carefully delineating the two wills of God and showing that these must always be kept distinct. We cannot identify God's hidden counsel (election and reprobation) with His covenant (promise and demand). The former belongs to the *hidden* will, the latter to the *revealed* will of God. The covenant is revealed and sealed in history. It is made with the believers and their seed, and it is the mark or ensign by which the believers, the seed of the church, are distinguished from unbelievers. But with the promises sealed in baptism comes at the same time the obligation to re-

nounce the world and to live a holy life. This comes to all the people set apart by God, including the children.

You would need to sever the Old and New Testaments if you wanted to prove that the baptism of infants is wrong or even optional!

Ideal and real

How then must the church be seen according to Pieters? In Scripture's speaking about the church there is a two-fold aspect. It describes the church in terms of the *ideal* (what the church must be and shall be at the end of the age) and *reality*, i.e. what the church is today. The ideal refers to events and circumstances which, while beginning in Christ, only come to full culmination on the last day (Rom. 6:4-11, Col. 2:12, Gal. 2:20, Col. 3:3). These passages refer to the death of the old nature, but incorporate in their statements its final end or goal: perfection in Christ. Yet, says Pieters, this is not the real situation

of the church today. The real situation, the other aspect the apostle brings forward, is that the call to daily repentance must go on (Eph. 4:21-28, Col. 3:5-10, Gal. 5:16,17). In the former passages, Paul holds up the ideal for the church and for the individual and takes it as a standard by which we must continually model our lives. In the latter passages, he reminds us that we are far from finished the race. The Baptists on the other hand take the ideal as reality, confuse the two, and continually speak of those who are the "saved."

That we are not in a blanket category called the "saved" or the "enlightened" is clear from many other passages in the New Testament which stress that the church is a **gathering** and at the same time a mixed body. Jesus speaking in His parables about the kingdom of God on earth speaks of the tares and the wheat that grow together on the earth (Mt. 13:36ff, 47ff, Mt. 22: 1-13). He speaks about branches that are in the vine, but some will be broken off (Jn. 15:1-11). Paul indicates in many places that there are still many sins, shortcomings and weaknesses in the church. Some churches also had conflicts with essential doctrines (1 Cor. 15:12f, see also Gal. 3:1, 4:11, 5:12). The Philippians too were plagued by the purveyors of false



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teaching (Phil. 3:17-19). Corinth had struggles with sexual immorality (1 Cor. 5:1f). The church was far from perfect!

All this is ignored by the Baptists who see the unity of the church in a subjective ground, namely, faith. Hence they always speak of the church as “the whole body of Christian believers” or “the whole body of believers on earth” – yet all without specific reference to the organized structure and form of the church, that is, the church as it is gathered around the administration of the Word, and gathered in the Word and Spirit. However, the church does *not* have its ground in *subjective* faith. Says Pieters: What is the *objective* ground of the speaking of the apostles? Not that people are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, but that they have been baptized (Gal. 3: 26, 27). All of the conditional phrases of the apostles have this objective ground (see, for example, Rom 8:13, Heb. 3:6, Col. 3:1).

Besides, says Pieters, in Scripture the apostles carefully distinguish between the responsibility facing the whole church, and the personal responsibility of believers individually. The former concerns the collective responsibility of all to uphold the truth and to walk in it daily (Gal. 3:27). But personal responsibility implies that each one must examine *himself* with a view to his life of faith (2 Cor. 13:5). In the context of the corporate responsibility, each believer must himself give an account of the hope that is in him, and of his personal union with Christ and the gospel, to his comfort, rest and peace in Christ.

The view of baptism

What are the grounds for the sacrament of baptism? Is faith ever a ground

for baptism? In adult baptism, faith should be seen as an accompanying *condition* for baptism. The ground for baptism is always the promise of the covenant of grace in Jesus Christ. Baptism, rooted in the one sacrifice of Christ, has replaced circumcision (Col. 2:12). For this reason the promises directed to the children in the old covenant equally apply to the children of believers in the new covenant (Acts 2: 39). The children are holy (1 Cor. 7:14), just as was the case in the old covenant. You would need to sever the Old and New Testaments if you wanted to prove that the baptism of infants is wrong or even optional! For are we not all children of Abraham by faith?

The warning

So much for a brief look at the work of Rev. Pieters in his century old tract. One might raise questions at certain points in his approach. But he is correct in pointing out that there are always these two aspects to the church as a gathering, namely its current state of imperfection, and its legally declared perfection in Christ, who promises to lead and guide His people to the day of glory. So he highlights a fundamental aspect of the confession that we must keep in mind: the church is a gathering and it is gathered through the Word and Spirit of Christ (see Lord’s Day 21). In other words, the call of the Word and the means of grace are essential elements in the way we are called to view the believers and their offspring today.

I’ve introduced Rev. Pieters if only to remind ourselves that since the earliest days of the Secession – and even before – the churches of the Reformation in Holland have consistently re-

jected the Baptist approach. And this rightly so, for it does not do justice to the rich testimony of the Scriptures! Let us then, building on the work of those who have gone before us, walk in the same line. We really do not have a choice! We are all under a heavenly call! Let this difference also be seen in a life that seeks to promote the kingdom of God in this world.

¹A good critical discussion of the Baptist position can be found in a recent book by the minister of the Free Reformed Church in Hamilton, Rev. G. Procee. He gives a good overview of the meaning of baptism, also for infants. See Gerald R. Procee, *Holy Baptism. The Scriptural Setting, Significance and Scope of Infant Baptism*, (Hamilton Free Reformed Church, Hamilton, 1998).

²K.J. Pieters, *Het baptisme bij het licht de Heilige Schrift en der geschiedenis beoordeeld en in ’t licht gesteld. Een ernstig woord van waarschuwing tegen deze gezindte aan de Chr. Afgesch. gereformeerden ‘de Vrienden der waarheid’ en allen die belang stellen in het Koninkrijk Gods op aarde*, (Telenga, Franeker, 1866).

³On Hulst see J. Faber, *American Secession Theologians on Covenant and Baptism* (Inheritance, Neerlandia, 1996) 19f. Faber also mentions Hulst’s “weekly conversation” with Rev. Kreulen of Ferwerd, who wrote a tract on infant baptism along with Rev. Pieters, (see following note).

⁴Pieters and Kreulen say: He is the enemy of the baptism of the infants, see K.J. Pieters and J.R. Kreulen, *De kinderdoop volgens de beginselen der Gereformeerde Kerk, in hare gronden, toedieningen en praktijk. Op nieuw onderzocht, beoordeeld en van vele schijnbare zwarigheden ontheven*, (Velenga, Franeker, 1861) 9.

⁵The marriage image is a popular one in the Baptist approach, so Pieters, 103.

⁶His tract is a response to a Baptist author who sharply criticized the first tract of Rev. Pieters and Kreulen on infant baptism, see footnote #4. 

What’s inside?

Welcome, Dear Reader! In your hands you hold the last General Synod Fergus issue of *Clarion*. You will find the official press release of Synod. You will also find two speeches of fraternal delegates. Quite a number of speeches were delivered. We decided to publish the two by ministers from churches right here in Canada. We thought this would be the most relevant.

The past two issues had articles by Dr. J. De Jong and Rev. P. VanderMeyden (a Free Reformed Church minister) on the question of “the appropriation of salvation,” a topic of discussion between Reformed believers for many years. Dr. Van Dam, in his role as executive editor, sums up the discussion pointing out areas of agreement and others that deserve more consideration. Since our past Synod mandated our Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity to take up contact with the External Relations Committee of the Free Reformed Churches of North America and to initiate fraternal dialogue with them with a view towards establishing federative unity, this discussion becomes all the more worthwhile.

Dr. Van Dam also updates us on what’s happening in Mexico. Rev. De Gelder passes on information from within our circles of churches.

We have our Synods and discussions; meanwhile, many of God’s children are persecuted, even killed, for the faith. Let’s not forget them! Dr. Oosterhoff reviews an important book about persecuted Christians.

GvP

By G.H. Visscher

Any coins in your pocket?

"Show me the coins used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." Matthew 22:19-21

Have you ever wished you always knew what to say in the heat of a discussion? One of the amazing things about the Lord Jesus as we meet Him in the gospels is that He always seems to be that kind of person. No matter what His accusers say, He has an answer ready. Whenever they tried to put Him on the spot, He always managed to turn it around so that they were the ones who found the spot too hot. The above passage is a case in point. The Lord Jesus is being confronted by a rather peculiar alliance: Pharisees and Herodians. Leaders of the Jewish people, ardent nationalists, opposed to Rome in every way, are joining forces with people who support the Roman rule of the Herods. A common enemy makes strange bed-fellows. Their purpose is to trap the Lord Jesus. The question is: *is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?* A positive answer would get Him in trouble with the people of Israel, a negative one could bring the wrath of Rome on His head. What to do?

The Lord Jesus responds with a three-pronged counterattack. First, He says: *"Show me the coin used for paying the tax."* Why does He ask them for a coin? Doesn't he have one? Don't they know what it looks like? The point is: He wants to know whether the Jews themselves have this kind of coin. On the one side of this coin was the head of the emperor and the inscription, *"Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus,"* and on the other side there was the figure of the emperor's mother as an incarnation of the goddess Peace and the inscription *"Highest Priest."* Because this coin had so many religious claims and even an image of the emperor, there was a feeling among the Jews that actually they should not even look at, let alone handle, this coin. That Jesus' questioners could provide one of these coins on demand cut the ground from under their feet. Not even

these Jews who so abhorred it for its idolatry could avoid this kind of tie with the emperor and his state. They were using Caesar's money, so let them also pay his taxes! If they were benefiting from his money and the things that come about by way of it (roads, sewers, etc.), aren't they really part of the whole system? The coin in their pockets testifies to the hypocrisy in their hearts!

It's no different today. No one can absolutely sever every possible tie with the government of his country. Even the Hutterite living in his isolated colony, reaps some benefit of the government of his land – whether it be the money in his pocket or the peace and freedom that he enjoys. That is what the Lord Jesus shows us as well. We may act as if there is a wall of separation between us and politics, but the coins in our pockets prove the opposite! It's just impossible to be an Anabaptist consistently! Neutrality is a myth. Total separation is an impossibility.

The Lord Jesus then delivers them yet another blow. For when He asks them whose portrait and inscription is on it and they say, *"Caesar's,"* Jesus says as it were: Doesn't the coin that has Caesar's face and Caesar's name on it belong to Caesar? *"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's!"* Caesar's coins are best suited for paying Caesar's tribute. The word "give" here actually means "give back." What do you do with something that belongs to someone else? You give it back. What to do with Caesar's money then? Give it back to Caesar! Why should anyone object to giving back to Caesar what is rightfully his?

And even with that there is yet a third blow. For the Lord Jesus also says: *". . . and to God what is God's."* Since it is one sentence, it actually means, "give back to God what is God's." Some suggest that the sense may very well be: If coins that bear Caesar's image



have to be given back to him, people who bear God's image have to be given back to God! It's an interesting thought. The point is deeper though. The addition puts the matter in a wider perspective. It was because of loyalty to God that most Jews objected to Roman taxation, but the Lord Jesus subtly indicates in this way that political allegiance even to a pagan state is not incompatible with such loyalty. The inspired apostle later expanded on this teaching of our Lord when he wrote: *"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. . . . Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor"* (Romans 13:1,5-7).

We too need to bear this in mind. The ungodliness of governments does not justify ungodliness on the part of the people of God. We may debate their policies, question their practices, but always we must recognize that they rule not just because of the people and the political process, but because they are appointed by God. Ungodly emperors notwithstanding, Paul writes as he does and Peter echoes his sentiments. *"Fear*

continued on page 306

THE APPROPRIATION OF SALVATION

Where are we at? A Summary of the Discussion

By C. Van Dam

Two issues of *Clarion* ago, Dr. J. De Jong responded to the document "The Appropriation of Salvation" and in the previous issue, Rev. P. VanderMeyden reacted to Dr. De Jong's contribution. We want to thank both writers for bringing the issues to the fore. Let's now briefly take inventory. Where exactly are we? What divides and what unites us as Canadian Reformed and Free Reformed on this topic?

It is obvious that there is much more that unites than separates. We both treasure the same Biblical truth of the all-encompassing work of redemption of our sovereign God in Christ and we both value the same confessions that articulate this awesome truth. Let us never underestimate or forget the tremendous area of agreement. Both authors have affirmed this and we need to keep this in mind when we delve into some very specific points of discussion.

Objective-Subjective

With respect to the objective-subjective discussion, one must ask, what is the point at issue? Both Dr. De Jong and Rev. VanderMeyden have stressed that God is always first in salvation. He grants the gospel promise. Both also

speak of the appropriation of the granted promise. Dr. De Jong, however, expressed reservations whether these truths can be placed within the framework of objective (granting) and subjective (appropriation), since such a framework does not fit in a covenantal context. Rev. VanderMeyden in turn is concerned that such reservations may mean that receiving the promise is not distinguished from receiving the saving work of the Holy Spirit. He points to the Israelites who did not enter into the promised land. The promise was objectively given to them, but there was no subjective appropriation of this.

In order to understand the concerns of Dr. De Jong one must realize that this is not "rooted in a refusal to distinguish receiving the promise from receiving the work of the Holy Spirit." Rather one must understand the ecclesiastical tradition from which he speaks. Prof. B. Holwerda rejected the distinction "objective and subjective" as applied to preaching, in part because this terminology may lead to misunderstanding the character of the Word of God. The Bible could be seen as an objective word that leaves us cold and does not address us. The application would have to add the subjective ele-

ment.¹ Holwerda stressed that God addresses us in His Word and that neither a promise nor a warning is objectively given to people. A promise urges them to turn to God and receive it in faith. And a warning urges them to repent from sin and seek their salvation in Jesus Christ. These are valuable guidelines for the preaching, and it may be better to avoid the word "objective" for the Word of God.

At the same time, Rev. VanderMeyden's appeal to Hebrews 3 and 4 to distinguish God's promise from the personal appropriation is to the point. Hebrews 4:6, for instance, speaks of those who formerly received the good news, but failed to enter because of disobedience. The promise was given, but God's promise required the response of faith; it needed to be appropriated (cf. also, e.g., Gen. 15:6 and Rom. 4 and 5).

Thus, while we may call the terms "objective and subjective" inappropriate, the distinction between granting the promise and its appropriation must be maintained.

Principle and progress

We are encouraged by Rev. VanderMeyden's rejection of the idea of "slumbering regeneration." This was a

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God. Honour the king" (1 Peter 2:17). Christians were thrown to the lions, abortions were heard of already then, but the apostles have learned from the Lord: Give to God what is God's, honour the Emperor. Our Lord Jesus Christ paid taxes and gave honour – even to the very government that crucified him. So too for us. If we have coins in our pockets, we just can't get away from it – we are involved in the political and

economic life of the nation. With the privileges come responsibilities.

"Giving to God what is God's," goes far beyond singing the national anthem on Canada Day. It means: we are involved in the politics of our nation. We must bear God's message into public life. We must be the salt of the earth. We must carry those who rule in our prayers. We must perform a service of love even to the tyrants among

them, by warning them in the name of God and by communicating to them the truth that has been entrusted to us. We must go forth into this area of life – not to make it His, but precisely because it *is* His.

Rev. G.H. Visscher is a Canadian citizen and taxpayer in Burlington, Ontario. There he is pastor and teacher of the Burlington-Waterdown Canadian Reformed Church.



makeshift solution for the issue of infant regeneration adopted by Dr. A. Kuyper and others without Scriptural support. Actually, it forms part of the background for the ecclesiastical Liberation of 1944 when this idea was rejected.²

It is, however, doubtful whether L. Berkhof can be used as a sound guide on this issue since he is critical of the confessional statements concerning regeneration. With respect to the Canons of Dort and the Belgic Confession's use of the term "regeneration" he remarks: "This comprehensive use of the term 'regeneration' often led to confusion and to the disregard of very necessary distinctions."³ We would rather stay closer to the language of our confession than L. Berkhof does.

In the discussion, there appears to be a terminological difference in the use of the word "regeneration." Dr. De Jong uses it for the whole process of renewal and sanctification while Rev. VanderMeyden takes it in the more restricted sense as the beginning of new life. This difference appears to be a reflection of the different uses of the term found in the Belgic Confession (Art. 24) and the Canons of Dort (III/IV 12). Rev. VanderMeyden's point is well taken when he notes that there is not much sense in debating this point as long as we reckon with the different confessional usage when the word "regeneration" is used.

No one can deny, however, that the process of regeneration has a beginning. The confessions, therefore, can and do speak about that beginning (see Canons of Dort, III/IV, 11). On the other hand, there appears to be no problem in

saying that the continual exercise of faith is an ongoing act of appropriation. Faith should in fact be an ongoing activity of appropriating what God says to us, as the many examples mentioned in Hebrews 11 prove.

Word and spirit

Rev. Vandermeyden assures us that the Free Reformed have no desire to isolate the work of the Holy Spirit from the Word, but he wants to emphasize that the Spirit's work by the Word is sovereign. We are thankful for this clear answer.

We in turn wish to assure Rev. VanderMeyden that the emphasis on the Word as means of saving grace does not lead to an "automatic salvation" view. The Canons of Dort state clearly that some who are called do not believe and this confession gives various reasons why the Word of God does not always lead to the fruit of faith (III/IV, 9). Also, there is no desire in us to deny that the Spirit works with the Word according to God's sovereign will (see e.g. Acts 16:14).

Preaching and appropriation

How does all this impact on the preaching? It is probably true that a different preaching style has developed between the Free Reformed and the Canadian Reformed Churches. Rev. VanderMeyden's question whether the Canadian Reformed preacher does not approach the congregation with the (Kuyperian!) idea in the back of their mind that they must all be presumed to be regenerated is worth considering.



CHURCH NEWS 

DECLINED to Flamborough, ON
Rev. W.M. Wielenga
of Lynden, WA, USA
* * *

CALLED to Fergus, ON and
Redeemer, Winnipeg, MB
Rev. J. VanWoudenberg
of Watford, ON

On the other hand, the Free Reformed preacher may need to ask himself what could be the origin of describing the marks of the lost condition of members of the congregation. Both Free Reformed and Canadian Reformed will need to study what God says of this issue in the way He addresses His people in the Old and New Testament. A question that also comes up in this context is whether someone who is known to be an unbeliever can be allowed to remain a member of the congregation of Christ.

These issues are important for they determine how one views and approaches the congregation in the preaching. It would be beneficial if we could study these issues not in our own separate corners, but in fruitful interaction with each other.

In closing, we thank Dr. De Jong and Rev. VanderMeyden for their contribution in this dialogue and we express the hope that this discussion may lead to more understanding and, indeed, to a richer experience of the unity we have in Christ. It may be good to come back to some of the issues raised in the future.

¹See B. Holwerda, 'Evenwichtsconstructies met betrekking tot de prediking' in his *Populair-wetenschappelijke bijdragen* (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1962) 19ff.

²See H. Van Tongeren, *Mandate Maintained* (Grand Rapids: n.p., 1965). This is a translated excerpt from the original H. van Tongeren, *Bewaard bevel: de vrijmaking in kort bestek* (Enschede: Boersma, 1952).

³L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949) 466, see also p. 476: the Confessions "fail to discriminate carefully between the various elements which we distinguish in regeneration." 



General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches Held at Fergus, Ontario, May 5-22, 1998

1. Opening

On behalf of the convening church at Fergus, its counsellor, Rev. J.G. Slaa, called the meeting to order. He requested all present to sing Ps. 122: 1, 2, read Eph. 1, and led in prayer. With some fitting introductory words he welcomed the delegates.

Some office bearers of the convening church examined the credentials and found them in good order. Present as delegates to Synod were: from Regional Synod East, Rev. W. den Hollander, Rev. P.G. Feenstra, Rev. A.J. Pol, Rev. G.H. Visscher, and the elders L. Jagt, W. Oostdyk, J. Schouten, W. Smouter; from Regional Synod West, Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. R.J. Eikelboom (alternate), Rev. J. Moesker, Rev. W.B. Slomp, and the elders W.A. Pleiter, A. VanLeeuwen, P. VanWoudenberg, T.M. Veenendaal. All delegates signed the attendance list.

2. Constitution of Synod

The following officers were elected:

Chairman: Rev. R. Aasman

Vice-chairman:

Rev. W. den Hollander

First Clerk: Rev. G.H. Visscher

Second Clerk: Rev. P.G. Feenstra

Synod was declared constituted and the executive took its place. The chairman, Rev. R. Aasman, thanked Synod for the confidence placed in the officers. He thanked Rev. J. de Gelder for his words during the prayer service the previous evening, Rev. J.G. Slaa for opening the meeting, and the church at Fergus for all the preparations made for Synod.

3. Time schedule and procedures

Synod adopted the following:

Time schedule for meeting of Synod: Monday to Friday 9-12, 2-5, and 7-9 (Monday starting at 9:30); Synod was not scheduled for the first Saturday in order to allow for a meeting of the Foundation for Superannuation, the following Saturdays were optional. Synod seated Rev. J.G. Slaa as an advisor to Synod. It was decided to grant the privilege of the floor to fraternal delegates and observers who were

planning to attend Synod as official representatives. Synod agreed that a selection of the Acts would be uploaded to a home page on the Internet as they became available.

Synod dealt with a large number of submissions which had arrived after the dead-line of March 24, 1998. According to the Guidelines for Synod (published by the convening church), Synod weighed the reasons for such late submissions, and decided on their admissibility or inadmissibility.

Synod considered the concerns of the church at Rockway about the appeals relating to their church and the Rev. T. Hoogsteen. Their concerns were regarding delegates to General Synod who participated as a delegate to a minor assembly in a decision of that assembly pertaining specifically to a person. The church at Rockway asked that such a delegate not serve on the advisory committee for that matter nor vote on that matter. Synod decided to leave the voting on such matters up to the delegate, according to Art. 32 C.O., and to take the concerns of Rockway into consideration in the composition of Advisory Committees of Synod.

4. Agenda and Advisory Committees

The Agenda was finalized and adopted. The following advisory committees were appointed:

Committee 1: Rev. J. Moesker (convener), Rev. G.H. Visscher, br. W. Oostdyk, br. P. VanWoudenberg.

Committee 2: Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. W.B. Slomp (convener), br. W.A. Pleiter, br. T.M. Veenendaal.

Committee 3: Rev. W. den Hollander (convener), Rev. P.G. Feenstra, br. W. Smouter, br. A. VanLeeuwen.

Committee 4: Rev. R.J. Eikelboom, Rev. A.J. Pol (convener), br. L. Jagt, br. J. Schouten.

5. Relations with Churches Abroad

Synod dealt with the Report of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA).

a. Synod decided to continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, The Free Church of Scotland, and the Presbyterian Church of Korea, according to the adopted rules.

b. The CRCA was mandated to discuss as yet with the Dutch deputies the decision of the RCN to permit elders to give the blessing in the worship service, and to inquire about the word inform in rule three of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship; as well, to discuss concerns which were brought to Synod's attention regarding an alternate Form for the Solemnization of Marriage and regarding statements made by certain ministers which bring into question their adherence to the Form of Subscription.

In response to some appeals regarding the relationship with the FCS and the PCK, Synod decided to include in the mandate of the CRCA a further clarification from the FCS on the practice of confessional membership, the doctrine of the church, and the position of the civil magistrate in relation to the church. In the same line Synod decided to include in the mandate of the CRCA a further investigation of the practices regarding the fencing of the Lord's Supper and confessional membership in the PCK. Also with respect to the PCK an outstanding mandate needs to be completed, namely the suggested exchange of professors between Hamilton and Pusan, while every attempt should be made to improve communications between our respective churches.

c. A report on the meeting of the ICRC in Seoul gave a positive evaluation of this meeting. Synod decided that the Can.RCs be represented at the next meeting of the Conference scheduled to take place in the USA in 2001 by two voting delegates. It



mandated the CRCA to make and support membership recommendations at the ICRC for those churches only with which we have official sister-church relations. In view of the fact that the Conference in Seoul made a change in the Constitution of the ICRC, Synod expressed its disapproval. The new reading of the Constitution makes an unnecessary distinction between the Reformed Faith and the confessional standards contained in the Basis.

- d. Synod thankfully took note of a report regarding the contact of the CRCA with the Reformed Church in

the US. Synod decided to decline the invitation of the RCUS at this time to enter into a fraternal relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship. Synod mandated the Committee for contact with the RCUS to discuss further matters of supervision of the Lord's Supper, the concept of the church, the concept of erasure, Lord's Day observance, and the relationship with the NAPARC.

- e. Upon the request of the CRCA Synod considered the workload and strategy of this Committee. Synod decided to restructure the committees for contact with other churches

into two Committees, known as the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) and the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas (CCCA). The first Committee will continue functioning as the present CRCA, while the second Committee will consist of sub-committees for contact with churches located in North and South America (at present the ERQ, the OPC, and the RCUS).

6. Theological College

On Friday, May 15, the professors of the Theological College with their wives joined the delegates of Synod for supper. In the evening session the professors received the privilege of the floor. In their presence Synod decided to direct the Board of Governors to grant tenure to Prof. Dr. J. DeJong and Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes. They were congratulated with this decision.

Synod dealt with a great number of aspects which pertained in general to the work and life of the College. Gratitude was expressed that the work at the Theological College continues without interruption and that all instruction is given in harmony with the Word of God and in agreement with the Confessions of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Prof. Dr. J. DeJong was appointed as Principal for the period of September 1999 to September 2002. The work of the retiring officers, Rev. C. VanSpronsen and br. K. Veldkamp, was acknowledged with gratitude, as was the work of the late Rev. G. VanDooren and of br. A. Van Egmond. Synod also decided to instruct the Board of Governors to proceed with the Recommended Plan for Expansion as soon as they have received commitment for 80% of the funds required. The Principal, Dr. N.H. Gootjes addressed Synod at the end of that session.

Synod further expressed gratitude for the proposed changes to course content and orientation, allowing the presence of guest lecturers, seminars and workshops, to give a more practical orientation and content to the training for the ministry. Synod directed the Board of Governors to proceed with the components of a Pastoral Proficiency Program, including an internship, on a trial basis. During that time this Program is not compulsory for all students involved in the M.Div. program. In view of these changes, the Board of Governors is directed to consider the addition of another faculty member for the diaconological department.

Synod appointed as Governors of the Theological College the following ministers:

From Eastern Canada: Rev. D.G.J. Agema, Rev. W. den Hollander, Rev. P.G. Feenstra (alternates: Rev. G. Nederveen, Rev. P. Aasman, and Rev. C. Bosch).

From Western Canada: Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. J. Moesker, Rev. J. Visscher (alternates: Rev. R.A. Schouten, Rev. W.B. Slomp, and Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar).

The following non-ministers were appointed: br. M. Kampen, br. W. Oostdyk, br. H.J. Sloots, br. W. Smouter, br. J. VanderWoude.

7. L'Église Réformée du Québec

A Report of the Committee for Contact with l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec (ERQ) was discussed. On the basis of this Report Synod noted with gratitude the contact and developing relationship with the ERQ. Synod decided to decline at this time the invitation of the ERQ to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship. From the Report it was evident that the ERQ is in the beginning stages of church development. On certain matters and issues they have not articulated a position (e.g. liturgical forms, fencing of the Lord's Supper, order of worship). A relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship, therefore, is neither feasible nor advisable at this time.

Synod observed that the following areas need further clarification and ongoing discussion, and included them in the mandate of the Committee for contact with the ERQ: the nature and status of the deacons and deaconesses; the matter of liturgical forms, order of worship, supervision of the pulpit and Lord's Day observance; the fencing of the Lord's table; the need for confessional binding for members and office bearers; the differences in the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship; the question whether federative unity is possible or not.

8. Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity

Synod discussed the Report of this Committee. Synod changed the name from Deputies to Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity. With gratitude the contributions of the late Rev. J.D. Wielenga to the work of this Committee were acknowledged. The Committee received the following mandate:

1. to make their presence known for the purpose of information and consultation wherever necessary;

2. to represent the churches, whenever invited, at assemblies or meetings held for the purpose of pursuing ecclesiastical unity;
3. to pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the United Reformed Churches in North America with a view towards establishing federative unity;
4. to represent the churches (when invited) at meetings of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring possibilities of federative unity;
5. to make themselves available upon request of Canadian Reformed Churches for advice on local developments;
6. to discuss and develop a proposal as to how to proceed in encouraging federative unity;
7. to provide information to the churches at regular intervals, and to report to the churches six months prior to the next general Synod.

Upon the recommendation of Regional Synod West, Synod also dealt with an overture concerning contact with the Free Reformed Churches of North America. Synod noted with gratitude the contact between the Canadian Reformed Church at Aldergrove and the Emmanuel Free Reformed Church at Abbotsford. The Church at Aldergrove followed the ecclesiastical way via the minor assemblies and provided these assemblies with sufficient information. Considering that the cause of unity would require that discussions between churches in these federations also take place on a federative level, Synod decided to add the following to the mandate of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity:

1. to take up contact with the External Relations Committee of the Free Reformed Churches of North America;
2. to initiate fraternal dialogue with the Free Reformed Churches in North America with a view towards establishing federative unity.

9. Bible Translations

Synod received the Report from the Committee on Bible Translations (CBT) with gratitude. The CBT was commended for the manner in which they served the churches. When the CBT learned that the International Bible Society intended to produce a gender-neutral edition of the NIV, it dealt with this issue before it began to carry out its own specific mandate. The CBT then

carried out its mandate on textual matters which needed to be brought to the NIV Translation Center. In the new mandate for the CBT Synod expressed the need for a close monitoring of the development of the NIV and of the activities of the IBS. An expert in English linguistics was added to the CBT, not only for confronting the inclusive language issue, but also to help the committee deal with grammatical and stylistic questions. Synod decided to continue to recommend the NIV for use in the churches. Yet it also continued to leave it in the freedom of the churches if they feel compelled to use other translations that received favourable reviews in the reports. Synod mandated the CBT to receive comments from the churches and/or members about passages in the NIV in need of improvement, to scrutinize these comments, and pass on valid concerns to the NIV Translation Center.

10. Book of Praise

Synod dealt with the Report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise. Upon the recommendation of the Committee Synod appointed a new Committee for the purpose of creating and maintaining an official web page for the Canadian Reformed Churches which will contain official and semi-official materials that reflect the life of the churches, are of benefit to the membership, and of assistance to her witness in this world.

Synod decided to put the matter of an alternate melody and harmonization of Hymn 1A to rest. The existing melodies for Hymn 1A and 1B will be maintained. Synod saw merit in the so-called Overleaf Musical Notation, repeating the musical notation when a psalm or hymn continues on the overleaf. The Committee, therefore, was mandated to prepare the Book of Praise with an Overleaf Musical Notation, and to present this revision to the next General Synod. In regards to the change-over by many churches to the NIV Bible Translation, Synod mandated the Committee to prepare the Prose section of the Book of Praise with NIV Bible references, and change the "thees" and "thous" accordingly. Synod adopted the revised version of the Nicene Creed, as recommended by the Committee.

11. Orthodox Presbyterian Church

In addition to the Report of the Committee for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Synod received many submissions from the churches regarding relations with the

OPC. Because this issue is of major concern to the churches, and to avoid the impression of not doing full justice to the matter, all the material submitted was declared admissible.

In its recommendations in answer to the concerns and appeals, Synod decided to express regret once again and to remind the appellants that Synod 1980 already did so when it expressed regret that the evaluation of the divergencies, as discussed in the letter of April, 1976, was not explained in detail by the Synod Coaldale 1977, before stating that these divergencies do not form an impediment to recognize the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 1977, Article 91, Consideration h). Synod affirmed that the Evaluation of Divergencies presented to Synod 1986 by the CCOPC is the document which provided the grounds for the 1977 decision to recognize the OPC as a true church. These grounds were upheld, considering also that the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards are not such that they prevent Ecclesiastical Fellowship, but they are divergencies about which there can continue to be discussions among those who belong to Reformed Churches.

Synod noted with thankfulness the desire of the OPC to be faithful to the Scriptures and to defend the Reformed heritage; as well, that the OPC, by terminating the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CRCNA has taken a clear stand in maintaining the truth and authority of the Word of God, and has removed another obstacle for the Canadian Reformed Churches to come to ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC.

Synod decided to adopt an amended Agreement concerning the Fencing of the Lord's Table and one concerning Confessional Membership as the basis for Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC, and to instruct the CCOPC to pass it on to the OPC Committee for Ecclesiastical and Interchurch Relationships (CEIR) for adoption by the General Assembly.

1. Concerning Fencing the Lord's Table:

The churches of the Reformation confess that the Lord's supper should not be profaned (1 Cor. 11:27, see Heid. Cat. Lord's Day 30, Q&A 82; Westminster Confession ch. 29, 8). This implies that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is to be supervised. In this supervision

the Church exercises discipline and manifests itself as true church. This supervision is to be applied to the members of the local church as well as to the guests. This means that a general verbal warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith and confirmation of a godly life is required. The eldership has a responsibility in supervising the admission to the Lord's Supper.

2. Concerning Confessional Membership:

The churches of the Reformation believe that they have to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3) and are called to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned (Rom. 16:17). Anyone who answers the membership vows in the affirmative is bound to receive and adhere to the doctrine of the Bible as the patristic church has summarized this teaching in the Apostles' Creed and the churches of the Reformation have elaborated on this in their confessions. Every confessing member is bound to this doctrine and must be willing to be instructed in it.

Conditional to the adoption of this Agreement, Synod decided to invite the OPC to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, according to the adopted rules for this relationship. Any further discussion regarding differences in confession and church polity must then take place within the relation of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, with the intention to upbuild each other mutually in the faith to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:3) In the event the General Assembly of the OPC does not adopt the above, Synod decided to reconsider the present relationship of ecclesiastical contact with the OPC at the next General Synod. In that case, the CCOPC must make recommendations to the next General Synod.

12. Appeals

Synod considered various appeals from churches and/or persons. The following may be noted:

1. In answer to the appeals of the churches at Barrhead, Coaldale, and Taber appealing Acts 1995, Article 115 (regarding the admission of the church at Denver into the Federation of Canadian Reformed

Churches), Synod decided to submit its Considerations. In these considerations Synod states that these churches correctly adduce the normative character of the articles 27-29 BC. In the midst of the difficulties that had developed in the local OPC church, the church at Denver sought to be obedient to the norm of Article 28 by joining a federation of churches they considered true and faithful to the Word of the Lord. Obedience to Articles 27-29 was being sought in the whole process. It was the temporary relationship with the OPC and the subsequent developments (e.g. identified divergencies such as the fencing of the Lord's table and confessional membership to be resolved first) that complicated the situation. In regard to Church Orderly concerns, Synod maintained the 1992 decision itself was the new ground, leading to a further investigation, which led Classis March 1993 to re-open the matter of Denver's request. These churches did not appeal this decision in the minor assemblies, so that it could be concluded that the appellants accepted the March 1993 decision as settled and binding. Synod considered as well that from the material presented it could be concluded that more consultation and communication between the OPC and the CanRCs in the process of admitting Denver into the federation would have been helpful. It is evident that the evaluation of the process of admission of the church at Denver into the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches hinges on the evaluation of the history of our contact with the OPC since 1977.

2. The matter of women's participation in the election of office bearers, also called Women's Voting, came to Synod in an appeal of Article 51 of the Acts 1995, in which Synod Abbotsford had declared an overture on the matter inadmissible. Synod upheld this decision, considering that a proposal must proceed through the minor assemblies until it reaches General Synod (Art. 30 C.O.). Synod considered it unfortunate, indeed, that Article 30 C.O. had not always been applied properly in the past, so that misunderstanding resulted from such inconsistency. In order to correct this situation, Synod had to declare an overture from the church at Aldergrove and from the Fellowship

church at Burlington on this matter inadmissible as well. The minor assemblies have to deal with these matters first, and only if a Classis is convinced of the validity of the proposal will it be placed on the agenda of Regional Synod. If Regional Synod is convinced that the proposal is valid, it will place the matter on the agenda of General Synod. Besides upholding the Church Order in Article 30 on these appeals and overtures, Synod did the same with submissions concerning the Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico and about an official Pro Life Policy of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

13. Fraternal Delegates and Observers

Various fraternal delegates attended Synod for several days each: Rev. C. Bouwman from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and Rev. A. de Jager from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands addressed Synod and conveyed greetings, sharing information on developments in their respective sister-churches. As observers there were present: Rev. J.J. Peterson of the OPC, Rev. G. Syms and br. D.S. Stelpstra of the RCUS, Rev. Paulin Bedard and Rev. Jean Guy de Blois of the ERQ, Rev. R. Stienstra and Rev. P. Vellenga of the URCNA. Of these observers the Rev. J.J. Peterson, Rev. G. Syms, Rev. P. Bedard, and Rev. R. Stienstra addressed Synod as well, each speaking about the present contacts and the way these are appreciated and assessed at the present time. All these delegates made ample use as well of the opportunity to interact with the various Advisory Committees of Synod, which were dealing with the contacts.

14. Miscellaneous

In the course of its proceedings, Synod dealt also with the following items: Inspection of the General Archives; Report of the church at Carman re the General Fund; Report Address Church; Finances General Synod 1995 in Abbotsford.

Regarding Acts of Closed Session, Synod decided not to accede to the request of the churches at Burlington-East and Guelph. The question of what is published in the Acts of Synod is not regulated by Scripture or Church Order. The Regulations of General Synod do not make any provision for public acts and confidential acts. All ecclesiastical assemblies, therefore, retain the right to

decide for themselves what should be made public and what should be kept confidential. Thus it would be inappropriate to make a general rule that all Acts of Synod must be included in the general acts. Instead it is the responsibility of every synod to decide for itself whether or not a particular Act should be kept confidential. In this regard, Synod 1998 decided that all acts can be included in the general acts.

15. Appointments

Synod made the following appointments, in addition to the ones mentioned above (the numbers between brackets indicate the year when the committee member is to retire from the committee):

- a. Committee of Relations with Churches Abroad:
Rev. E. Kampen (convener) (2001),
Rev. C. VanSpronsen (2001),
br. H.A. Berends (2001),
br. H. Hoogstra (2007).
- b. Committee of Contact with Churches in the Americas:
RCUS Sub-committee,
Rev. J. Moesker (convener) (2004),
Rev. K. Jonker (2007),
br. W. Gortemaker (2004),
br. A. Poppe (2007);
ERQ Sub-committee,
Rev. P.G. Feenstra (coordinator of CCCA and convener ERQ) (2004),
Rev. A.J. Pol (2007),
br. W. Oostdyk (2004),
br. John Boot (2001);
OPC Sub-committee,
Rev. J. deGelder (convener) (2004),
Dr. N.H. Gootjes (2001),
br. G. Nordeman (2001),
br. G. Van Woudenberg (2004).
- c. Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity:
East: Dr. J. DeJong (convener) (2004),
Rev. W. den Hollander (2001),
br. F. Westrik (2007);
West: Rev. R. Aasman (2001),
Rev. W.B. Slomp (2007),
br. P. VanWoudenberg (2004).
- d. Standing Committee for the Book of Praise:
Rev. C. Bosch (convener) (2007),
Rev. B.J. Berends (2001),
sr. C. VanHalen-Faber (2004),
br. T.M.P. VanderVen (2007).
- e. Committee on Bible Translations:
Rev. P. Aasman (convener) (2001),
Dr. W. Helder (2007),

Prof. J. Geertsema,
Dr. C. VanDam.

- f. Churches for Days of Prayer: The church at Burlington-Waterdown and the Providence Church at Edmonton.
- g. General Fund: the church at Carman.
- h. Archives: the church at Burlington-East.
- i. Inspection of Archives: the church at Burlington-Waterdown.
- j. Audit Finances of Synod 1998: the church at Guelph.
- k. Address Church: in Canada, the church at Burlington-East; in the USA, the church at Grand Rapids.
- l. Committee for Printing the Acts: the Clerks of Synod 1998.
- m. Committee for Official Web-site: br. T. Flach, br. J. Hoogerdijk, Rev. R.E. Pot, Rev. G.H. Visscher (coordinator).
- n. Convening Church for next General Synod: the church at Neerlandia (May 2001).

16. Closing

After observing with thankfulness that Censure ad Art. 34 C.O. was not necessary, the chairman, Rev. R. Aasman, addressed Synod with words of gratitude for the good cooperation and harmony in which Synod could come to the completion of its work. He entrusted the work of Synod to the blessing of the Lord, expressing the sincere desire that the decisions and work of Synod may be a blessing for the churches. He thanked the coordinator of the ladies committee, sr. Betty Dijkstra, and the church of Fergus with some fitting words to express the appreciation of the delegates, and added some tokens of appreciation to these words. The vice-chairman, Rev. W. den Hollander, thanked the chairman for his excellent leadership, words which were confirmed by all delegates of Synod 1998. He requested the singing of Psalm 118:1, 4, and led in thanksgiving and prayer. Thus on Friday, May 22, 1998, at 7:45 p.m., General Synod Fergus 1998 was closed.

For General Synod Fergus 1998,
W. den Hollander,
vice-chairman at that time. 

Greetings from other Churches to General Synod Fergus 1998

From the many special speeches delivered at synod by delegates from other churches we have selected the two addresses from churches in Canada for publication. These and all the other speeches will be printed in the Acts of synod which are forthcoming. – Editor

BE FAITHFUL, CONSISTENT AND COURAGEOUS

Address of the Rev. P. Bedard of l'Église Réformée du Québec

Esteemed Brothers,

It is a joy and a privilege to be with you. I would like to thank you, also on behalf of Rev. deBlois, for the welcome we received. This is the first time I am present at one of your Synods. But it is not the first time I have the pleasure to meet with some of you.

My first official contact with your churches goes back exactly four years ago. In May 1994, I met the consistory of the church at Ottawa. I went with another delegate of our Synod. We were appointed by the Synod of l'Église Réformée du Québec to initiate contacts with the Canadian Reformed churches. At that time, we didn't know much about your churches and about the kind of relationship that was possible between you and us. We contacted the church at Ottawa. I can bear witness here with gratitude that we have been warmly received by their consistory. They were quite interested to hear about who we were and what was the Lord doing among us in Quebec. We appreciated their willingness and availability to help us go through the whole process of developing official contacts with your Federation. We worked together to prepare an overture presenting the ERQ. The consistory at Ottawa sent the overture to Classis Ontario North. I also had the privilege to be there, in December 1994, for that second step. Rev. deBlois was also there. Classis accepted to send the request for Ecclesiastical Fellowship to Synod Abbotsford, three years ago.

As you know, Synod Abbotsford appointed a committee for contact with our churches. And again, I had the privilege and the responsibility to be part of the next step. Rev. deBlois, Mr. Thibaudeau and myself were appointed by our Synod to work with your committee. And we had the joy to meet together, to work together and to know each other. More than that, we together have appreciated to learn what the Lord was doing in the long history of your churches as well as in the very short history of our churches. I can give evidence again in favor of Rev. Visscher, Rev. VanPopta, Mr. Oostdyk and Mr. Boot. I have appreciated their ability to listen, to ask specific questions, to answer our questions, to raise some concerns, and to give us encouragement. In a word I have seen in their attitude, in their words and deeds a brotherly love, for which I am thankful to the Lord. The committee didn't consider their mandate lightly. After many meetings, readings and discussions, they have submitted a lengthy report to your churches.

During these years, I also had the opportunity to visit some of your congregations and to meet some other people of your churches. And each time I have been impressed by the rich spiritual heritage the Lord gave you and by your serious desire to transmit it to the next generation. Through these experiences I can say, personally, that my vision and my understanding of the church of the Lord has deepened, and my confidence in the Lord's gathering and preserving His people has grown. Not that we should live by sight. No we live by faith alone in His promises. But the fact that the Lord has graciously given us brothers and sisters is a strong encouragement.

Having myself been born and raised in a strong Roman Catholic family, I must admit that it would be easy for me to covet what the young people of your congregations may receive at home and in your churches: the pure Gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ, the faithful

teaching of the Bible, regular prayer, catechism, words of wisdom, fellowship with brothers and sisters in the Lord, many good examples of Christian families, and so many other things that some of the members of your churches may sometimes take for granted. I encourage them not to take them for granted, and not to neglect, or even to despise the heritage received. If the contacts between you and us may be helpful at least in this area, I would be happy. Whatever will happen in the future about our relationship, the work already done would have not been in vain.

But I am not complaining about what I have not received. I have so many reasons to be thankful. I even fear that if I had to count all the blessings I received from the Lord, I would forget many of them. The king David said: "Bless the Lord, o my soul, and forget none of His benefits." (Ps. 103:2). It would be too long here to tell you my story: Having been baptized in the Roman Catholic church, having received all the Roman Catholic doctrine; then as a teenager starting to read the Bible, being converted at eighteen, rebaptized in a brethren assembly, and later on, providentially discovering the Reformed faith, struggling with the doctrine of the covenant and infant baptism, and finally accepting and confessing what the Huguenots, my ancestors, believed four hundred years ago! And today I have the so great privilege and responsibility to be minister of the Word and sacraments! How can it be possible?

In our churches in Quebec, we are a total of about three hundred people. Most of them have gone through a more or less similar experience. And today, we have children. We teach them the Bible and the Reformed doctrine. By God's grace, we want to be a good example for them. We pray the Lord for this second generation. We also want to reach other people around us with the Gospel that we cherish. The road before us is full of challenges. The world around us is full of dangers. And we lack

so much experience. But yes, there are so many reasons to be thankful because there are so many blessings to count!

If you are looking for an established, well organized Reformed federation in Quebec, maybe you will be disappointed. Maybe you will not find it the way you would like to find it. It would be easy for you to say: "Look here, they don't have this, they don't have that, they are not like us." Of course, we are not. How could we be? Yes, we have shortcomings. And you have too. Yes, it takes time to build a Reformed church. And the Lord took time to build your churches. And it is not finished. But should we first concentrate on what we do not have or on what we do very imperfectly? To my eyes, our very existence is a miracle of God's grace! And of course God's grace comes with God's law. There are promises and obligations in His covenant! You see, I have learned it. So, as a new Federation we have to grow, to learn and to apply God's Word in all the areas of our church life. For example, we have to discuss things like confessional membership and the fencing of the Lord's table. And I believe that you may be helpful in these things, as well as we may be helpful to you in other areas.

We have studied your rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. We have adopted quite similar rules. One thing that attracts me a lot in these rules is the mutual character of the relationship. How could two different Federations, of two different sizes, with two different histories and experiences, be bound in a mutual relationship? This is a good question. We may have the right answer on paper. And I think the rules give a clear answer. But then we have to live up to them. The smaller and younger brother may be tempted to have an inferiority complex. The bigger and older brother may be tempted to have a superiority complex. It must not be so in the Lord's family. We both have things to give to the other and things to receive from the other, mutually. The rules, I believe, express that truth clearly.

But maybe I anticipate too much. The Ecclesiastical Fellowship is not established yet. Our Synod has accepted to approach you and to propose to you such a relationship. But you may still have some questions, some concerns that must be dealt with. Is it feasible to come to such a fellowship? Is it the appropriate time? Are there other discussions and works that should be done before? Your Synod

has to make decisions in this regard. I know that you will not consider the subject lightly, but that you are devoting prayer, time and energy to it. All that I can say here is this: May God's will be done and may you have wisdom to make decisions for His glory.

If I may say something about other decisions you still have to make, three words come to my mind: Faithfulness, consistency and courage. I encourage you to continue to be faithful to Scriptures, to be consistent specially in the way you deal with other churches, and to have the courage to make the good decisions that will express faithfulness and consistency. On one hand, I know your deep desire to help others. To me, it is obvious. On the other hand, I know where you stand with your Confession. It is also obvious. Sometimes you may wonder how those two can go together. How to abide by the Confession, in doctrine and life, and at the same time how to keep your hands opened, ready to help others and share your heritage with others? I have no magic formula to propose to you. But I believe, I have the conviction that they go together, consistency and openness, even if you may not always see it. Sometimes you may have tensions among you, among your churches, about that, even tensions inside yourselves. We live by faith, don't we? Our refuge is in God's wisdom, not ours, isn't it? The best way you can help others is to be faithful, consistent and courageous, and all this by God's grace only. But now I am starting to preach to you. Please forgive me.

I think it is appropriate here to conclude with a word about your generosity. Since your last Synod, and even before, many of your congregations have supported us financially. They have done that "not reluctantly or under compulsion," but as cheerful givers and with amazing generosity. As the Apostle Paul says: "Whoever sows generously will also reap generously." (2 Cor. 9:6). May your churches reap, by God's grace, one hundred times what they have given. And be sure that your generosity results in many expressions of thanks to God!

In conclusion, my prayer is that the Lord will continue to guide us together. In each of our congregations, in our respective Federations, and all together may we "be like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose" (Phil. 2:2), having the same attitude as that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you.

Address to Fergus 1998

MUTUAL EFFORTS TOWARD ECCLESIASTICAL UNITY

Address of the Rev. R. Stienstra of the United Reformed Churches of North America

Esteemed Brothers,

As spokesman of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the United Reformed Churches in North America, I first of all want to thank you for extending the invitation to us to be present as observers at your General Synod in 1998. For us this is a historic occasion. Whereas we have had a number of times during the past years when we became acquainted with your deputies at our assemblies, today constitutes a special event for us, and we treasure it.

On behalf of the committee I bring you fraternal greetings from our federation. The 70 churches consisting of some 17,000 souls wish you God's richest blessing as you strive to be faithful and true to the high calling of being His people in the midst of a sinful world. May the Lord Who gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself a church chosen unto everlasting life, continue to use and bless your federation in the North American setting as He has done so evidently in the past fifty years.

Your deputies for the promotion of ecclesiastical unity have responded to the correspondence from the URC committee for ecumenical relations and church unity in a positive way. After a year or two of such correspondence, and with the input of the URC Synod of St. Catharines in 1997, our committee considered the time had come to propose that the progress made in previous correspondence be advanced by face to face meetings. With the willingness of your deputies two of such meetings have taken place in 1998 with a third one scheduled in September.

From our side we are pleased that your deputies were agreeable that our mutual objective should be integrated federative unity. The two sides could not (yet) agree on the most suitable pathway or strategy toward that unity. In general both parties agreed to follow the Dutch model of *verkenning*, *herkenning*, and *erkenning*. The deputies proposed "recognition, acceptance, and union." The committee suggested, "exploration, recognition, and integration." A suitable resolution is being worked out.

I expect that your deputies have reported these matters to the Synod. In any case a report will in due time appear in

the church papers. I wish to add some comments, however, in conveying the greetings of the United Reformed Churches.

Our two federations have much in common, such as the Three Forms of Unity and an identical Form of Subscription; not to mention the same ecclesiastical forms, as well as the Church Order of Dort as basis for our respective orders. But there are some distinctives. We share a similar history, yet one which has its distinctives as well. One such distinctive, I continue to use the word here, is the fact that the URC finds its beginning in the secessions during the present decade from the Christian Reformed Church.

Most of our members were born and raised in the CRC, and most of the churches of our federation are in the United States and do not trace their history directly via the Doleantie of 1886, nor the Secession of 1834. Their forefathers immigrated during the 1850s and founded the CRC in 1857. Of course, our 29 Canadian churches consist mainly of members who share your origins in the Gereformeerde Kerken in Holland, but who did not join the Liberated churches in 1944.

In some sense the United Reformed Churches are the legitimate continuation of the Christian Reformed Church. We seek to be faithful to the Confessions and true to the Scriptures. This brings me to the matter of recognition and the true church of Christ in terms of the Belgic Confession, Articles 27-29.

We confess as you do that we are "a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers, who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed by His blood and sealed by the Holy Spirit." As such we are part of the one catholic or universal Church. The United Reformed Churches consider themselves to be the true church of Christ. With dedication and faithfulness the office-bearers see to it that the pure preaching of the gospel is proclaimed. The churches maintain the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them. The elders seek to exercise church discipline for the correcting and punishing of sins.

Although weakness and sin continue to be evident in our churches, and hypocrites are mixed in with the good, yet without hesitation we consider ourselves the true church of Christ. It is out of this conviction that our committee is persuaded that mutual recognition of each other as faithful and true churches of the Lord needs to take place sometime on the road to integrated ecclesiastical unity between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches. I stress sometime during the process rather than at its conclusion.

But then, mutual recognition is not an empty, vague gesture nor an expression of the concept of church pluriformity. We view the teaching of church pluriformity unscriptural and non-conforming to the Reformed confessions. Our committee is convinced that mu-

tual recognition has serious consequences for both church bodies. We propose that after adequate dialogue between us has taken place, some ecclesiastical fellowship be entered upon which contains the ingredients that in principle pulpit exchange and table fellowship be allowed to be a stimulant in the movement toward full integration.

Let me expand a little. To our committee it is inconceivable that the Scriptures teach, or that the Reformed Confessions propound that when two churches are in agreement that both demonstrate and practice faithfully the three marks of the true church as confessed in the Belgic Confession, Article 29, there should not be some form of Biblical fellowship between them beyond the perfunctory.

I conclude with this final notation. The URC committee on which I serve has written to your deputies that we "consider the secession of 1944, or the Liberation, to be God's way and work to bring His people back to Himself from deviant teachings and practices." We also wrote to you that "we believe that the CRC should have established relations with the liberated churches in the Netherlands and discontinued them with Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland."

Brothers, may the King of the Church prosper and bless you in your labors as General Synod these days, and may He also bless and prosper our mutual efforts toward ecclesiastical unity. To Him alone be the glory! 

THE HI-LITER

News from Here and There

By J. de Gelder

First of all a big thank you for all the information about *pyrogies*. A while ago I read in the Barrhead/Neerlandia bulletin about an evening on how to make *pyrogies*, and I could not figure out what they were. But now I know. Thank you again for the phone calls and fax messages, complete with recipes.

Edmonton

We have all heard about the ruling of the Supreme Court regarding the rights of homosexuals. In the Providence bulletin Rev. Aasman wrote:

Although a decision has been made not to use the notwithstanding clause, there are still some major decisions to be made regarding the rights of homosexuals in our society. We all still have an opportunity to give our input. I hope to include a list of MLA's phone numbers and addresses in this bulletin.

And then there is indeed a list of 29 names and addresses in the bulletin. A practical and helpful initiative to get members of the congregation directly involved in those matters.

Houston

We make a move to the west and read in the Bulkley Valley Echo:

As congregation we are about to experience a very great change. The Lord willing on March 29, we plan to have our first worship services in our new building. The finishing touches are being made in the coming week. Special thanks to the building committee for a job well done! We indeed have received from the Lord a very beautiful place of worship.

Our heartfelt congratulations to the brothers and sisters in Houston!

Saskatoon

We go to the east again and stop in Saskatoon. But there is no Canadian Reformed Church in Saskatoon! No – not yet. But the report of a consistory meeting in Edmonton Providence informs us that:

Those families from Abbotsford will be moving to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The request is to set up a house congregation there (Providence is the closest congregation geographically). After having discussed this matter, consistory agrees with this request, in principle.

And with regard to the same matter Rev. Jonker of Winnipeg Grace wrote about a message from a colleague in B.C.:

He asked me whether I knew of people who have considered a move to the Saskatoon area. I pass this request on to the readers of our Church News. . . . I personally would support church planting in this province where we don't have sister churches. In our time it is getting harder to send out missionaries overseas. Maybe the time has come for our churches to apply God's command of Genesis 1 and 9, and Christ's command of Matthew 28 for our own country!

Toronto

In the fall the Burlington Reformed Study Centre is organizing a series of meetings on worship. But consistories also realize their responsibility for the character of the worship service. The following example I found in the Toronto bulletin, speaking about the service at Easter.

The consistory has also given permission for the combination of piano and flute/trumpet, which will be played during the collections and which will accompany the singing of the closing song! In this way the use of musical instruments and the singing of the climactic song of praise will bring the worship of our gracious God and the joyous celebration of the glorious victory over death through the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour to an extra festive conclusion!

Hamilton

In many congregations this is also the time of the year that new elders and deacons are nominated, elected, and ordained. In various churches different election practices seem to be in place. In Hamilton they do it as follows:

Today is election day! Remember to vote after the morning worship service or before the afternoon worship service. Voting stations are set up in the basement. The counting of the ballots will take place at a meeting which is scheduled for tomorrow evening at 7:30 p.m.

Although every one is welcome to attend this meeting, you need not feel obliged to attend, as the results will be announced next Sunday morning.

Armadale

As was mentioned in a previous Hi-Liter, in our Australian sister churches interesting developments occur concerning Mission. The Mission Committee of the church at Armadale, which took over from Albany the responsibility for a group of brothers and sisters – a home-congregation in Lae, PNG – is working towards the institution of the RCPNG in Lae.

To that end visits have been made, and will be made on a regular basis, and close cooperation and consultation has been agreed on with the Foreign Mission Board in Toronto, as well as with its missionary, Rev. S.'t Hart, who works in another part of PNG.

Mount Nasura

In the meantime the church at Mount Nasura is distancing itself from the work in PNG, and started working out its own mission commitments:

After further discussing a proposal for a Mission Committee for India, consistory decides to adopt it, with the understanding that it has to prove itself with time. The main function of this committee is to conduct the contact between consistory and G. Jacob in India.

Launceston

No one will deny the importance of regular Bible study, but sometimes we can differ as to what would be the most adequate structure or format for studying God's Word. In the King's Bridge, the bulletin of the churches in Tasmania I read the following about a new format in the church at Launceston:

All adult members (of the whole congregation, I guess [JDG]) are divided into groups in their area and will meet either weekly or fortnightly. The aim is that couples attend but we realize that in some cases this may prove impossible. Leaders will be appointed for each group and they are responsible for the running of the club, dissemination of rosters and study material and they will be contacting everybody soon with details of the venue for the first meeting.

The advantages of the new format are numerous. Some are:

- * To create a more intimate setting which will foster an awareness of each others needs.
- * People will be able to share their spiritual experiences and blessings and encourage each other.
- * The new format is flexible in that each group can decide which night and time is most appropriate for them.
- * Prayer can focus on special needs of the group members.

All groups will begin studying 1 John 1. The topic for the first evening will be 1 John 1: 1 - 4.

I am actually quite curious how this will work.



By C. Van Dam

Juan Calvino Seminary Update

P.Y. De Jong in Mexico

Dr. Peter Y. De Jong, a well known and outstanding speaker for the Reformed faith, was Visiting Professor in February. He spoke on “everyday Christianity” – the Calvinist perspective of the all-encompassing claims of Christ in our daily life, with special attention to the role of church officers in promoting a sound doctrine and practice for God’s people.

While in Mexico, Dr. De Jong was also able to visit a Christian orphanage operated by one of the Seminary’s graduate students living in Queretaro, a three-hour drive from Mexico City.

Dr. De Jong’s study on Revelation is now almost translated into Spanish. The translation is being done by an expert translator, Prof. Jorge Ramirez of Juan Calvino Seminary. This is a momentous event for the Spanish speaking world – a Reformed, that is Biblical, explanation of this important Bible book! If you would like to support this work, please write Dr. P.Y. De Jong (at 86 Robin Road, Beecher, Illinois, USA 60401).

The growing importance of the seminary

Earlier this year, the Association for Presbyterian and Reformed Institutions of Theology in Mexico held its semi-annual meeting in Merida, Yucatan. Dr. Joseph Michael Velazquez, president of the seminary, as well as two Board members attended. When the meeting’s main speaker proposed the idea of “*culture*” as determining the context of the Bible,¹ it appeared that the Bible schools, institutes and seminaries present would go along with this popular humanistic theme – until Dr. Velazquez mounted a spirited counter proposal: *the Bible* as the context for determining all culture! After a prolonged, often strong debate, the other institutions began to slowly follow the Calvinist position, even to the point of proposing the

Juan Calvino Seminary as the next site for its meeting and their Professors as the main speakers! We can rejoice that this seminary gives theological leadership in Mexico.

New students from NPC Presbytery

In what looks like a major breakthrough, one of the larger presbyteries of the National Presbyterian Church (NPC) has begun to send its students to Juan Calvino Seminary. It has done so because of continuing concern for the drift from Biblical doctrine and Godly practice of the leadership of the NPC.

The first two students have arrived and more will follow. They are however not being given the scholarship normally given to NPC seminary students, putting them at a considerable disadvantage. But the students are determined. “My own denominational (NPC) Seminary is Liberationistic in its theology, but I am determined,” says Eriberto, one of the students, “to follow a truly Biblical course of study here at Juan Calvino, even at the loss of my four-year scholarship. I am in an economic bind now, but I must look at my future ministry and the future of my church.”

Continuing needs

Mexico City is one of the most expensive places in the world in which to live. Yet, the professors receive less than \$ 150 a month. This has led to their seeking two or three other jobs – leaving the seminary greatly weakened. It also affects the ability of the professors to teach and to present the great Calvinist doctrines so desperately needed in society at large. Dr. Velazquez asks: “What price can be placed on providing the unique Biblical world-view which only the Reformed faith can provide for Mexico today? I can think of no more effective missions that this preparation of

our youth for a life of ministry to our people.”

Borrowed name returned!

Readers of *Clarion* will recall that the Juan Calvino Seminary used to enjoy the considerable financial support of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC).¹ When Juan Calvino Seminary however insisted on purity of doctrine from the CRC and removed a CRC professor from their faculty because of Marxist teachings and relocated him to a non-teaching position, a chain of events started which led to a break with the CRC and a split in the Mexican church. The CRC however established another Juan Calvino Seminary in Mexico City so that the CRC would not have to explain to supporters back home why their men were no longer teaching at Juan Calvino. So there were two seminaries with identical names.

This confusing and unjust situation has now come to an end. The CRC has quietly renamed their seminary, but only after much pressure from all the other Mexican theological institutions which knew what had happened. Dr. Velazquez, president of the seminary, asked “will we now receive an apology or will the CRC now admit what it did in Mexico? I think not, but its submission to the demands of the accrediting agencies in Mexico to return our name speaks for itself.”

¹See “The Light of the Gospel in Mexico,” *Clarion* July 11 and 25, 1997.

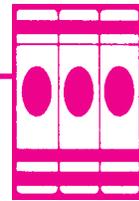
Source: *Juan Calvino Theological Seminary Sem News of March and April 1998.*

Please send any gifts for the Seminary (and make cheques payable to)

Worldwide Christian Schools
(Mexico Project)
P.O. Box 81129
RPO Fiddlers Green
Ancaster, ON L9G 4X1

BOOK REVIEW

By F.G. Oosterhoff



***Their Blood Cries Out*, Paul Marshall, 1997, Word Publishing, Nashville, Tennessee. \$18.99 CDN; \$12.99 US**

Suffering and silence

The heading of this article is the title of a book about Christians who are being persecuted for their faith. The author, Dr. Paul Marshall, is a Canadian scholar who has visited several of the countries he describes, and who has spoken with many victims of persecution. He has written a gripping account of their plight, one that I sincerely hope will find many readers among both Christians and non-Christians. These suffering Christians – men, women, and children – need our help.

The book is not easy to read. True, it is well written, balanced, reader-friendly both in its use of language and its organization, and fair to all sides. It is also very informative. But the nature of the information is often nightmarish. Marshall's account makes clear the frightening extent of the sufferings the victims of persecution undergo, and the horrifying manner in which abuse, torture, harassment, and measures of discrimination are being applied. In that sense the account is a truly disturbing one. To quote the author himself, his book "is about a spiritual plague. It tells of massacre, rape, torture, slavery, beatings, mutilations, and imprisonment. It also tells of pervasive patterns of extortion, harassment, family division, and crippling discrimination in employment and education. This plague affects over two hundred million people, with an additional four hundred million suffering from discrimination and legal impediments" (p. 4).

Marshall's book is disturbing not only because of the nature and extent of the sufferings he describes, but also because he shows that the situation is still being ignored by far too many western politicians and journalists, and indeed by far too many western Christians. As I wrote in an earlier article on the persecution of Christians world-wide, it was a Jew, the American scholar Michael Horowitz, who served as a galvanizer of America's Christian community to act on behalf of their victimized fellow-believers. This same Jewish advocate provides an introduction to Marshall's book,

wherein he continues to lament the West's guilty silence. So does Marshall himself. The second part of his book (chapters seven through nine), entitled "American Apathy," is devoted to the issue. That part also contains guidelines for those who want to break the silence and come to the help of the persecuted.

Triumphs

As disturbing as the book is in many ways, it is also encouraging, for it gives abundant witness to the dignity, courage, and perseverance of the persecuted. The blood of the martyrs is again the seed of the church: in many of the persecuting countries the church is far more vibrant and increases far more rapidly than in most western areas.

"More people," Marshall writes, "take part in Christian worship in China than do people in the entirety of Western Europe. The same is true of Nigeria, and probably true of India, Brazil, and even the world's largest Muslim country, Indonesia. The Middle East contains people of many religions. Lebanon is 40 percent Christian; Sudan, 20 percent; Egypt, about 12 percent. Other countries have lower proportions only because of recent emigration or flight – or because Christians were subjected to genocide" (p. 8).

It is these millions of foreign Christians who not only expect our help, but who are also fully entitled to it. Marshall concludes his chapter on the continuing apathy in many parts of the Christian community by reminding his readers that the Lord's commandment to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and the prisoner (Matthew 25 : 33-46), applies as much to Christians elsewhere in our global village as to our next-door neighbours (pp. 179f.). The good we do to them is done to Christ, and the help we fail to give them we fail to give Christ. And He warns us that our attitude with respect to the needy has eternal consequences.

Once again I urge you to read the book and support the persecuted church, financially, by means of political pressure, and above all by persistent prayer, including communal prayer. We have witnessed in recent years the collapse of totalitarian, anti-Christian powers in central and eastern Europe, a col-

lapse that provided freedom of religion for millions. May we not ask for a similar miracle to occur in the remaining communist countries, and in those areas that are under the control of a militant, intolerant Mohammedanism? Persecuted Christians do not underestimate the power of prayer. We, western Christians, should not do so either.

Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff is a retired teacher of history living in Hamilton, Ontario.

"The Advancing Jihad"

Mary, a young Egyptian girl, displays her fragile wrist, which is encircled by an ugly bracelet of scarred flesh. Her disfigurement bears mute witness to the brutal abduction, rape and nine-month captivity she endured at the hands of Islamic kidnappers. As part of their program to transform Mary into a Muslim, the captors poured sulfuric acid on her wrist to remove the tattooed cross she wore as a statement of her faith.

. . . At first, Mary tried to refuse to wear the traditional Islamic veil. "They warned me that if I removed it they would throw acid on my face," she later told reporters. Eventually, unable to resist her captors' demands, she signed official papers of conversion to Islam.

While Mary was held hostage, her father went to the Cairo police. They told him to forget Mary – she was in the safe hands of Islam. In fact, the distraught man was ordered to sign a pledge that he would cease his search for his daughter. . . .

Fortunately, Mary escaped. She was given assistance by a clandestine group called "Servants of the Cross," who sheltered her. Although conversion to Christianity from Islam is considered apostasy in Egypt, and Shari'a law calls for a death sentence, the Servants aided her as she reconverted to Christianity. In Egyptian society, rape victims are often held responsible for their plight, and are sometimes killed. With this in mind, the organization also helped Mary find a Christian husband.

Servants of the Cross took Mary to a tattooist, who reapplied the cross to her wrist, just above the disfiguring scar. . . .

***Their Blood Cries Out*, pp. 15f, Paul Marshall, 1997, Word Publishing, Nashville, Tennessee. All rights reserved.**



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

School is nearly over for all of you. It must be nice, after having been at school for such a long time, to have a long break. Do you have many plans for the holidays? Are you going travelling, or visiting friends or family, or are you going to stay at home and help Mom clean up the house. Spring cleaning can be really good fun, don't you think?

And to be able to enjoy plenty of sunshine, watching the trees and flowers come to life. You then have to think at how much God has done for us. He made all of this. He makes the sunshine and rain, and through this, He makes the trees, grass and flowers to grow. You or your Dad and Mom have to put the plants into the ground, but God does the rest. Do you remember to thank Him for His wonderful gifts of life?

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Tanya Meints | 22 Jocelyn Schoon |
| 1 Sophia Brouwer | 24 Deborah Voorhorst |
| 1 Albert Buikema | 25 Twyla Vanleeuwen |
| 7 Gregory Spriensma | 27 Reuel Feenstra |
| 8 Felicia Oosterhoff | 27 Bonita Feenstra |
| 8 Mary Ellen Van Doornik | 29 Renee Kruisselbrink |
| 8 Jennifer Post | 29 Lindsay North |
| 16 Jason VanderHorst | 30 Lori Oosterhoff |
| 17 Melanie Spanninga | |

PUZZLE

By Busy Beaver *Vanessa Ostermeier*

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| P P X Z M Y N Z E Y X O P | Words to find |
| N E E L U E R Q R U L E R | |
| M N N E P L O S A S O H T | |
| N C C O S K T O S R H N K | |
| R I G N L A S C E O R T M | |
| I L G R P M C P R S Q O N | |
| C E H L U N O L A S A D O | |
| D F E N O O F Y I I P X P | |
| L R S U G L U E A C M L G | |
| S T R Q M N O X S S N A C | |
| R S R E K R A M O T D E G | |
| P O N M I O U I Z D H V P | |

UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS THEN MATCH WITH THE SECOND ROW

By Busy Beaver *Candace Schuurman*

- | | | |
|--------------|-------|------------|
| 1. Irinoac | _____ | flower |
| 2. tetamhw | _____ | school |
| 3. eenalpth | _____ | bath |
| 4. alilc | _____ | dictionary |
| 5. drow | _____ | animal |
| 6. gnifre | _____ | birthday |
| 7. sders | _____ | Bible |
| 8. woetl | _____ | body |
| 9. boteokstx | _____ | clothes |
| 10. dcnalse | _____ | magazine |

A CROSSWORD FOR THE OLDER BUSY BEAVERS

1		2		3	4		5
				6			
7	8				9	10	
11				12			
13			14		15		
16							
			17		18		19
20							

ACROSS

- '... and whoever loses his life will it.' (Luke 17:33)
- '... let my son, so he may worship me.' (Ex. 4:23)
- A bruised he will not break.' (Is. 42:3)
- A book of the Bible, in short.
- Scottish town and county.
- '... you will them to pieces like pottery.' (Ps. 2:9)
- Adorn part of a ship?
- With 'man', and Syrian leper.
- (two words) 'Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that with.... me, bless His holy name.' (Ps. 103:1 – RSV)
- With 'per', the evening meal.
- A Biblical king who reverses 6 Across.
- 'The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and for.....' (Ps. 121:8)

DOWN

- 'Today you shall be with me in' (Luke 23:43)
- What you need to do to keep fit.
- For example.
- Citizens to whom an epistle was written.
- 'Or what can a man give in for his soul?' (Matt. 16:26)
- 'The of all look to you; and you give them their food at the proper time.' (Ps. 145:15)
- An abbreviated book of the Bible.
- With 'spell', makes a North-country game.
- An afternoon with the Prime Minister?
- Gold in heraldry, but in ordinary use marks an alternative.