

Clarion

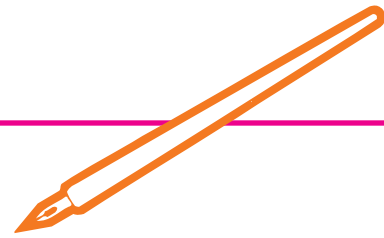
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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*The Free Reformed Church
of Legana*



By C. Van Dam



Greetings from Australia!

This past summer my wife and I had the singular privilege of visiting our sister churches in Australia. They send their greetings to us and I herewith pass them on! These churches support our Theological College both in prayer and materially. They also regularly send us students – eight so far, not including those who have come from Indonesia.

Some time ago, the Australian Deputies for the Training for the Ministry issued an invitation for a professor from the Theological College to visit the Free Reformed Churches and give lectures with a view to strengthening the bonds between the Theological College and the Australian churches. The success of Dr. Faber's earlier visit about nine years ago provided additional stimulus for this course of action. In response to the Australian invitation, the Senate of the Theological College appointed me to visit the Australian churches. New Zealand became part of the itinerary as well. Please see a report in a future issue.

After a smooth 30 hour journey from Toronto to Western Australia, we were warmly welcomed at the Perth airport. This set the tone and characterized the reception we experienced over and over again as we travelled through the churches. We felt right at home in the brotherhood "down under."

Our Australian sister churches are found in three separate geographic clusters. The largest concentration of 6 congregations – Armadale, Byford, Mount Nasura, Kelmescott, West Kelmescott, Rockingham (and one house congregation – Bunbury) is found in the southern Perth metropolitan area, on the west coast of Australia. In the southwest coastal region of Western Australia are found two congregations – Albany and West Albany – and in northern Tasmania, the congregations at Launceston and Legana exist in close proximity together. The total membership of these churches is about 3,300. I was able to speak several times in all the three points of concentration, could administer God's word in each congregation and also address two office bearers conferences. It was enriching to interact in the discussion periods following the speeches and discover that the issues down under are not really all that different from those in North America.

Our visit to Tasmania had an aspect unknown in the other areas visited. Here we again met a warm fellowship of believers but it was one that was still recovering from the grief of a split that had recently occurred in their midst after the deposition of Rev. F.J. van Hulst. He was removed from office for false teaching and for schism when he started his own worship services. The questionable views of van Hulst concern especially the appropriation of salvation, the experience of faith and the growth in faith.¹ It was wonderful to meet Rev. and Mrs. W. Boessenkool of South Africa who in their retirement were voluntarily giving their energies for the churches in Tasmania and whose labours there are much appreciated.



The Free Reformed Church of Kelmescott where the meetings took place in the Perth area.

We were also able to visit almost all the schools run by members of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. Remarkably they all had the name of John Calvin. It was a great privilege to meet teachers and staff whose task is such an important one. Although the level of support varies from state to state, the Australian brothers and sisters are in the happy situation that the civil authorities provide a considerable number of tax dollars for Reformed education so that money worries such as are common in Canada are virtually unknown there. In the Perth area there are quite a number of university and college students and it was a joy to address them on the relationship between faith and reason.

Travelling through the Australian countryside was a journey of discovery. It was wonderful to discover a vast variety of vegetation, both small and large, not found in Canada and to be amazed at the colourful birds that flit about and to sight wallabies and kangaroos in the wild. Each area had its own beauty. Subtropical semiarid Perth with its distinctive palms and tropical fruits, and the temperate southwest and Tasmania, with their astounding rain forests. Each area had its allure. How beautiful the Lord our God made everything and designed each plant and creature for its specific habitat!

Although as passing guests it is difficult to draw all sorts of far-reaching conclusions, we had the impression that there are very many similarities between the Free Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed. Both federations stem from post-war immigrant churches, an identity that still impacts to varying degrees as churches seek to be faithful in a culture and context different from their immediate point of

origin. Both federations have experienced God's blessing in numerical growth, and both wrestle with varying degrees of success on how to relate to faithful churches of a different background. Also, the membership of both federations have done a tremendous amount of work for Reformed education and in varying degrees are aware of the need to spread the Reformed faith in their communities and to apply the Reformed faith to all of life.

It was a great joy to meet brothers and sisters with whom we share the same faith and to reaffirm bonds with colleagues, several of whom were former students. Judging from reactions received during our stay, it would appear that the trip did strengthen the bonds between Hamilton and the Australian churches.

It goes without saying, but let us articulate it nevertheless: We are very thankful to the Lord our God who has safely guided us along so many kilometres of travel and whose blessing we experienced in so many ways. May this trip be used by the Head of the Church to his glory and praise.

¹For a helpful overview of the issues involved, see G. Van Rongen, *Living Faith: Background Information Regarding a Recent Synodical Decision* (Reformed Guardian NS 3, PO Box 163, Kelmscott, WA 6991, Australia; 1998).

What's inside?

A couple of our ministers have been globe-trotting. Recently, Dr. Van Dam visited our sister churches in Australia. In the editorial he brings us their greetings and tells us a bit about the Free Reformed Churches.

The Rev. Eric Kampen was across the pond in the Netherlands. He was our official delegate at the General Synod of our sister churches there. You will find a report about his trip and visit.

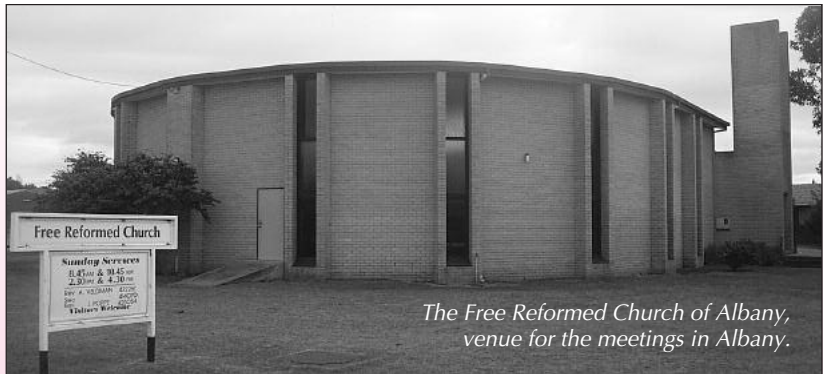
On the theme of different Reformed churches and the contact we have with them, we publish the second instalment of Prof. Kamphuis's articles about the Westminster Confession.

Perhaps you have heard something about the proposed "Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency" for theology students. The Rev. Bill Slomp writes about this.

Rev. Richard Pot of Orangeville contributes the meditation.

In addition, we have a few contributions from readers.

GvP



The Free Reformed Church of Albany, venue for the meetings in Albany.



The Free Reformed Church of Legana, site of the office bearers' conference in Tasmania, with Rev. W. Boessenkool in front.

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: C. Van Dam
 Managing Editor: G.Ph. van Popta
 Language Editor: J.L. van Popta
 Coeditors: R. Aasman, J. De Jong, J. Geertsema,
 N.H. Gootjes, G.Ph. van Popta

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION
 46 Sulphur Springs Road, Ancaster, ON L9G 1L8
 Fax: (905) 304-4951
 E-Mail: clarion@compuserve.com

**ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:
 (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):**

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
 One Beghin Avenue
 Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
 Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202
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IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – Greetings from Australia!
 — C. Van Dam 414

Treasures, New and Old
 – Scaling Walls — R.E. Pot . . 416

Notes on The Westminster Confession (Second of four parts)
 — J. Kamphuis 417

Pastoral Proficiency?
 — W.B. Slomp 420

Poem: On the Death of Marguerite's Brother, Francis I
 — Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarre 421

Report On Visit to the General Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Vrijgemaakt) May 1999
 — E. Kampen 422

Letters to the Editor 425

Special Events – Credit Christian High School Graduation 1999
 — Ron de Haan 426

Reader's Forum – Scriptural Law of Worship
 — Henry Sikkema 427

Press Release – Classis Alberta/Manitoba May 25, 1999 held at Taber — J. Moesker 428

Our Little Magazine
 — Aunt Betty 430

By R.E. Pot

Scaling Walls

With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall. Psalm 18:29

For most of us, war is something far removed from the reality of our lives. We hear the sounds of battles on radios, see them on screens inside our homes, but it's all far away. To people living in war, we live like kings! Peace, prosperity! It's like the ending of a fairy tale – living happily ever after.

But just because we enjoy peace, do we live happily every after? Many of us experience moments of unhappiness in our lives. Sometimes *great* unhappiness. Reality is that there are still battles to fight. Each has to fight his own battles. Battles with loneliness, grief. Terminal disease, chronic illness. Handicaps. Wounds of sexual abuse. Family conflict, straying children. Disappointment, failure. The reality of pain, tears, helplessness – it's all there in these personal battles.

And sometimes the difficulties of battle get the better of us. Sometimes you may wonder how you're going to get through. You can't even think about tomorrow, because you're having enough trouble trying to survive today! It's stressful, draining. Sometimes it's even too much.

But the real battle isn't just with the pain and misery of it all. It's the battle against sin! Sin causes us to be discontented instead of content, to give up instead of fighting. To envy others who don't have to fight the battles that we do. To complain, selfishly thinking about ourselves first instead of God and our neighbour. Sin is the real problem in our battles! Altogether, it can bring you to the edge . . . that you say: I can't do it anymore.

David also lived like a king. He was a king. For David, living as king didn't mean enjoying peace. It meant fighting battles. In Psalm 18, David looks back at those battles he fought. As he reflects on those battles, he asks, "How did I get the strength to deal with those battles? How did I make it through alive?"

Those battles were very real. David mentions advancing against a troop. That was a strong force of soldiers. The band of Amalekites who raided Ziklag was a troop that David faced with only 400 men (1 Sam 30). He also mentions scaling walls. He faced such a wall of a fortress when he captured Jerusalem. The people on the walls of a fortress had all the advantages. Even the people in Jerusalem were convinced that David didn't have any hope of defeating them, saying, "Even the blind and lame can ward you off!" (2 Sam 5). Those are the kinds of battles David had to face, and many more!

Maybe you think: "But David was a mighty warrior. I'm no mighty warrior, no hero. In my battles I'm often a weakling ready to give up." But David wasn't a mighty warrior in his own strength! He knew exactly what it was to be weak and ready to give up! "The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me" he confesses (v. 4). In other words, I'm helpless!


But in his distress, realizing his helplessness, David turns to God for help! Knowing that you're helpless, that God alone can help – that's not a sign of spiritual weakness. That's true humility, dependence on God. That's reality for all of life! Believers are not Houdinis. When cords of death and despair entangle us, we can't get out on our own!

But here's God's goodness: When you are helpless, God gives help! When you are weak, God is your strength! "With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall." God makes it possible for David to survive, even to conquer and win! *With your help, with my God* – that's the key! Only because "David found strength in the Lord his God" (1 Sam 30:6) could he conquer the Amalekite troop, overcome the Jebusite fortress with its impressive

walls. David is the one who advances against the troop, who scales the wall. But David says: "One hundred percent God. *With my God* I did it all, *without my God* I couldn't do any of it."

Why is powerful God so concerned with weak David, that powerful God provides weak David with the strength he needs for his battles? Because David's battles are God's battles! David is *King David, God's king*, fighting battles for God's glory. These are battles that peak with David's son, Jesus Christ, who had to fight the ultimate battle for God's glory. But King Jesus crushed the troop, scaled the wall, won the victory. It's in light of that victory, that God gives David all the strength he needs. For David is a believer in Christ, and shares in Christ by true faith. That's also how it works for us. The battles continue, the troops are still out, the walls are still up. But in the battle, you're a member of Christ. You share in Christ, not only also in his kingship (LD12), but also in his victory, and the booty of war.

In your personal battles, the troop may seem too strong, the wall too high. Maybe you say, "I can't do it." Maybe when you see the difficult trials endured by others you say, "I don't know how they cope, I could never do that." You're absolutely right. You can't do it. But *with your God* you can! King David's words can be said by kingly believers today: *With my God* I can advance against that troop, scale that wall! God doesn't promise a life without battles, but He does promise strength in those battles! He gives his Word and Spirit to equip you in the good fight. Then you discover what David did: That with your God, what you thought impossible, is possible after all. You discover what Paul did: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil 4:13). The strategy David used to kill Uriah is one that God will never use on believing front-line soldiers today.

Rev. Richard Pot is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in Orangeville, Ontario. 

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The Westminster Confession¹

(Second of Four Parts)

By J. Kamphuis

In the previous instalment, Prof. Kamphuis showed how the Reformed Churches have historically been able to see unity in doctrine even though there was a variety of confessions. This was also evident at the famous Synod of Dort (1618-1620).

A question

Did this situation of having different confessions while being one in faith not cause tensions among the delegates at the Synod of Dort? That certainly was the case. More about that later. Then we will also look at the specific function of the Westminster Confession, which was written not that long after the Synod of Dort.

But from the history of our “own” Reformed churches we can for now already learn one lesson: since these churches believe that the Lord Jesus Christ gathers his people by his Spirit and Word in many different historical situations and from many countries with different languages, there is the possibility of churches having also different confessions while this does not harm the unity of faith and neither hinders them to *practice and maintain* that unity of faith.

In the Netherlands we have experienced that in a difficult struggle for the truth of the gospel. For in the Synod of Dort, the Reformed churches with the help of foreign sister churches rejected the errors of the Arminians. Those foreign sister churches were one in faith with the Dutch Reformed churches. They were also willing to defend that faith, and they maintained the confession of God’s free grace and eternal election. One in faith, although they did adhere to different confessional *documents*.

Considering the presence of so many delegates from churches abroad at the Synod of Dort we raised the ques-

tion whether this situation resulted in tensions. Did this ever cause conflicts?

It might be very helpful especially when we consider the origin of the Westminster Confession in 1647 to pay a bit more attention to those tensions at the Synod of Dort.

They [the foreign delegates at Dort] could inform synod that the Confession of the churches in the Netherlands agrees in all points of doctrine “with the truth expressed in Holy Scripture” and is also in accord “with the Confessions of other Reformed churches.”

The Three Forms of Unity ecumenically confirmed!

When the Five Articles Against the Remonstrants were drafted at the Synod of Dort, with the help of the delegates of foreign sister churches, the proposal was made to subject the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism to an examination while the foreign delegates were still present. This examination would focus on the *contents* of the doctrine and not on the wording or the way it was formulated. As we can read in the Acts of the 144th Session of Synod, this examination had to deal with the question whether in these confessional documents anything can be found “which might not seem to be in full agreement with the truth of God’s revealed Word, or with the confessions of other Reformed churches.”²

Not everybody at synod was happy with this initiative. There was fear that

in the end things would still go in a wrong direction. It had always been the Remonstrants (Arminians) who did not want to know of a real binding to the confessions. Therefore they propagated that every synod always had again to subject the whole confession to a *revision*. Reformed people had always opposed this idea. The confession must be checked in the light of the Word of God. But the members of an ecclesiastical assembly are bound to the confessions as adopted by the churches, since these churches summarized their faith in God’s Word in those confessions. When someone would submit a *gravamen* on a *specific point* of the confession, he may of course expect that his objection will be judged *only* with the standard of God’s Word. But the Reformed churches have always refused to declare a moratorium on the binding to the confessions as long as they were in revision. That’s why some at the Synod of Dort were afraid of this initiative to submit the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism to a general examination. Don’t forget, that this proposal had been put on the table of synod by the national government as well.

But the misgivings disappeared when it became clear what the purpose of this examination was.

The Arminians had continually complained and said that quite a bit of criticism could be voiced against the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, and that the Reformed churches in the Netherlands with these confessions had isolated themselves from churches in other countries.

Now the Dutch churches had a golden opportunity to ask the delegates from these other countries openly: how do you judge and evaluate our confession? Dealing with the Arminian controversies all the delegates had already

shown a beautiful and fundamental unity. It would do a lot of good when the brothers from abroad clearly indicated that they could wholeheartedly agree with the confession, as it had been maintained in the Netherlands by the churches and the believers, also in times of bloody persecutions!

And indeed, the brothers from afar responded positively to the request of their brothers in the Netherlands. They did not take it lightly but did a thorough job! In the 146th Session they could inform synod that the confession of the churches in the Netherlands agrees in all points of doctrine “with the truth expressed in Holy Scripture” and is also in accord “with the confessions of other Reformed churches.”³ Then there follows the *admonition* voiced by the brothers from the churches abroad:

to persevere steadfastly in this orthodox, God-pleasing and simple Confession of Faith, to pass it on unadulterated to the next generations, and to maintain it faithfully until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁴

The Reformed churches of the Netherlands passed up an opportunity to encourage their brothers in England who ... opposed the ecclesiastical hierarchy as found there.

That was a great moment in the history of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands!⁵

We may say that the Three Forms of Unity of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands are *ecumenically* confirmed. The churches in Europe which followed the direction of Reformed Protestantism have together wholeheartedly endorsed the confession of the churches in the Netherlands!

But there was dissonance!

By now you might ask: what does all this have to do with the Westminster Confession of 1647?

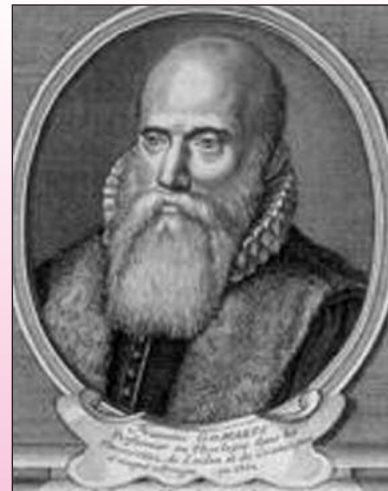
It is true: I took a little detour! But may I for a while continue to do so? For then you will understand better *later on* why it is so important for us today that in the English speaking world a confession as the Westminster was born.

The story of the Synod of Dort seems to be an account of only peace and harmony! However, that is not the complete picture! They did not agree on *everything*! When the matter of the examination of the Belgic Confession was to be dealt with by synod, the chairman, the Reverend Johannes Bogerman, did make *one exception*. Not only the formulation and wording of the points of doctrine, but also the *government and polity* of the church would be kept out of the discussion. That would be discussed *after* the brothers from abroad had left synod! And this did not only concern the Church Order. For Bogerman mentions explicitly the Articles 31 and 32 of the Belgic Confession as the ones which do not have to be “examined.”⁶ When you look up those articles you see that they deal with the offices and with the order and discipline of the church. And we read in Article 31 that beautiful confession which is a death-blow to all hierarchy (under which the churches had suffered when they were still living in the Roman house of slavery):

Ministers of the Word, in whatever place they are, have equal power and authority, for they are all servants of Jesus Christ, the only universal Bishop and the only Head of the Church.

On this very important matter there was a radical difference between the Dutch churches and the English state-church, the Anglican Church. As far as the doctrine was concerned this church was at that time Reformed. But that could not be said with regard to the government of the church. The English state-church had cut all ties with Rome. But for the rest the hierarchical order was still intact. There was an arch-bishop and many other bishops, and *subject to them* the presbyters and deacons. The King of England, who had at last chosen against the Arminians, was a fervent champion of an *Episcopal form of church government* in the strictest sense of the word (i.e. the bishop is a successor of the apostles). Those who in England opposed this system were even severely persecuted! The first delegate from England in the Synod of Dort was (take note!) also a bishop!

Although he was not *formally* acknowledged as such by the synod, that did *in reality* happen quite often. He was considered and treated as the chairman of the delegates of the foreign churches. He was regarded as the most important one (even with respect to financial



F. Gomarus

reimbursement). There were only a few members of synod who dared to disagree with him. Here we should make honourable mention of Professor Gomarus, who at a certain point in the discussion made the remark: “In this meeting it is not ecclesiastical position that counts, but arguments.”

It was a beautiful moment when the churches from abroad wholeheartedly expressed their agreement with the confession of the Dutch churches. But at *the same time* we must say that it was a *weak* moment, for here an essential point of difference was shoved off the table of synod!

The weakness of that moment showed up immediately when they discussed the Belgic Confession. The representatives from England first received the floor. The bishop was the spokesman, and in his speech he took exception to the words we just quoted from Article 31, that there is *equality* among the ministers of the Word, who are all servants of Jesus Christ, the only Bishop of the Church. In his view, that was not according to Christ’s command neither was it in agreement with antiquity (i.e. with the practice of the early Christian church). He challenged the scholars in synod to prove the contrary. Was the cause of all their ecclesiastical problems in the Netherlands not the absence of an Episcopal church government, with the result that there were so many men, so many minds?

Nobody in synod responded to the challenge of the bishop. They all stuck to the “agreement” (not to discuss the Articles 31, 32 of the Belgic Confession). But that meant that the bishop could have the impression that the

brothers at synod were in their hearts convinced of the excellency of the Episcopal system of church government.

And thus the Reformed churches of the Netherlands passed up an opportunity to encourage their brothers in England who being guided by the Holy Scripture opposed the ecclesiastical hierarchy as found there.

Also in a Reformed synod errors are made!

A variety of confessional documents *does not necessarily have to hurt the unity of faith.*

Interim conclusion

We did note a moment of serious weakness in the work of this synod, although we today are still thankful for all the work it did. Dort does teach us a lesson. The lesson is this: a variety of confessional documents *does not necessarily have to hurt the unity of faith*. That variety is often a valuable asset for which we may be very grateful. Thus we can also learn from each other. We can also learn to make allowances for each other, when the one has formulated things a bit differently than the other. That has also been openly stated at the synod, when the question arose how to understand the phrase “descended into hell” from the Apostolic Creed. Then a difference of opinion showed up as to *the original meaning of these words*. But the representatives from the Netherlands said: let those brothers keep their opinion and we keep ours. And those brothers (again the ones from England) declared that the way Lord’s Day 16 explains these words as such is in complete harmony with Scripture.

But things go wrong when part of the confession is suppressed by taking it out of the discussion out of fear for trouble. It also has to be emphasized that all this did not just concern a *minor and rather unimportant* part of church polity. The Reformed churches have clearly stated in their Church Order that such points may never be a reason to reject churches abroad (see our Article 50 CO). But here at the Synod of Dort *the confessional heart* of the government of the church was at stake. The Articles 30-32 of the Belgic Confession are, so to speak, the confessional foundation on which the Church Order is built.

Now we should not too easily criticize the Synod of Dort. One could say much to excuse the brothers and to defend them. We will not speak about that now. It was correct and wise that in the serious conflict with the Arminians the brothers kept up the fellowship with the English church. We have to judge these matters in the light of *their own time*. The English state-church (in spite of many weaknesses) was at this time still a church which wanted to confess the truth of the Scriptures. Today the situation is totally different in this respect. But then it was still an open question of how things would develop in these churches. Such a situation requires great caution and patience.

However, it was definitely wrong that a very important matter was not *allowed* to be discussed. At that time of trouble the churches in the Netherlands received support from England. But in this respect Holland did not lend support to the brothers who in England wanted to obey Holy Scripture.

Therefore it is a remarkable development, that shortly after the Synod of Dort was held in the Netherlands a confession, the Westminster Confession, was drafted in that very land of England, a confession which *broke* with the Episco-

pal form of government and which also in other aspects meant an *important step in the direction of the churches on the European continent*.

¹This series of articles originally appeared in Dutch in *Rondom Het Woord*, 38:11; 39:1,2,3 (1984/85) and were written by Prof. J. Kamphuis of Kampen, the Netherlands. They were freely translated and adapted to our Canadian situation by Rev. Johannes Mulder of Burlington, Ontario who was assisted by others. Prof. J. Kamphuis approved of our translation and adaptation.

²The original reads: “. . . het welcke met de waerheydt van Godes geopenbaerde Woort, oft met de Confessien van anderen Gereformeerde Kercken niet al te wel en soude schijnen te accorderen.”

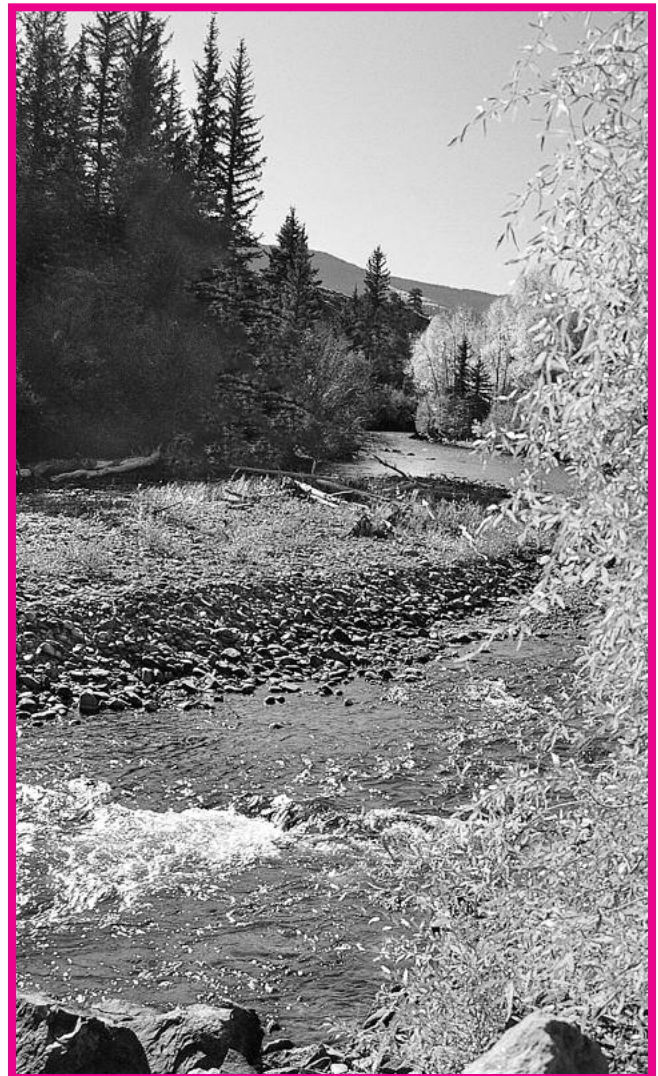
³The original reads: “. . . met de waerheydt in de heilighe Schriftuere uytgedruct.” And also, “. . . met de Confessien van andere Gereformeerde Kercken wel accordeerde.”

⁴Original: “. . . in dese rechtsinnige Godsalighe en eenvoudighe Confessie des geloofs stantvastelijc te willen volherden, deselve den na-comelinghen onvervalscht te willen naerlaten, ende tot de comste toe onses Heeren Jesu Christi, onvervalscht te willen bewaren.”

⁵Later on also the churches in France which could not be represented at the synod expressed their wholehearted agreement with this judgment. The Heidelberg Catechism also received unswerving endorsement from the brothers coming from the other churches.

⁶The *Acts* mention only these two articles. Perhaps also Article 30 has been excluded (as appears to be the case from other sources).

– to be continued 



Pastoral Proficiency?

By W.B. Slomp

The Board of Governors of the Theological College came to Synod Fergus 1998 with a proposal to add a formalized practical component to the training of ministers. The governors proposed that the students at the College should receive formal practical training during the four years at the College which would lead to a certificate of Pastoral Proficiency. Since it is meant only for those going into the ministry, and not for those who take the degree for academic purposes only, this certificate would only be an added notation to the degree of Master of Divinity.

This proposal to synod was the result of extensive consultations with faculty, students, consistories and ministers. Ninety percent of the churches who responded to the submission of the board of governors were in favour of the proposal.

Synod, however, had some reservations about certain components of the proposal, and decided to proceed with caution, taking to heart various comments made by some of the churches and ministers. For there were those who questioned various aspects of a formalized training component and also the very designation of "Pastoral Proficiency."

Consequently, synod decided that, while authorizing the Board of Governors to "proceed with the components of the proposed program, including the internship," this is to be done on a trial basis, without making this a prerequisite for entrance to the ministry at this time. Furthermore, synod directed the governors to consider integrating the practical elements with the academic courses currently being taught at the College, and to see whether or not an additional faculty member for the diaconological department would be necessary.

In this article I want to make some comments about these developments in the hope that this will lead to a better understanding of the necessity of such additional training and of the need to

make this a required element in the training of ministers.

The necessity for practical training

There is no doubt that nowadays practical training for ministers is essential, for a minister will encounter many problems unheard of in the past. This is partly due to the secularization of society. Now ministers and elders have to deal more and more with the breakdown of family and marriage relationships and to deal with all kinds of emotional and psychological problems. Also, since it is no longer taboo to receive counselling, it is expected of the office-bearers in the church to provide that same kind of service.

For that reason also our sister churches in the Netherlands have implemented a strong practical element to the training. And on this continent there are no institutes of training for the ministry I know of that do not very strongly emphasize the practical elements of the ministry. In most institutions that emphasis is so strong that this training is done at the expense of the academic component. Clearly that is not the direction we must go. For, if you do not have a thorough understanding of the Scriptures, and if you are not able to interpret clearly what God says in his Word, you will not be able to give proper direction to people's lives.

Currently the academic training given at our College is very comprehensive and thorough. That is how it ought to remain. However, the need for further practical training is also absolutely essential. In all other professions a practical element is always a part of one's training. Can you imagine, for example, that a doctor would be allowed to practise on his own, without having gained practical experience under experienced physicians first? You cannot learn how to operate and perform all kinds of medical procedures from the books without having first learned to do this under careful supervision. And the same thing is true of

lawyers, teachers, social workers and counsellors. None of them would be able to receive their degrees without first having received some first-hand experience under seasoned professionals, showing that they are able to put into practice what they have learned.

The same thing is true of theological training. There is more to being a minister than knowing how to relate to books. Although the preaching is the most important task of a minister, such preaching must not only be biblical and doctrinally sound, it must also meet the spiritual – including the emotional and psychological – needs of the people. Otherwise the preaching is nothing more than an abstract treatise, making very little impact.

The only way that a minister can know the needs in the congregation is by learning how to interact with them and how to listen to them. Typically a student fresh from College is quite apprehensive about dealing with the various problems within the congregation. It is true that the elders are there to help him in that regard. However, most elders do not have any supervised training either, and are often at a loss themselves. Furthermore it happens, especially in small churches, that the consistory consists of elders who are only in their first or second term.

At the Theological College a student learns to teach and to speak. But, a minister must also know how to listen and to minister to those who are depressed, or bereaved, or who are having problems in their families, with their children, or their spouse. It takes training to learn to sit back and listen to the hurts and problems of those whom God has put in his charge. He needs to gain a certain confidence to know that there are not always clear-cut solutions to problems. He needs to learn that it is also not always necessary to have something to say. It is good just to sit back and listen to the pain that others are experiencing, and to show that he deeply cares about them.

On the Death of Marguerite's Brother, Francis I

*'T is done! a father, mother gone,
A sister, brother, torn away.
My hope is now in God alone,
Whom heaven and earth alike obey.
Above, beneath, to him is known, –
The world's wide compass is his own.*

*I love, – but in the world no more,
Nor in gay hall, or festal bower;
Not the fair forms I prized before, –
But him, all beauty, wisdom, power,
My Saviour, who has cast a chain
On sin and ill, and woe and pain!*

*I from my memory have effaced
All former joys, all kindred, friends;
All honors that my station graced
I hold but snares that fortune sends:
Hence! joys by Christ at distance cast,
That we may be his own at last!*

Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarre,
Translated by Louisa Stuart Costello

He must also know how to deal with those who have been sexually, emotionally or physically abused. What do you do? What do you say? When do you involve the consistory, or the secular authorities? What steps do you take?

The student also has to learn to take a close look at himself. To what extent is his way of ministry an impediment to others' spiritual well-being? Is he too judgmental in his remarks? Is he able to communicate well? Is he humble in his approach? Is he someone people can relate to? Is he able to receive and to deal with criticism? The latter especially needs to be evaluated. For any office-bearer who has difficulty dealing with criticism will not be effective. He will be more of a liability than an asset to the church.

A student who tags along with an experienced minister for several months will be evaluated on those very important elements of his own personality. And, if it turns out that he is not able to deal with the criticism, or to relate to others effectively by dealing with their various needs, he should seriously consider not entering the ministry.

Confidentiality

One of the objections brought forth was that the confidential aspect the

work of an office-bearer would prevent a student from going along with a minister on various visits. However, this is not a valid objection. My experience is that by and large people do not mind. Those who are in need are always very glad for a visit from anyone who is willing and able to share their pain. They would not mind if a minister-in-training came along. People also recognize that training is necessary, and that this is a good way of accomplishing this. Furthermore, they recognize that a student from the College will be someone trustworthy, who will not betray confidentiality. Besides, the option is always there that if it is not deemed desirable to have a student along, such a request will certainly be honoured.

Evaluation

Under the supervision of a minister and his consistory a student would be evaluated on his performance, in consultation with the coordinator and the professor of diaconology. It will be necessary to have a standard and well-planned evaluation system in which the consistories, the supervising ministers, the coordinator, and the professor of diaconology are thoroughly involved throughout the whole process. It will take time in order to have such a

system properly worked out. In so doing, no doubt there will be glitches. But, that should not prevent us from implementing such training.

Currently our professor of diaconology is also responsible for the department of ecclesiology. This does not allow him the time to deal with the pastoral aspect of the training for ministers. Therefore the suggestion of the Board of Governors for a coordinator is a good one. Indeed, in the future it may be necessary to appoint an additional faculty member to the College. At this time, however, such a suggestion is premature. It is better first to implement the program and then to determine what the needs are in that regard.

Pastoral proficiency?

The criticism that the certificate should be called something other than a "Pastoral Proficiency Certificate" has some merit. Even the most experienced and best-trained ministers will never be able to call themselves proficient in their pastoral care. For no one will ever be totally proficient in the things that he says and does. That is especially the case in pastoral care. We are all sinful people and our ability to communicate effectively with and understand one another at all times under all circumstances is impossible. Office-bearers will always be deficient in their pastoral care. And so, it might be better to call the certificate a "Certificate of Pastoral Care."

Nevertheless, every attempt must be made to ensure that the care given be such that the spiritual needs of the congregation are met to the best of our ability. Paul says in Acts 20:28, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with his own blood." Paul himself stated to the Thesalonians about his own pastoral care: "For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess 2:11-12). That is quite a responsibility the Lord God gives to us. Let us train our ministers to live up to that calling.

Rev. W. B. Slomp is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in Neerlandia, Alberta.



REPORT ON

Visit to the General Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Vrijgemaakt)

May 1999

By E. Kampen

Special privilege

As the visit to the Free Church of Scotland on behalf of the churches in Canada was a privilege, the visit to the Netherlands fell in the category of a special privilege. This was not because the churches in the Netherlands are viewed with higher esteem; rather, there was the personal dimension that it was the first visit back to my country of birth since immigrating in 1970.

Format

Compared to a General Assembly which conducts its business at a hectic pace in order to be done within a week, the synod of our Dutch sister churches comes across as a leisurely enterprise. Synod began the second week of April. By mid-May most of the time had been spent in committee meetings. In order to allow delegates to be home on Sunday, meetings finish early Friday afternoon and resume late Monday morning. By the start of July, they were far from done and synod went into recess for summer vacation.

This format makes it rather difficult to receive foreign delegates who like to observe synod in plenary session. The Dutch churches thus decided to have a special day in which to receive the delegates from the sister churches. The day chosen for this was May 19. Foreign delegates were invited to be the guests of the Dutch churches from May 17-21. As a result, foreign delegates descended upon the Netherlands, coming not only from Canada but also from Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales, India, Spain, Venezuela, Japan and Korea.

The Rev. Knigge and his wife, undoubtedly still known by many of the readers as the first missionary couple sent out by the Canadian Reformed Churches, had been appointed as our host. They performed their task most admirably. Rooms had been reserved at a

conference center near the city of Leusden where synod was being held. This arrangement gave opportunity to meet people from all over the world. This was an interesting experience.

Though we were not expected at synod till Wednesday, May 19, when it was learned that synod was to hold a plenary session on Tuesday evening, the opportunity was seized to attend. The discussion that evening dealt with pastoral care in the military as well as relationships with foreign churches.

International day

On Wednesday, May the 19th, we were taken by bus to the church building where synod was being held. In the morning we were invited to choose one of the synod committees and discuss the matters they were busy with. I chose the committee dealing with the Hymns.

In the afternoon we were given opportunity to address the synod. (The text of Rev. Kampen's address follows this article.) In response to my address, the speaker tied in with a comment I had made about us being the little sister. He thought the good point in being little was that it kept one humble, something which they as Dutch churches also needed to remember. These speeches kept us busy till the end of the day. It proved to be a very stimulating experience as you could hear about the struggles and triumphs of the Reformed faith all over the world, from India to England to Venezuela.

General impressions

The Dutch sister churches received us royally. We were treated as foreign dignitaries, international statesmen. It was a truly enjoyable experience to meet so many from so many lands that share the Reformed faith. It broadens your horizon which so quickly becomes fixated as you deal with the daily problems

in your own congregation. At the same time, one did not really get an opportunity to interact with members of synod and to witness how it conducts its business. The experience in Scotland in that respect was more helpful. Nevertheless, from what could be seen a favourable impression could be gathered.

The Dutch churches continue to increase the number of contacts. They are more generous in their evaluation of other churches. We seem to take the approach that a church must be on equal terms with us before we can enter a relationship. The Dutch enter into a relationship with a church in order to help it grow in faithfulness. The latter approach has something to commend it. What good is it to greet your brother and then send him home without food and drink? At the same time, the danger is there that you look at yourself as big brother. Not that the Dutch necessarily are guilty of this, but colonialism is always a threat when dealing with those who have less than we have.

One wonders about the length it takes to conduct the business of synod. As was mentioned, they began in April and the end may not be till September. It would seem that in this they are unique in the world wide community of Reformed churches. Most have a far more definitive time frame, often in terms of days rather than weeks. The duration of the synod means that only elders who have retired are able to be delegated to synod for no ordinary labourer can miss half a year of work. Further, ministers are taken out of their congregation for a long period of time.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from what was actually observed at the synod. After all, the focus fell on the foreign delegates. If anything, the benefit of the visit was not so much in getting to know the Dutch churches better but to get a better sense of how

Generale
1999 **S**ynode
LEUSDEN

van De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland

*Church building where
synod is held.*



Christ's church "is not confined or limited to one particular place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world. However, it is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith" (BC 27). In due time, the Acts of Synod Leusden will have to be evaluated to see where our Dutch sister churches are headed.

Appreciation

In reflecting on both visits, I appreciate the opportunity to represent the churches in travelling to a land foreign to most of us yet rich in Reformed history, Scotland, as well as to the land of personal interest to so many Church members, the Netherlands. It is my hope that by these reports you may have gained increased sensitivity for the catholicity of Christ's Church. After all, it is the confession of "a holy, catholic church" which is the basis of having a Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad.

Text of speech the Rev. E. Kampen delivered to the General Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Vrijgemaakt)

Esteemed Brothers in the Lord:

It is a great privilege to be present in your midst as representative of the Canadian Reformed Churches. When one considers the size of the respective countries, and that the total membership in our churches is

about 15,000 and your total membership is over 120,000, you could say that the little sister from the big country is visiting the big sister in the little country.

It is most fitting that I begin by conveying to you as synod, and through you to all the churches, heartfelt greetings on behalf of the brothers and sisters in Canada. The greeting carries extra significance because for many members the tie is not merely the gospel of grace but also that of race.

I mention the words "race" and "grace." In church matters great care must be taken never to confuse the two. We know that it was hard for Peter and the early New Testament church to accept that the gospel was not limited to their race. It is not always so easy for us to make that distinction. That leads to problems inside and outside the church.

With respect to problems outside the church, I refer to how the church is seen in the community. To make a clear distinction between your race and the community united around the gospel of grace will not be a problem in the Netherlands like it is in Canada. In a country with great ethnic diversity one's religion is often associated with one's ethnic roots. For example, to many of our fellow Canadians, "Reformed" seems to be a synonym for "Dutch." You mention that you belong to the Canadian Reformed Church and often the response is, "O, the Dutch Church."

This forces us as churches to struggle with the question as to what is truly catholic and what is ethnic in our history so that we may be a blessing to our fellow Canadians. After all, being Reformed is not the same as being Dutch.

It also brings problems inside the church. It does that in two ways. First of all, it can be hard for the members to distinguish between race and grace. That means, it is hard to fully accept as equals in the faith those who do not share our history. This is reflected in the careful, hesitant way we go about our inter-church relationships. Though we have been making progress in this matter as can be seen in our relationships with churches of Presbyterian origin, our steps are not always so steady, so sure footed and harmonious. We look to our big sister in the little country and see her walk with apparent sure-footedness. It seems that being such a big sister you take such big steps that we as a small sister get out of breath trying to keep up. I think a difference is that for you, our big sister, it is all far more academic. Scotland, the Netherlands, Korea, they are separated by plenty of water. For us it is very practical. Scotsman, Koreans, and Dutch, with their roots either in the continental Reformed tradition or the Presbyterian tradition, potentially live on the same street! Sometimes it seems that ecclesiastical apartheid is the best solution under

Moderamen



Rev. H.J. Boiten,
chairman



Rev. P. Schelling,
vice-chairman



Rev. J. Luiten,
first clerk



Rev. D.T. Vreugdenhill,
second clerk

the circumstances. With the Lord's blessing, we will make progress.

It was said that there are two problems inside the church because of the grace/race factor. The second is this, that the younger generation in the church equates Reformed with being Dutch. The experiential, sensational approach, of evangelical groups has much appeal. It is a challenge to show the youth that we believe what we believe, and we do what we do not because of our race but because it is in harmony with the gospel of grace. In a religious climate where the buzz word is innovation, our only antidote is to clearly explain the gospel truths rediscovered in the Great Reformation. In the words of Jeremiah, we have to point to the ancient paths, the ways of God's covenant, calling the members to walk on them so that they may find rest for their souls (Jer 6:16). This is quite a challenge in a society where new is seen as better. Often the desire is there for something new because no one has bothered to clearly explain the old.

In this you can see that though we are only a small sister, we have a big challenge. Thankfully, we don't have to do it in our own strength but we do it in dependence upon the Lord our God.

I trust you did not consider it selfish to speak a little about our life as churches. In accordance with our rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, where we promise to "assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy, and be

watchful for deviations" (Rule 1), I take the liberty to also make a few comments about the matters before you as synod. Though it is not possible to speak of a collective Canadian Reformed mind on these matters, you should be aware of some of the thoughts that live in our midst.

First of all, you have an impressive agenda. To go back to our image, our big sister has big plans! Though we live in a big country, we like to think small. Your synod deals with matters of evangelism and liturgy. Perhaps it is the great distances between most of our congregations, spread over a number of time zones, but these matters never make it to our synod. They are left at the local level – yes, even liturgy is left in the freedom of the churches.

We see an extensive report on hymns (255!). Of course it is only for evaluation. We have had 65 hymns for some years already, laid out in the pattern of the Apostles' Creed. We do hear clamouring for more hymns from time to time. It may be of interest to you that in our North American context, a common refrain among those who experience reformation is the need to return to singing the Psalms. Not that hymns are to be excluded but there is to be a preponderance of Psalms. The problem with the Psalms is that often people are not sufficiently biblically literate to understand them also as they speak of God's salvation in Christ. The cry for hymns may be an indictment of the teaching efforts of the church! Further, it should be kept in mind that it is better to know a few songs well than to have

400 songs which are unknown. You can have too much choice!

There is also the matter of the role of women. It is remarkable that while the proposed new marriage form is very subtle, your delegate to Synod Fergus 1998 stated that the real issue is the question of headship (*Acts*, p. 202). We wait for your decision on the matter, but we wonder where you are headed with this discussion. Does the very fact it is discussed suggest that as you stand at the crossroads, you are not so sure about the ancient paths anymore? Is there a need for new insight or simply renewed insights? We do indeed get the impression at times that you are not so sure anymore. We hear that too in the comments of Brother De Jager when he indicated that "Kampen is rethinking [preaching and liturgy]," and that you are rethinking mission.

Brothers, the prophet Jeremiah called Judah to ask for the ancient paths, the good ways, and to walk in them, so that they might find rest for their souls. That is our challenge. May the LORD grant you the wisdom to hold to the ancient paths and walk on them faithfully, able to apply to eternal truths in the pinpointed concrete situations we as churches face today. Don't be afraid to appear out of step with the times. Just take care to keep in step with the Spirit (Gal 5:25).

Rev. Eric Kampen is convener of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad and is minister of Willoughby Heights Canadian Reformed Church in Langley, B.C.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length. Please include address and phone number.

Apples and oranges

I have enjoyed reading the series of articles on Evangelicalism by P.H. Holtvluwer. They were informative in their broad perspective.

I have now read a number of evaluations of the Evangelical movement both in our press and in Dutch periodicals. What struck me after reading this latest one was that a series of articles on the Reformed movement by an orthodox Evangelical might be very similar in approach, contents, and conclusions, but then, of course, from his reference point – an orthodox Evangelical church.

This imaginary writer in his attempt to give an overview of the Reformed movement would have to show the existence of a whole gamut of Reformed churches ranging from very “liberal” to very “conservative.” It would not be sheer coincidence if this writer had ended his evaluation with the same conclusion as Holtvluwer’s, which among other things included the statement that “By knowing our confessions well and living up to them, we can be a positive influence on them rather than they being a negative influence on us.” The evangelical writer would probably have said “by knowing our Bible” rather than “our confessions” but otherwise, looking at the whole Reformed movement, he could have left the statement unchanged and be not without grounds just as Holtvluwer’s wasn’t.

What I like to illustrate with this reversal of point of view is that this

type of article could be more constructive if we really compared apples with apples. What we do now is comparing a broad movement with one specific expression of the Reformed movement, i.e. the Canadian Reformed one. And, of course, this leads to a defensive type of argumentation, because there are definitely worrisome views and practices in parts of the Evangelical movement, as there are in parts of the Reformed movement.

The type of evaluation such as Holtvluwer’s series of articles is only useful if we follow it up with a real apple and apple comparison. Let us seek out those groups in the Evangelical movement that we have much in common with. According to Holtvluwer these groups do exist. Let us get to know and understand these particular Evangelical churches better. This approach may possibly lead to greater unity of God’s people.

I am convinced that if ever the church stands to profit more from responding to God’s desire of unity than she did in New Testament times, it will be in the third millennium. But that requires another letter.

*Henk Van Beelan,
Smithers, BC*

Response to Henk Van Beelen’s letter

My thanks to br. Van Beelen who has caused me to reevaluate my approach in the articles on Evangelicalism.

Br. Van Beelen is concerned that I have been busy comparing apples and oranges, and while he finds this interesting he does not find it helpful. Evidently br. Van Beelen’s main concern is that any analysis of “other” Christian movements should have as its goal the “greater unity of God’s people.” My articles, then, failed to contribute toward this end.

In my defense I must say that my exposition never pretended to have this goal at all. Its purpose was solely to inform a primarily Reformed readership of what is going on outside of our ecclesiastical walls in the Evangelical movement, and then offer an evaluation of that movement. First we must test the spirits before we can think of becoming united with them. My articles were thus intended to represent a testing of the spirits of Evangelicalism.

Moreover, br. Van Beelen has incorrectly spoken of the “Evangelical movement” in comparison with the “Reformed movement.” To my knowledge there is no “Reformed movement,” only Reformed churches. One reason I couldn’t evaluate apples and oranges in this regard is that Evangelicalism is radically different from Reformed churches. The first is an interdenominational cooperative effort at upholding the four “isms” (see the third article) while the latter are churches adhering faithfully to the heritage that was restored to them at the time of the Reformation. The nature of the case, I’m afraid, is simply apples and oranges.

I agree with br. Van Beelen that more work needs to be done to become familiar with those parts of the Evangelical movement which appear to be closer to us than others. Reformed churches should always seek a unity in the true faith with other Christians. My work was meant as an introduction to the broader movement, noting its positive and negative components, and to that end I hope it served its purpose.

P.H. Holtvluwer 



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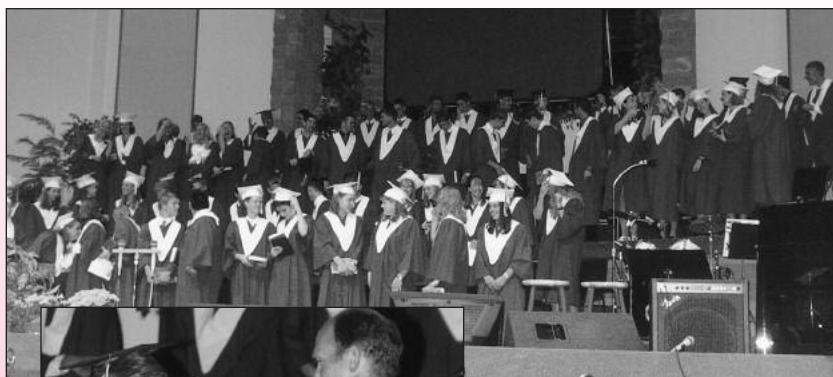
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Credo Christian High School Graduation 1999

With the final provincial exam completed on June 29, the Credo grads of 1999 had to work right to the end of their school year. It was that night for the graduation ceremonies and the next night for the banquet! No doubt the "final days" of their last year in high school were busy, if not something of a blur for the 67 graduating students at Credo Christian High School. Not a problem, however, for this very talented group of seniors. They seemed quite capable of decorating, dressing, practising, and preparing for these wonderful festivities. Perhaps in the back of their minds were vacation plans, university preparation, and summer work schedules. But now? The school year is over and they could celebrate!

Approximately 1200 members of the school community came out to witness the 1999 graduation and were impressed with this classy group of grads. After the entrance of the class of '99, grad David VanLaar welcomed family, friends and honoured guests. Principal Ed Vanderboom offered the opening speech and reminded the grads and audience of "The Battle." It's all about training. He identified the enemy as the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:10-18). A difficult enemy, indeed? But the preparation? Right thinking. Put on the full armour of God: truth, righteousness and faith will carry the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. This is what Credo's theme was for the school year. It's about training up a child in the way he should go. This training does not stop but goes on for a lifetime . . . for the glory of God.

Mr. Martin Leyenhorst, departing chairman, spoke on behalf of the parents. He gave a lively speech about the cows leaving! Indeed, he was able to compare young people and their growth, hopes, expectations, and futures to the passage of animals "charging for the gate." Is life about running for the opening? There's much more to life in Christ. Seek his ways.



Chairman Mr. Martin Leyenhorst presents a book to graduate Joey Boot.

Chairman Leyenhorst, principal Vanderboom and vice-principal Henry Moes then proceeded to present the diplomas which were accompanied by J. Douma's *The Ten Commandments*. Sixty-seven names later, there was the flurry of flashbulbs as parents captured this special moment.

Arenda Schutte had the privilege of speaking for the grads as Valedictorian. Her speech was a beautiful allegory involving students and art. She showed the wonder of God's creative work in his children using a variety of artistic images and themes. Tapestries, mosaics, and frescoes were cleverly used in this rather inspiring speech. Obviously, Arenda's point was clear: We need to reflect the love of the Potter in everything we do.

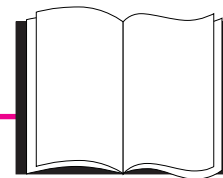
Several students were then presented with awards and scholarships for some very fine academic performances. Entrance scholarships, district scholarships, bursaries were passed on to these

deserving students; and one, Jody Bysterveld, was recognized as the top science student, and was awarded the Governor's General's Bronze Medal. Congratulations! All in all, great reason for gratitude.

The following evening was a time for the celebratory banquet. This well dressed crowd of 280 people took in some excellent food, fun and laughs and even a few tears. A variety of excellent music, drama and awards were part of the evening's festivities.

In all of these festivities, the blessing of the Lord were evident. It was truly a wonderful thing to hear grads speak of their appreciation for the Christian upbringing and schooling they received. Despite human frailties, our heavenly Father maintains his care over us, his children. These "children" will be missed, but preparations will be made to train up the next "warriors" at Credo High.

Ron de Haan 



Scriptural Law of Worship

By Henry Sikkema

In *A Note on Hymns: Response to brothers Douma and Duker* (Clarion, May 28, 1998), Dr. J. DeJong defends the current Canadian Reformed federation practices regarding hymns with great zeal.

Dr. J. DeJong writes, "the collection of both psalms and hymns gives a good representative picture of what a Reformed Psalter looks like." Several things are missed here – the basis for calling a Psalter a "good representative picture" must come from Scripture. Scripture authorizes the 150 Psalms of the Old Testament, and no other songs are authorized. What then, is Dr. J. DeJong's standard?

He writes that we must seek "a conscious alignment with the early church." This would require that we sing what they sang. The fact is that prior to AD 300 the evidence shows that they sang Psalms and there is no evidence that other hymns were sung as Dr. J. DeJong would have it. Later, when hymns were introduced, the Councils of Laodicea (AD 437) and Constantinople (AD 618) urged churches to sing the Psalms only.

Yet we do have a higher standard than historical testimony; Br. Duker refers to it: "The church must have clear biblical grounds for singing uninspired songs in worship."

The will of God, as told in Scripture (Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; Leviticus 10:1-7; Colossians 3:23; Matthew 15:7-9; John 4:23, etc.), written about in the confessions (Belgic Confession Article 7, Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 96) and written about by Calvin, De Cock, and Ursinus, is the *Scriptural Law of Worship*. This law is based on the second commandment and the sufficiency of Scripture and is that we worship as revealed by divine warrant in explicit command, good and necessary consequence or approved example – God forbids everything else in worship. This *must* be the principle guiding the Committee for the *Book of Praise*.

Dr. J. DeJong writes that a "central rule is: is the song Scriptural and does it accurately and completely reflect the Scriptural truth?" This is contrary to the meaning of Br. Duker, and I ask for scriptural proof of Dr. J. DeJong's "central rule." A man's conscience is to be bound by God only, not by vague, unproved central rules of other men.

Br. Duker's use of "uninspired," "man-made" and "unspiritual" are valid since the words of the hymns are *not* inspired. At very best they are loose paraphrases of Scriptures but are mostly man-made hymns. There is no divine authorization for the use of such songs. The "odd entanglements" that arise from doing only what God demands do

not exist. It is only when man strays from God's Word that "odd entanglements" occur.

Dr. J. DeJong notes that the use of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 can imply that other songs may be used. When making such a statement, in clear opposition to the explanations of Calvin, Van Der Velde, De Cock, and the Synod of Dort, more explanation is *surely* required. There is simply no proof that Paul referred to any other songs than the 150 Psalms of the Psalter. In the same paragraph Dr. J. DeJong appeals to Christian liberty. Christian liberty means freedom to obey God, not liberty to do as one pleases as long as it doesn't go against explicit commands of God. It means we are at liberty to obey Christ and are no longer slaves to sin. Worship in the New Testament is not "one of maturity and freedom" to innovate but of freedom to obey God only and not to obey Satan!

We need to question our worship practices. Now, as always, we need divine warrant to add to or subtract from the perfection of Scripture and in song that is the Psalter.

Henry Sikkema is a member of Providence Canadian Reformed Church at Edmonton, Alberta.

In an upcoming issue, there will be an article on this topic by the Rev. R. Aasman. – Editor



Annual Report from the Canadian Reformed Society for a Home for the Aged Inc. Operating Ebenezer Villa in Hamilton and Mount Nemo Christian Nursing Home in Burlington

On April 24, 1999, our annual membership meeting was held in the lounge of Ebenezer Villa and some 35 members attended. Besides the usual business matters, Rev. G. Nederveen spoke on the ageing process and how our elderly members may continue their task in the Communion of Saints while enjoying fel-

lowship in a home such as Ebenezer Villa or when unable to continue independent living in Mount Nemo Christian Nursing Home. (Ps 92:12-15)

At this meeting, the Board was pleased to submit the audited financial statements and to report that the results of its operations are satisfactory. The So-

ciety was able to donate \$10,000 to "Anchor" Association for capital expenditures.

The chairman noted "indeed the Lord has blessed us richly."

Although you do not read much about the activities of the Board and Management Committees of both

Homes, rest assured that much work is done in quiet (and sometimes not so quiet) corners of the meeting rooms.

The Board and Management Committees function very well and always work together in good harmony and cooperation. Many volunteers also donate countless hours for the benefit of our elderly residents, while Mr. Allan Sybersma, our Chief Administrator at Mount Nemo Christian Nursing Home provides excellent professional services and leadership.

A partial change of the guard took place at the Annual Meeting. Tony Vanderhout, as board member and chairman, and Peter John VanDyk, our secretary, finished their term. Bob Havenaar, our vice-chairman was re-elected (and has since become Chairman of the Board). Two new board members were elected: Paul Flach and Paul VanderVeen, both from Hamilton. We wish these brothers well.

The Board structure is now as follows:

Bob Havenaar, Chairman; Henk Gelderman, Vice-Chairman; Mark Deboer, Secretary; R. Jake Oosterhoff, Treasurer; Henry Prinzen, Director; Paul Flach, Director; Paul VanderVeen, Director.

The Management Committee of Ebenezer Villa also had some changes.

Last December, Ike VanderWoude, after many years of dedicated service, requested to be discharged. Later, Tony Vanderhout also requested "retirement" from this Committee. We are pleased that others were found willing to come on board. This Management Committee is now in the good hands of:

Bruce Morris, Chairman; Mrs. Annette Bartels, Secretary; Frank Ludwig; Gerald VanDasselaar, Henry Prinzen and Dave Bosma.

Each has been given a certain task while Cathy Lof continues as our Custodian and Fred Stoffels our Financial Administrator.

The Mount Nemo Management Committee remains steadfast and is well looked after by:

Louis Sipkema, Chairman; Henk Gelderman, Vice-Chairman; Peter John Vandyk, Bob Havenaar, Jack Poort, Mark DeBoer and Paul VanSydenborgh.

As you can see, many are involved in the affairs of the Society and we thank them all for their willingness to do so. We cannot list all the names of the volunteers at Mount Nemo Christian Nursing Home and Ebenezer Villa. Indeed, altogether they form a small army. Thank you all!!

However, our membership "army" is becoming smaller. Why not write out



CHURCH NEWS

CALLLED by the Free Reformed Church at Legana, Tasmania

Rev. J. Poppe
of West Albany, Australia

your cheque for \$50.00 now and mail it to R. Jake Oosterhoff at 4300 Bethesda Rd., R.R. #1, Vineland, ON L0R 2C0, payable to Canadian Reformed Society for a Home for the Aged Inc. This past year, we received a substantial donation from a member of one of our churches in Canada. We publicly acknowledge this and sincerely thank the donor.

May the Lord continue to bless our Society and all who are associated with it.

The Board 

PRESS RELEASE



Press Release Classis Alberta/Manitoba May 25/99 held at Taber

Art. 1 Opening

Rev. J. VanPopta led the opening devotions, reading from 1 Timothy 4 and leading in prayer. He welcomed the delegates and mentioned that this was the first time a classis had ever been convened in the Taber church. Rev. D. VandeBurgt was welcomed as delegate for the first time after his ordination as minister of the church at Denver. It was also noted that Rev. R. Aasman had declined a call to the church of Smithers, and in the meantime had received another call to the church of Smithville. Rev. VanPopta mentioned that the Redeemer church of Winnipeg was still vacant and expressed the hope that in due time this church might receive a minister of the Word. The recent shooting of a couple of students in a school in

Taber was mentioned as a reminder to all that we live out of the Lord's hand.

Art. 2 Credentials

The credentials were reviewed by the delegates of the convening church of Coaldale and found in order. The following delegates were present:

- Barrhead – Rev. E. Tiggelaar and elder B. Vogelzang
- Calgary – Rev. R. Eikelboom and elder H. DeBoer
- Carman – Rev. J. Moesker and elder P. Veenendaal
- Coaldale – Rev. J. VanPopta and elder R. Versteeg
- Denver – Rev. D. VandeBurgt and elder R. Bruintjes
- Edmonton Immanuel – Rev. G. Snip and elder G. Visscher
- Edmonton Providence – Rev. R. Aasman and elder J. Leffers
- Neerlandia – elders L. Wierenga and R. Steenbergen

- Taber – Rev. T. Lodder and elder C. Hoogerdijk
- Winnipeg Grace – Rev. K. Jonker and elder C. VanSeters
- Winnipeg Redeemer – elders J. Kuik and H. Slaa

Art. 3 Constitution

Classis was declared constituted with the following officers:
chairman – Rev. T. Lodder
vice-chairman – Rev. J. Moesker
clerk – Rev. E. Tiggelaar

Art. 4 Adoption Agenda

The agenda was adopted as amended.

Art. 5 Reports

a. Reports Treasurer Classis

The financial report of the treasurer was approved. Some requests of the treasurer for clarification were dealt with in closed session. The

Providence Church of Edmonton reported that the books of the treasurer were found to be in good order for the year 1998. The treasurer, br. J. Buitenbos of Edmonton, was thanked for his diligent work.

b. Report of Church for Inspection of Archives

The council of the Immanuel Church of Edmonton reported that the archives of the 1998 classes were found to have been properly filed. It was noted that the press releases of some of the recent classes were missing. Those who were vice-chairmen of those classes were requested to submit those reports as yet.

c. Report of Brothers for Contact with Provincial Governments

Rev. Tiggelaar reported concerning contact with the government of Alberta. A change in documentation of marriages was noted. Certificates for solemnizing marriages were obtained without problems for new ministers in Alberta. Rev. Jonker reported concerning contact with the government of Manitoba. There were no major matters to report. The delegates of the church of Denver reported that there are no problems in the USA with obtaining the right to conduct weddings. There is no need to have ongoing contact with the state for the purpose of validating marriages. It was suggested that any contact with the state of Colorado be left up to the church of Denver.

d. Church Visitation Reports

Church visit reports were read concerning visits of church visitors to the Providence Church of Edmonton and Immanuel Church of Edmonton on Dec.9th, 1998, and to the churches of Barrhead and Neerlandia on Dec.10, 1998.

e. Report of Observer to the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the OPC

Rev. Eikelboom will report on this at the next classis.

f. Report of Committee for Financial Aid for Students for the Ministry

Since the last report, the Lord took to Himself committee member br. A. Hamoen. Gratitude was expressed for the many years of service provided for this committee by

br. Hamoen. A letter will be sent to sr. Hamoen expressing this and offering our condolences. The church of Coaldale, in consultation with the committee, will offer a recommendation to the next classis regarding a new member for this committee. In closed session approval was given for support to a student for the ministry.

Art. 6 Request Carman about institution of another church

The church of Carman requested classis

1. to grant approval to constitute a second consistory and institute a new congregation in Carman on July 4th, 1999, and
2. to appoint a representative to be present at that occasion on behalf of the churches in Classis AB/MB.

With thankfulness to the Lord, classis approved the request of Carman to institute another congregation there, and wished them the blessing of the Lord as they proceed with this institution. The chairman expressed gratitude to the Lord for his work in giving the growth to the church of Carman which made this institution necessary. Rev. Jonker was appointed to represent the churches in classis at the institution of the new church.

**Art. 7 Question Period
Ad Art. 44 Church Order**

All churches responded positively to the first two questions in the Article, and negatively to the last.

Art. 8 Appointments

- a. Convening church next classis: Church of Denver
- b. Date and venue of next classis: 9:00 a.m. Oct. 5th (or Dec. 7th) 1999 with Calgary as venue, unless the Redeemer Church of Winnipeg requires examination for a minister elect, in which case the venue could be made Winnipeg.
- c. Suggested officers:
chairman – Rev. J. VanPopta
vice-chairman – Rev. T. Lodder
clerk – Rev. J. Moesker
- d. Observer to the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the OPC: It was decided to have Rev. VandeBurgt attend the Presbytery on a regular basis, as his work permits. This is based on a standing invitation of the P.O.D.. Rev. Lodder was already appointed by a previous classis to attend a Presbytery meeting in the year 2000.

e. Appointments as per Art.8 Regulations Classis:

1. Treasurer – br. J. Buitenbos
2. Church for auditing books treasurer – Edmonton Providence
3. Church for care of the archives – Edmonton Providence
4. Church for inspection archives – Edmonton Immanuel
5. Committee for examination – Revs. Aasman and Jonker with Rev. Slomp as alternate.
6. Examiners – sermon:
Revs. Aasman and Jonker
exegesis OT: Rev. Aasman
exegesis NT: Rev. Snip
knowledge Scripture:
Rev. Lodder
doctrines/creeds: Rev. Slomp
church history: Rev. Tiggelaar
ethics: Rev. Eikelboom
church polity: Rev. VanPopta
diaconology: Revs. Moesker and VandeBurgt
7. Committee for Aid to Needy Students for the Ministry – brs. C. Veldkamp and W. Vogelzang
8. Committee for Aid to Needy Churches – brs. P. Groenwold, W. Noot, and J. Vanderdeen
9. Deputies for Contact with Provincial Governments – Rev. Tiggelaar for Alberta and Rev. Jonker for Manitoba

Art. 9 Personal Question Period

Opportunity was given to the delegates for personal questions. It was noted that the Free Church of Scotland in Edmonton should be invited to each classis. The brothers were also urged to abide by the rules and regulations in regard to the matter of needy churches.

Art. 10 Brotherly Censure Ad Art. 34 Church Order

Thankfully, there was no need to censure any brothers, and the delegates were thanked for their cooperation. The chairman was also thanked for his work in leading the assembly.

Art. 11 Adoption of Acts and approval Press Release

The Acts of this classis were reviewed and adopted. The press release was approved.

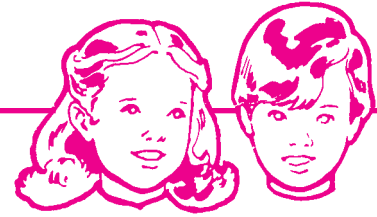
Art. 12 Closing

After the delegates sang Psalm 122:3, Rev. Lodder led in thanksgiving prayer, and classis was declared over.

for Classis May 25/99,
J. Moesker, vice-chairman e.t. 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

Another two weeks have passed, and we are still on holidays. Have you tried the fun things that I put in the last *Our Little Magazine*? Were they different to what you are used to doing?

This time I have a puzzle. I will give the puzzle to you this time, but won't let you know the solution to the puzzle. I will put the solution to the puzzle in the next *Little Magazine*. That way you have two weeks to try to work the puzzle out.

You will let me know how your painting and puzzles went, won't you?

Lots of love,
Aunt Betty

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

September 1, 1987	Jordan Lodder
September 2, 1989	Jessica Verhelst
September 4, 1986	Brandon Van Amerongen
September 9, 1987	Adena Feenstra
September 9, 1990	Cheyenne Bergsma
September 16, 1989	Ashley Tuininga
September 20, 1987	Chelsea Kampen
September 22, 1986	Sarah Schulenberg

THE TRAPPED STRING

To make this paper puzzle, you will need some card or stiff paper about 15cm wide and 10cm long. Start by making two cuts 8cm long about 1.5cm apart. Just below these cuts, make a hole in the card or paper. This hole should be about 2cm across. It doesn't have to be a perfect circle.

Now you need a piece of string of about 30cm long. You will also need two large buttons (bigger than the hole) or cut two circles from a piece of cardboard.

Loop the string behind the paper strip and put both ends down through the hole. Tie one big button to each end of the string, or glue or staple the ends of the string to the two circles.

It's now puzzle time. Try to remove the string without tearing the card or paper and without removing either button or cardboard circle. Don't give up. It can be done. Best of all, after you learn how to do this puzzle, you can show it to others. It's great fun watching a friend struggle with a puzzle which you already know how to solve.

SOLUTION NEXT TIME!

HANDPRINT MOBILE

You will need to have finger paint, flat dishes, paper, water and sponge, soapy water and a towel. Put different colour paints in the flat dishes. Moisten the table surface, before placing your paper on it, to stop the paper from slipping. Put a hand in the paint then place it firmly onto the paper to make your hand print. Make handprints in the same or in different colours, taking care to wash your hands between colour changes. Or use mixtures of colours to make colourful hands.

Cut your hands out of the paper and hang them with string on a tree, or on bits of wood to make a handprint mobile.



ODD MAN OUT

In each of the following groups, one of the parts does not link properly with the others. Which is the "odd man out" and why?

1. Job, James, Jonah, Jeremiah, Joshua
2. Sinai, Pisgah, Ararat, Carmel, Philippi
3. Ben-hadad, Hezekiah, Zedekiah, Jehoshaphat, Asa
4. Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Caleb, Nehemiah,
5. Galilee, Samaria, Goshen, Idumea, Judea
6. Ephesians, Revelations, Galatians, Colossians, Philemon
7. Dan, Gad, Naphtali, Obadiah, Jebulun
8. Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Paul
9. Aaron, Annas, Caiaphas, Abner, Eli
10. Stephen, Barnabas, Silas, Mark, Timothy

