

Clarion

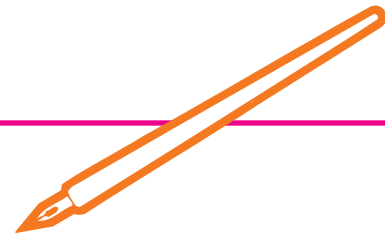
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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*Reformed Church of
New Zealand at Hastings*



By J. De Jong



Annexing or Merger?

Over the summer *Clarion* has published some of the material that led to the current state of doctrinal agreement that we have been pursuing with delegates from the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA). According to our calling and task we have been involved in the promotion of ecclesiastical unity with the new federation stemming from the Christian Reformed Church for quite some time. Already in the days of the formation of the Alliance of Reformed Churches, delegates from the Canadian Reformed Churches drew attention to the call of Christ that those who confess the same faith must gather together around the one table of the Lord, and unite in one federation. The churches have continued in this mandate right to this very day, and as the documents show, some progress is being made.

Other ties

However, the URCNA – true to its new name – has been very eager to promote ecumenical relations with a large number of other bodies as well. Their ties are especially close with the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (OCRC) and the Free Reformed Churches, and they are developing closer ties with the Protestant Reformed Churches. Their most recent synod at Hudsonville made an especially far-reaching decision with regard to the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches. They were invited to unite with the United Reformed Churches, forming one federation under the Church Order of the URCNA. The normal requirement of this Church Order that ministers coming into the federation from other churches be required to undergo a *colloquium doctum* was waived in this case. Individual churches of the United Reformed federation were required to communicate their approbation of this decision to the Stated Clerk by the end of July.

A sound course?

We may ask whether this decision represents a sound course of action on the part of the URCNA. On the one hand, the decision can be readily understood. These two federations are groups of churches coming from one house. They also seceded from the Christian Reformed Church for essentially the same reasons. The OCRC represents an earlier wave of discontent with regard to the impact of the new hermeneutic, and other liberal tendencies in the CRC. The URCNA represents the same protest against liberalism at a later stage, especially as it concerns the *result* and *effect* of the things that the OCRC originally protested. No wonder then that the brothers – and here I refer especially to those from whom the proposal at the URC synod originated – feel a strong bond with one another.

Yet – looking at all this as an outsider – I cannot say that this decision represents a sound course of action for the URCNA, nor one that indicates a careful pursuit of ecumenicity according to Reformed principles. Essentially the URC decision on this matter has the flavour of annexing a group of churches rather than entering into a merger with them. The option presented is: you may join, but on *our terms*, according to *our order*. Hence, whatever you have developed over the years needs to be left behind.

Let me explain my difficulties with this approach. First of all, there was no recommendation from the Ecumenical Relations committee of the United Reformed Churches at the synod with regard to union with this federation. While there were some talks with them in eastern Canada, for the most part these have been rather minimal, and of a more exploratory character. Secondly, the OCRC were not asking for unity in any way at the last URC synod. The fraternal delegate, Rev. De Prine of Bowmanville, did not make any references to the desirability or the call to federative unity. His main contribution to the discussion, as far as I remember, was: “When you get older, I

don’t know if you get any wiser, but you do get slower.” The sum of this address was then: let’s leave things as they are. Living in a cooperative relationship beside each other did not appear to present any problem for him. In fact, it seemed to be more of a solution.

To this we may add a third point. No mention at all was made at the synod of the fact that the OCRC represents a *federation* of churches, that is, a group of churches spanning the continent but united

together in one federation that has adopted its own “Declaration of Separation and Return” as its “founding charter”. This Declaration, modelled on the Act of Secession of 1834, publicly presents the rationale for the existence of the federation, the departure from the CRC, and also adds the stated desire of the federation “to seek unity with all Christians and congregations who like us wish to live together in Christian harmony through the humble submission to God’s infallible Word as this has been summarized in our Three Forms of Unity.”¹ The federation also resolves to live according to the terms of the Church Order of Dort as adopted with revisions at the Synod of Cambridge, (On.), March 1988.

If a whole federation is then invited to join with another without any reference to its own birth papers or church order, simply on the basis of the fellowship that exists between churches in one part of the country, then the result is that one federation is fully *annexed* by another. Any thought of a careful consideration of the reason for separation in the first place, any interaction with the *Declaration* is apparently considered in this process to be entirely unnecessary. Even

We defend merger, rather than an annex policy, that is, the coming together of two federations rather than one being entirely absorbed by the other.

differences in church order, – if they do exist – were not part of the discussion.

Telling indicators

The decision with regard to the OCRC forms a telling indicator of the sort of federation we are dealing with in the URCNA. The federation represents a further stage in the continued splintering of the CRC, but like its predecessors, it remains a question whether these “splinters” have really shown that they desire to pursue true ecumenicity on a Reformed basis, with careful attention to the doctrine and practices of the Reformed Churches throughout their history. The union proposal with the OCRC is a case of a rather over hasty courtship – marriage before engagement, indeed, without even taking the time to get to know one another! Can such a marriage work out in the long run?

Time will tell us what the local United Reformed churches will do, and what the reaction of the OCRC will be. But as interested spectators to this “whirlwind romance” we can only say: here we have a painful absence of historical consciousness with regard to the gathering of the church. And there is – perhaps on both sides – an undue disparagement of the Reformed idea of a federation and its prerogatives. It seems that out of reaction to the CRC with its over emphasis on the corporate unity of the entire body of the church, (the national church) we now have among these “splinter groups” a strong emphasis on the autonomy of the local church without the necessarily complementing principle of the mutual obligation of the churches to act and live together as one federation. In other words, the churches promote local autonomy to the extent that the federational allegiance gets shortchanged. You don’t just decide willy-nilly to swallow up another federation if you respect that federation’s history and background. And if you have any sense of identity with regard to your own federation and its *raison d’être*, you are not going to let yourself get swallowed without a close examination of what you are getting in to. Above all, on all sides things should be done together!

Telling too is the principle of ratification that the URC have appended to their offer to the OCRC. The synod decision, although binding in itself needs the *ratification* of the local churches before it can be implemented. Just exactly what number of churches must voice their approval in order for the decision to be effected is not clear to me. Here, too, however, the sense of federational

identity and mutual commitment to each other is weaker than it could be.

Our stand

We do not just write these things as an interested third party watching how the relationships of others develop. Still less do we write out of any sense of jealousy, as if we feel jilted, having hoped secretly that we would be first in line for the United Reformed churches. After all, as stated, there are cogent arguments to be brought forward for the approach that the United Reformed churches have taken in regard to the OCRC. But it all does throw up an additional flag of caution for us. For as we desire to hold to our own birth papers, we need to say: the route of one group annexing another is not an option for us. We defend *merger*, rather than an *annex* policy, that is, the *coming together* of two federations rather than one being entirely absorbed by the other.

That means that in the process to merger, there will be give and take on both sides and a willingness to mutually go back to the principles of the beginning, the “birth papers” of the Reformed churches. Perhaps we will need more revisions of our church order, liturgy

and songbook. A Reformed church that is always reforming necessarily stands open to all of this. But we do so with the rule of Paul “*that we hold fast what we have received*” (Phil 3:16). In other words, we are willing in any and every way to make a good thing better, but not to exchange the good God has given us for something more inferior.

That is the merger that Kuyper defended in 1892 – not one of iron and lead, but one of *gold* and *gold*. We pursue a union not where knowledge will decline and zeal slacken, but a union born out of knowledge, which will also result in deeper fellowship, growth in knowledge and a more effective witness to the world around us. Any other kind of unity is not worth pursuing, for all true unity is and remains unity *in the truth*. We then know what we are called to do. As an esteemed colleague put it: *Let’s go for the gold!* May God continue to hear the prayers of those who have this unity and this faith in their hearts! For then we know that whatever happens here on earth, his church is being gathered in a true unity of faith!

¹See the *Declaration* as published in *Christian Renewal*, Jan. 20, 1992



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By R.E. Pot

The Art of Living Well

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

Psalm 111:10a

Decisions. Every day of your life, you're faced with many of them. Small decisions about whether to buy Coca-Cola or the cheaper no-name brand. Big decisions about whether to buy a new car or keep the old one for another three years. Decisions about where your dollars will go on a Thursday evening shopping spree, where your feet will go on a Friday night. Decisions about jobs, relationships, entertainment.

These decisions are important because you will want to live *well*. To make *good* and *right* decisions. The Bible calls this wisdom. Wisdom is often confused with knowledge. Someone who performs brilliantly on a TV quiz show may have his head crammed full of information. But that doesn't mean he has wisdom!

In Scripture, wisdom is very practical. It's often connected with ordinary people. Wisdom describes the skill of the people who make Aaron's high priestly garments (Exod 20:3). The craftsmanship of metal workers (Exod 31:3,6). A person who is skilled, who knows how to do their job *well*, is a person the Bible calls *wise*.

Applied to life in general, then, wisdom is the art of *living well*. It's the art of living your daily life, and doing a good job of it. Being able to decide between good and bad. Knowing the right thing to do, and the right time to do it. In other words, the very quality you need in order to make good decisions, to live well, is wisdom.

So where do you get wisdom? Can you sign up for a course in "Wisdom 101", perhaps buy textbooks on the subject? God's Word tells you where to find wisdom. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." The *key* to wisdom, to living well is to *start* with the fear of the LORD. The fear of the LORD is the doorway to wisdom. You can't get wisdom without going through that doorway.

Do you still remember what you learned in Grade 1? It's a safe guess to

say that somewhere around that time in your life, you learned your ABCs. When you finished Grade 1, did you forget the ABCs? You wouldn't get very far in Grade 2 if you did! That beginning step is foundational. If you don't start with that foundation, with the first steps, then you are never going to get any farther.

Similarly, fearing God is the fundamental first step to being wise, to living well. If you don't start by learning in God's school, with those ABCs, then you don't have a hope of living well! The fear of the LORD is the basic first step, essential for every step in life. Without it, you can't get true wisdom.

What, then, is this foundational "fear of the LORD"? The Bible uses this expression to refer to being in awe and reverence of God. Fearing God means knowing God for who He really is, being in a right relationship with Him. Understanding that you're a child of God, that He's your Creator (v.2), Provider (v.5), and Saviour (v.9) in Jesus Christ.

Truly fearing the LORD, understanding the riches of being God's child, always results in an obedient lifestyle. When you understand what God has done for you, you will respect Him, love Him, obey Him. Being God-fearing always results in a thankful lifestyle that says, "My Father, tell me, your child, what to do and I'll do it!" So it's no surprise that in the Bible, fearing God is often connected with proper living, obeying God's Word. The expression "fear of God" often parallels *obeying God's commandments* (Ps 19:7-9), and contrasts *doing evil* (Prov 8:13). Obedience is part of fearing God. To live well, then, you need to listen to God's Word, and obey his commandments.

When you do that, you will get wisdom. You will truly understand life, the way things really work. If you don't fear God and don't have wisdom, you will find it totally depressing to experience suffering and trials. You won't understand why you had to suffer that accident or sickness. But if you fear

the LORD, and read his Word, you know that God uses your suffering to produce perseverance, character and hope (Rom 5:3-5), and that He uses your suffering to work for good (Rom 8:28). Because you are God-fearing and wise, you are encouraged in trials instead of depressed!

If you don't fear God and don't have wisdom, you won't understand the purpose of daily work. People who don't fear God work for work's sake, or perhaps to get rich. They hope to win the lottery or else retire at 55 and spend the rest of their lives playing golf and traveling the world. They busily chase earthly things, only to discover that they don't satisfy. You know why. When you fear God, and read his Word, you know that the ultimate purpose of work isn't about getting rich, but to serve God. That's wisdom!

That's how fearing God, listening to and obeying his Word helps you interpret properly what happens in your life, and make the right decisions. Life becomes a lot easier! The fools of the world have to work everything out for themselves how to live well. Even then they get it wrong. But God *tells* you his children how to live well! His Word gives you a proper perspective on every aspect of life.

How are you going to live *well*? Choose wisdom. Make the fear of the LORD your starting point in every aspect of your life. View everything in connection with your relationship with your Father in heaven. Listen to what his Word says about it, and ask Him for help. Then you will understand life, make right decisions and choices. Don't worry if the world regards your lifestyle as a foolish one. The fools of this world have long regarded the wisdom of God as foolishness (1 Cor 1:18). Their mistake is nothing less than eternal foolishness.

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



The Westminster Confession¹

(Third of Four Parts)

By J. Kamphuis

Prof. Kamphuis related in the previous instalment how the Three Forms of Unity were judged to be faithful to Scripture by the foreign delegates who attended the Synod of Dordt. At the same time, this illustrious Synod made the mistake of not dealing with the confessional heart of the government of the church and so missed an opportunity to encourage the English believers who opposed the hierarchy of the Church of England.

1. A climax in the conflict in England

At the time of the Synod of Dort the church in England as well as its king offered support to the Reformed people in the Netherlands. But shortly after, things apparently changed. The King of England, James I, who reigned till 1625, turned increasingly against the "Puritans." It was precisely his strong preference for the episcopal system of church government which led him farther away from the Reformed confession. Under the reign of his son Charles I, this development in an unreformed direction became still stronger. When he was

king, his close friend William Laud was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. We saw already that at the Synod of Dort the bishop present there spoke in favour of the episcopal system of church government. But Archbishop Laud was an even stronger advocate of that system! Already as a young man at the beginning of his ecclesiastical career he defended the thesis that without the "divine episcopate" it is impossible to be a true church. That went much farther than what had been said in the Synod of Dort! No wonder that under this Archbishop the church moved much closer to Rome (a development which in fact had started already at the end of the reign of King James I). Without bishops there is no true church. But then Rome had to be acknowledged as "true church." In spite of the great distance between Rome and England, they both had a form of the "apostolic succession", which could not be said of the Reformed churches. No wonder that among the church people in England the fear grew that ecclesiastically the road definitely would end up in Rome.

Now we also see how things are connected. In Dort, there was still the idea that the articles of faith on church government could be left out of the discussion "for the sake of peace and harmony." In England, however, in the period after Dort "the church leaders" seemed to go more and more in an Arminian direction and the Calvinistic content of the Anglican confession (the Thirty-nine Articles) met with increasing resistance.

How close the Anglican Church under Archbishop Laud was going back to the Roman Catholic doctrine is clear from one example. Already before he became Archbishop of England he ordered that *the altar* in the church had to be honoured with curtsies. It carried "the body of Christ", did it not? But it was not necessary to pay the same respect to *the pulpit*. For from there it was just *the Word that was proclaimed!*

The consistent policy of the Archbishop in the direction of Rome caused a climax in the conflict with the Reformed segment of the church. The explosion came when an attempt was made to bring to ecclesiastical submission also the Calvinist and Presbyterian people in Scotland, among whom the reformer John Knox had fought the good fight. The episcopal system of church government had to bring uniformity to those in Scotland as well. And also there the people had to turn away from the sober liturgy of the Reformation.

This attempt turned into a failure. In 1638 the Scottish people joined together in Edinburgh in a Covenant to oppose the Anglican liturgy forced upon them. They pledged to defend "the true Reformed religion." Also in England the civic and ecclesiastical opposition grew and reached a climax. The English parliament took a strong stand against the king and his religious advisers, especially the Archbishop of Canterbury. And with or without the cooperation of the king, parliament wanted to maintain and restore the unity with Scotland. That implied that with respect to the church and the

What's inside?

While Dr. Van Dam was down under visiting our Australian sister churches, he took the opportunity to visit New Zealand and the Reformed churches there. You will find a report on his visit. Interestingly, the Reformed churches of New Zealand hold to both the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Speaking of this confession, we publish the third instalment of Prof. J. Kamphuis's survey of the Westminster Confession. He writes about its birth.

The month of June is a popular month for ecclesiastical synods and assemblies. Dr. J. De Jong reviews some of the decisions made by the Christian Reformed Church, our Dutch sister churches, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. This latter church made some decisions not very favourable to us. Our reviewer comments on these.

A year ago, Dr. De Jong spoke to a Mission Aid Conference in Hamilton. We publish here the first part of his speech in which he reflects on the relationship between Mission and Mission Aid. *Clarion* apologizes for the delay in publication.

The Rev. R. E. Pot contributes the meditation.

We hope we have given you some things to think about and discuss with family and friends.

GvP

confession they did not want to see a split between the church in Scotland, where the Calvinism of John Knox was dominant, and the church in England.

2. A counter-movement to reform the church

The opposition against the king and the episcopal hierarchy was undoubtedly motivated from the outset by a desire to reform the church. Naturally, also here we should keep in mind the specific time frame. It was the same in the Netherlands! The Dutch government also played a role not only in the convening of the Synod of Dort but also during its meetings. Today we simply cannot imagine such a situation anymore. It is not for nothing that the Bible translation which originated from the Synod of Dort is still called the States-General Bible (the 1637 Statenvertaling). Similarly, we see that in England the *parliament* started the battle. The civic authorities were much more involved than we would like to have seen happen! The synod or assembly which would later give its name to the Westminster Confession, was in fact not much more than a committee of parliament!

However, it is very clear indeed that all this was a movement to reform the Church. The king and the Archbishop with his ecclesiastical hierarchy led the churches in the direction of Rome, at any rate in a direction which led the churches back to the Middle Ages, and which wanted to undo the Reformation of the Church.

Parliament refused to go this way. Concretely that meant no closer contact with Rome, but more fellowship with the church in Scotland, and also with the other Reformed churches.

When the English and Scottish did later come to an agreement, they established together the *Solemn League and Covenant*. The main purpose of this Covenant was to guarantee the freedom of the church in England (over against the power of the king). The Reformed religion had to be maintained. Reformation was necessary with regard to the doctrine of the church, the worship services, the discipline and the church government. This Reformation was to be done according to the Word of God and the example of the Reformed churches. This last point is important. The desire to reform the church in England resulted very clearly in a movement *towards* the other churches of the Reformation! Over against the *schismatic* pushing of king, bishops and ecclesiastical hierarchy, the real *ecumenical* nature of the Reformation is

here evident. In the various countries where the Reformation took hold, the concrete situations may have been very different, but they did not want to lose *the unity of the faith*. In their own situation they knew themselves united with “all those who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:2). In an earlier article we spoke already about the *double* motive, namely, that among the Reformed churches *unity of the faith* can coincide with a distinction and *variety with respect to confessional documents*. This is also evident in the history of the origin of the Westminster Confession.

3. The Westminster Confession of Faith is born

In accordance with their mandate to purify the doctrine of the Church from all false additions the Westminster Assembly tried initially to revise the Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican Church. But the close relation with Scotland also in ecclesiastical matters, and a continued reflection of the mandate given them made the brothers opt for a different approach.

In England ... the church leaders seemed to go more and more in an Arminian direction and the Calvinistic content of the Anglican confession (the Thirty-nine Articles) met with increasing resistance.

As such it would not have been impossible to continue the revision of the Anglican confession, the Thirty-nine Articles. Neither was it unthinkable that they would have tried to find themselves in the Scotch Confession of 1560. The main objection to this was that this confession was strongly influenced by the time in which it was made. Another consideration was that the Reformation of the church of *England* should not become a *Scottish* affair! And thus it was considered better to draft a new confession.

From 1643 till the end of 1647 they worked on this confession, and several months were also used in 1647 to add Scripture references. In Scotland it was adopted by the churches in that same year by the Synod of Edinburgh. There this confession replaced from then on the Scotch Confession of 1560. In the next year the Westminster Confession of

Faith was also approved in England by parliament.

It is a delight to study how the Synod of Westminster fulfilled its mandate. Also within this Synod there were tensions and disagreements! In the *first* place it should be said that this Synod did not try in a revolutionary way to come up with something totally new. In making a new confession they tried to build on that which their own historical situation presented to them. It is very clear that the brothers made use of the so-called Irish Articles which were drafted by the theologian James Ussher in 1615. This confession had spoken already quite extensively about the divine decree of election. The whole set up of the first part of the Westminster Confession is derived from these Articles. The Assembly also thankfully used the assistance of the Scottish commissioners. But it is *also* clear that they continually kept an eye on the confessions of other Reformed churches, namely those on the European continent. There were different opinions among the Reformed believers also with respect to the doctrine of God's eternal election. That was the case in the Synod of Dort in the Netherlands in 1618/1619. No less in the Westminster Assembly in England 1643/1647. But just as at the Synod of Dort the Reformed representatives closed ranks, so it was in England. They found a formula to confess together their faith in the God who before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4) merely out of grace has chosen in Christ a certain number of people to salvation.

But it should also be said that the Confession of Westminster wanted to be timely, taking into account what was going on in the church at that time. Also in this respect they carefully saw to it that they remained loyal to the Holy Scripture. In those days there was among the Reformed believers (especially in France) a segment which did not want to revive Arminian opinions, but on the other hand they did all their best to soften up the “harshness” of the doctrine of Dort.² But the Westminster Assembly did not follow this direction in any way. They also made a positive attempt in this ecclesiastical confession to confess the doctrine of the covenant.

It is no wonder that from many quarters this Confession has been praised as one of the richest and ripest fruits of the Reformation and of the confessional development thereafter. One of the authors of the history of the confessional documents of the Christian church describes this confession correctly as follows: “It exhibits the consensus of the Reformed

Churches on the Continent and in England and Scotland.”³ The members of the Westminster Assembly in all their labours always kept in mind the promotion of the unity of the churches.

It is to be deplored that what seemed to be the strength of the Westminster Assembly, namely, the leadership and the protection of the civil government, already quite quickly turned out to be its weakness, especially in England. Parliament still did approve the confession. But it never was accepted in the church of England, mainly because when the confession was finalized the *political* situation had changed again. A strong warning for the church never to lean on the “strong arm” of the civil government! In England the confession was adopted only by some independent groups of believers.

It was different in Scotland as we already saw. There this confession is truly still *the* confession of the Church of the Reformation. And from Scotland

and England it came to the new world of America. There it became *the* Confession of the Presbyterian world. From America (also through the work of mission) it has gone out all over the world and reached all continents. Just as the English language became an international language, so the Westminster Confession received international and world-wide recognition.

The desire to reform the church in England resulted very clearly in a movement towards the other churches of the Reformation!

That is how also our Canadian Reformed Churches were confronted with it when we explored closer relationship with the Korean Presbyterian Churches. And we kept hearing about the West-

minster Confession when contacts were established with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the USA, the Free Church of Scotland, not to speak of churches in other countries and continents. The Westminster Confession has under God’s providential care become the Reformed confession with the greatest international recognition!

¹The following 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.
²This school of thought had its centre in the Theological Seminary in Saumur, France and its main proponent was Moses Amyraldus (1596-1664).

³P. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, (6th ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1931) 1, 766.

– to be continued 

LIFE EXPERIENCE

A Kiss Goodbye

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth. Proverbs 27 :1

By Sarah Ludwig

On Tuesday, August 10th, 1999 at 8:30 p.m. the telephone rang. It was one of my father’s friends calling. He was calling to speak to my father (his minister) who was visiting my family while on holidays with my mother and siblings. Shortly after my father picked up the receiver, his face quickly became very serious and he appeared quite distraught and sad.

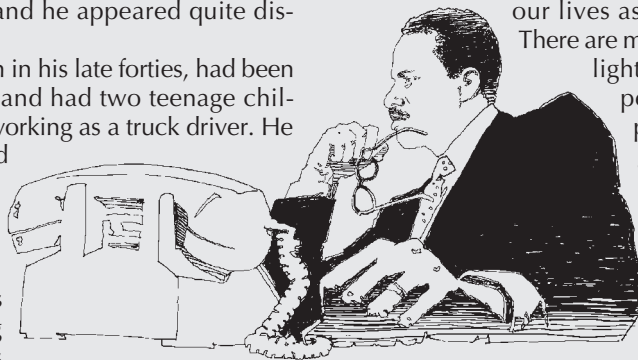
He was a tall, well built man in his late forties, had been married for over twenty years and had two teenage children. He had a busy schedule working as a truck driver. He was often full of smiles and laughter. He loved music and had even composed a few pieces for the piano which he had once played during a Sunday service. That Tuesday was probably a regular day, starting early he may have kissed his wife goodbye and said to her that he’d be home in time for dinner, if he didn’t get stuck in traffic. That day, there was a terrible accident. The man was very seriously injured and by the end of the day he lay in a hospital in a coma with very little chance of surviving the ordeal.

On Wednesday, August 11th shortly before 1 p.m., the man was taken home to be with his heavenly Father. He

had been my father’s friend for many years and now he was gone, within less than a day. When my father hung up the receiver and told us the news, my first thoughts went to the man’s wife and then to my husband.

So often, we take life for granted. We live our lives as if nothing will happen to us.

There are many situations that we deal with lightly. We leave for work and expect to return, we fight and expect to make up, we say quick goodbyes because we are in a hurry. Cherish the moments that you have with others, settle your fights quickly, take the time to say goodbye. Do not get caught up on petty little things that take up your precious time. Remember this story before you leave your house in the morning, kiss and hug your loved ones and say goodbye as if it were your last, for we do not know God’s time.



story before you leave your house in the morning, kiss and hug your loved ones and say goodbye as if it were your last, for we do not know God’s time.

Sara Ludwig is a teacher at Credo Christian High School in Langley, British Columbia.





Summer Synods

The month of June brings with it quite a number of synods and ecclesiastical meetings in North American church life, so much so that I heard of one dubious source referring to this as “a month of mischief.” Well, synods may decide things that we have trouble with, but we do acknowledge them as holy assemblies, bringing together the collective wisdom of the churches at any point in time – all to be tested with the only rule and standard of the church, the word of God as confessed in its confessions. Let us then review some of the assemblies that were held this past summer.

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

The General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) met from June 18-20 in Grand Rapids. One of the more far reaching decision – certainly from the perspective of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), was the decision to suspend all further talks with the CanRC until what has been called an “offence” with regard to statements made by Rev. Hofford is taken out of the way. While fraternal relations were pursued with other church groups, including the United Reformed Churches, the Canadian Reformed Churches ended up getting a rather cold shoulder: no more talks.

Readers will recall what this “offence” is all about. It was dealt with extensively at Synod Fergus 1998. The synod dealt with an appeal from the Presbytery of the Mid Atlantic of the OPC, an appeal which represented a culmination of a host of appeals to various assemblies in the last number of years. The substance of this appeal is that the presbytery demands that Rev. Hofford’s accusation against the ministers of the presbytery, labelling them as “false shepherds” be retracted. The Presbytery indicated it was willing to discuss the issues of the supervision of the Lord’s table, but not on the terms specified by Rev. Hofford and the Tri-County Reformed Church. The result was that Synod advised the Presbytery and Rev. Hofford to seek reconciliation according to the considerations of Fer-

gus. The gist of these considerations appears to me to be: give Rev. Hofford a full hearing, and he will (and directly ought to) then remove his charges. Apparently this was unacceptable for the General Assembly.

Naturally we can only regret this decision, since it does not move us forward even one step. If anything we are on a backward moving scale. The difficulties I have with this decision can be briefly stated. First, it makes of what was a *local* and at most a *regional* matter a national issue, and indeed a life and death issue affecting the ongoing relationship of the churches as whole. This to my mind is very unfortunate since our assemblies have consistently sought to keep this matter *local*; after all, that’s where the issues need to be confronted and resolved. Second, the decision of the OPC General Assembly does not include any interaction with the decision of Synod Fergus 1998. In fact, the response of Fergus 1998 to the Presbytery appeal was not even broached. What the brothers at Fergus had hoped for, – the resolution of outstanding issues – did not materialize. Rather, the issue concerning the supervision of the Lord’s table as it arose in a specific situation has now been escalated to a major stumbling block in the relationship with the CanRC. Third, the decision leaves the entire process of discussion, – now over 30 years old – in limbo, with no leads or indications where matters will go from here.

This is not the place to discuss the decision extensively. Let me only state that even in the context of all the difficulties surrounding the departure of Tri County church and its minister from the OPC, there should be no need to hold to the label “false shepherds.” There is every reason for Rev. Hofford to retract that statement *first* so that the air can be cleared for a more detailed discussion of the outstanding issues. For it will be directly clear to all that given the nature of our discussions with the OPC over the last 30 years, a reference to “false shepherds” in that fellowship can only muddy the waters unneces-

sarily. After all, in joining the Canadian Reformed federation, Rev. Hofford made it clear that he accepted all our decisions with regard to the OPC as settled and binding, and indicated he would not publicly work against them.

Given the current status of Rev. Hofford in our churches (a dismissed minister) these developments are all rather disappointing. I can only express regret that, although invited, delegates of the CanRC were not present at the Assembly to give some further elucidation of the position of Synod Fergus on the appeal, or at least to try and keep the talks on track. Should we not make the most of the opportunities given to us?

Reformed Churches Liberated

The synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN [Lib]) has been meeting in Leusden, Holland. Several major decisions were taken which will affect the life and worship of these churches.

With regard to foreign relations, the churches opened the way to develop a sister church relationship with the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA). The fraternal delegates of the RCN were present at the Synod of the URCNA in Hudsonville, and were able to bring back a favourable report to the Synod at Leusden. The synod also decided to establish a sister church relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia and the OPC.

This decision ends up putting the policy of ecumenical relations of the Dutch churches at odds with the position taken by our sister churches in Australia, and to a certain extent, with the position of our own churches. At their last synod (1998) our Australian sister churches adopted a two-fold condition to be sent to the PCEA with regard to further talks towards a sister- church relationship. These two points deal with supervision of the Lord’s table and supervision of the pulpit, and take the line essentially followed by our own Synod of Fergus, i.e. that admittance to the table requires a knowledge of one’s conduct of life before God.¹ Admittance to the pulpit can

only be granted once a church has been duly recognized as being a true church according to the marks of Art. 29, B.C. Synod Launceston 1998 also adopted a third statement dealing with the position of children in the covenant. Reiterating a 1990 decision, the Australian churches added that while a sister church relationship must be pursued, because of long standing historical differences, it could only come very slowly. The decisions of 1998 indicate that the Australian churches are not about to enter into a sister-church relationship with the PCEA until these three matters have been sufficiently resolved.

As far as I know this is the first time in our history that churches stemming from the Netherlands have come to stand at odds with Holland in regard to sister church relationships. We now may envision the scenario that Holland ends up with closer ties to Presbyterian churches than to those who have come from its own house! It remains a question whether this development fits with the intent of the Rules of Correspondence in the way they are currently functioning between the Dutch and Canadian church federations.

Let me not comment further on the Dutch decisions. Perhaps one thing may be said. We are entering a period in which the churches stemming from the Netherlands are developing their own specific relationships with other Reformed and Presbyterian churches. It seems that each federation is doing this in the light of the needs and circumstances of its own context. Therefore, I do not think that the policy of relative openness to Presbyterian churches as practised by Holland need be followed either in Australia or here in Canada. We should develop *our own approach*. And we may need to get used to each group taking its own approach. But let us be careful thereby not criticize our sister federations too sharply. One can notice that the approach that different church federations (Australia and Holland) take with regard to Presbyterian federations is largely determined by the character of the relationship they see resulting from the process of forming a unity, and just exactly how that relationship will function between the two federations. The closer the tie, the more careful the churches are in establishing the criteria for the relationship.

Synod Leusden also took the historic step of creating a closer link between Word and deed in the mission of the church. In other words, the older

model of a marked demarcation between mission and mission aid has been dropped in favour of a more integrated approach in which word and deed are two arms of the one missionary endeavour of the church. The relief agency active in the churches *De verre naasten*, has been disbanded and will now fall under the supervision of special synodical deputies for "mission and developmental aid." These deputies have been appointed and they will be accountable to the churches by means of regular reports in the church press, and regular reports to synod.

In Canada various mission sectors are working on the same issues. More attention is being given to the creation of greater harmony and synchronization between Word and deed in our mission and outreach projects. On the other hand, we need to be on guard against the danger of centralization. With the appointment of synodical deputies for developmental aid, Holland could be in greater danger of returning to the centralized model that existed before the Liberation. Is this going to be a case of *deja vu*?

Christian Reformed Church

The Christian Reformed Church held its annual June synod at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario. The delegates were warmly welcomed by the College president, Dr. Justin Cooper. Special alterations were made to the main floor seating of the auditorium (a


podium built on seats) to allow the delegates to sit at tables in one large U shaped format.

Perhaps the most noteworthy decision at this assembly was the decision to express a public apology to people afflicted with homosexual tendencies in the church, stating that the pastoral care of the church has been very poor if not entirely wrong. One of the elders called it a "turning of the corner."

Public apologies like this seem to be in vogue these days. Last year's CRC synod made a similar sort of apology to blacks, confessing openly the sin of racism. Yet they don't mean much. And besides, they come cheap – especially when you hardly know the people you are talking about. A much better approach is to leave the apologies to a *pastoral situation*, and to a specific pastoral context. Granted that sometimes apologies are necessary; after all, office bearers are only human, and they all make mistakes. But let the apology be made by those who erred in specific situations, and leave arbitrary general apologies alone, for they only go to the wind.

Such is the character of churches that are determined to divert from the truth. A sad and sorry affair.

Note: This article draws on reports in *Nederlands Dagblad*, *New Horizons* and *The Banner*.

¹See Acts of the 1998 Synod, Free Reformed Churches of Australia, Art. 93, pp. 43-51. 

I.L.P.B. Update, September 1999

As one of the Women's League delegates to the Inter-League Publication Board, it has been my pleasure to highlight the activities of the I.L.P.B.

The I.L.P.B. is a joint venture of the Men, Women and Young People's Societies. Our mandate is to translate and publish Reformed Bible study material, and our goal is to promote the study of God's Word.

Currently we are working on: *Acts; Believe and Confess; Joshua; Een Koning naar Gods Wil; Jona, Profeet van God; Wat is Hierop Uw Antwoord; The Bride's Treasure and To the Praise of His Glory; Die Here is en Levend Maakt.*

Reprints available soon: *You ... His Child and You ... His Guest*, by P.C. van Wijk; *James and 1 & 2 Peter* by H.D. van Herksen and J. Smelik respectively.

New publication: *2 Corinthians* by L. Selles.

Please contact the I.L.P.B. representative in your congregation for the new brochure on the outlines and topical books available. They will be pleased to take your order.

Thank you for your support. May the Lord bless you with a fruitful study season.

For the I.L.P.B.,
Jo Anne Werkman

Word and Deed: Reflections on the Relationship between Mission and Mission Aid¹

(First of two parts)

By J. De Jong

Introduction

It's a privilege for me to be able to address your assembly on a matter which has increasingly become a topic of discussion both locally and abroad. In the convocation address of 1996, I used the occasion to commemorate the mission synod of Middelburg 1896, and touched on some of the changes taking place in the world of mission.² Yet due to time constraints I was only able to touch on the issue of the relationship between the "chief-service" (mission) and the supporting service (mission aid). So I welcome the opportunity to fill out some matters I only raised in a cursory fashion at that time. And I hope my remarks will be seen in the context of "hulpdienst", that is, that theology, also mission theology can serve as a handmaiden to the actual missionary enterprise.

In my convocation address I dealt extensively with the line taken by the synod of Middelburg 1896, a policy particularly conditioned by the synod's notion of "preparatory grace." Then we will look at some Scriptural data as touching this problem. Finally, I will draw out some practical conclusions. Hence: the traditional three points – which I hope will keep me just within or perhaps only marginally beyond the time allotted to me for this address.

The pattern of history

It is clear that the impetus and effect of the missionary approach of the synod of Middelburg 1896 was to see mission aid as an integral part of the entire missionary endeavour. The synod made use of the notion of preparatory grace, a concept which had its links to Kuyper's notion of common grace.³ Thus temporary gifts of medicine and educational tools would serve to prepare people's hearts for the greater gift of eternal grace. This approach found its

way into the Mission Order of 1902, and for years dominated the missionary practice of the Dutch churches.

This Kuyperian perspective received an additional boost with the appearance of the so-called comprehensive approach propounded by the International Missionary Conference of Jerusalem in 1928. The comprehensive approach essentially put all branches of missionary activity on one level: whether it was providing medical aid, preaching, education or basic sustenance, all these were seen as various branches or components of the one missionary endeavour. The principles of 1928 worked their way on through in the missionary strategies of the World Council of Churches, and still have a dominant place in the missionary approaches of the mainline churches.

Without taking away from the good work that was done, one gets the impression that mission endeavour ultimately ended up in the hands of a few people who made the decisions for a broader number of churches.

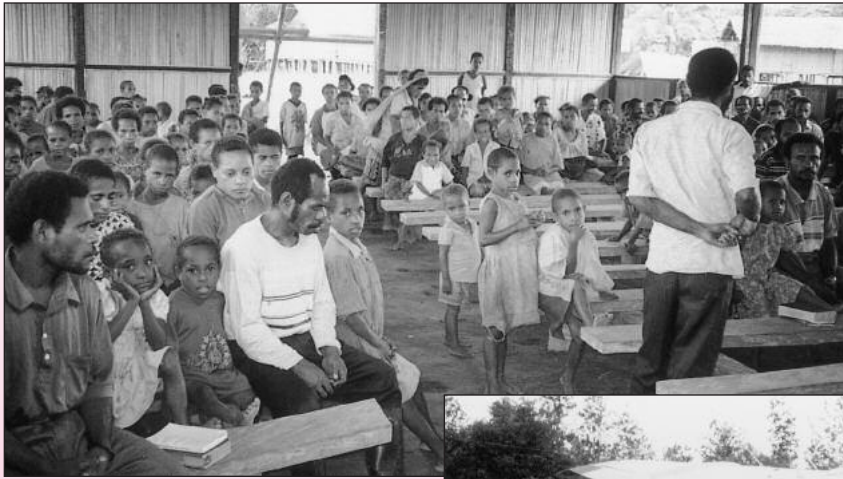
The missionary policy adopted in the Mission Order, along with the increasing centralization of church life in the twenties, led to a bureaucratization of the missionary strategy of the Dutch churches. Without taking away from the good work that was done, one gets the impression that mission endeavour ultimately ended up in the hands of a few people who made the decisions for a broader number of churches. The newer thinking of 1928 was only fuel for the fire in a climate in which bu-

reaucratization and centralization was essentially the order of the day.⁴

It is then clear that the synod of Amersfoort 1948, only four years after the Liberation, represents a reaction to the conditions that existed prior to the Liberation. This reaction involved a newly found accent on the original principle of 1896: the missionary enterprise is the task of the local church. With regard to the relationship between mission and supporting services, the synod received a report by an appointed synodical committee (reporter: M. De Goede) in which the missionary character of the supporting projects was stringently denied.⁵ The supporting services were considered necessary but were not considered to be mission work. According to Amersfoort 1948 mission is restricted to the preaching of the gospel.

The reports on this question commissioned by the synod, although less rigid, followed a similar line of reasoning.⁶ There was a strong reaction to the previous period of integration, and also a strong refutation of the ideas of the comprehensive approach. In effect, all aid work was seen as the responsibility of the congregation in its capacity of sharing the office of all believers. Mission was seen as the task of the special office, especially the office of the minister of the word. The report was rather reticent about the elders and more so about the deacons. But all the special offices were regarded as being the primary agents in mission work.

The synod of Kampen 1951 was asked to make a judgment about the character of the relation between mission and mission aid. Yet the synod refused to make a statement on this question, with the following argument: it is the task of the sending church with the cooperating churches to determine what comprises the duties of the missionaries on the mission fields and from what supporting services they may



Before Sunday Morning Worship Service, June 7, 1998 – Mangelum.

MAF workers in Boma, Irian Jaya. L-R: Pak Yusuf, Pak Agus, Pak Hafi.



eventually benefit.”⁷ A decision was also made to drop the provisions of Art. 52 CO, dealing with mission, and to abandon the Mission Order that had functioned in the churches since 1902.⁸ This decision has been the subject of much criticism and has been regarded as a statement leaving the churches in the lurch.⁹ One of the leading figures of the synod, then Rev. H.J. Schilder, had his protest registered in the *Acts* with regard to the decision to abandon the Mission Order without putting any other regulation in its place.¹⁰ While there may be some truth to all of this, I do not think we need to be overly critical of this synod. I have the impression that the brothers felt that the churches were not ready to make a decision on these matters, and that they also felt that the exact relation between mission and mission aid was to a certain extent also a function of time and circumstance, and the specific needs of the specific missionary project.

This led to the separation of mission and mission aid – mission being the responsibility of the consistories, and mission aid given over to the societies, Mesoz, Meschobor, and so on. Later a new organization came into being for

developmental work: *De verre naasten* (The Distant Neighbours). Over the years the separation between the aid worker and the missionaries has been steadfastly maintained. Yet this has all led to different sorts of problems. Perhaps the most acute of these is the harmony between the various missionary agencies, and the coordination of the efforts. Can you really maintain the unity of the missionary enterprise with such a flux of different organizations and interests functioning on the field?

Biblical data

The clear line of the Bible is that there is an indissoluble unity between word and deed. The unity between word and deed can be found in God Himself (2 Chron 6:4). Israel was called to be a light to the nations, and was called to let the message of praise to God fill the earth (Isa 49:6, cf. Ps 96). But at the same time, this was to be shown in the deed. Put another way, the principles of the first table of the law had to be matched with those in the second. Israel was called to show mercy and compassion to the poor and stranger, the widow, the orphan and the Levite. Special laws included the fol-

lowing: the tithe for the poor (Deut 14:28, 29; 26:12-15) the tithe for participation in festivals (Deut 16:10ff), leaving grain on the fields for the poor and stranger (Deut 24: 19); leaving fruits of the olive and vineyard (Deut 24:20,21); letting the land lie fallow, leaving the produce of the seventh year for the poor (Exod 23:10,11); leaving the borders of the land and the remainders of the corn, barley and other grains on the harvest field, and leaving the fallen grapes of the vineyard for the poor (Lev 19:9, 23:22). Behind all this lay the idea of the tithe: give a tenth to the LORD of all He has given you. The tenth is a sign that the whole produce, and all the fruit of the land really belongs to the LORD!¹¹

The central message of many of the later prophets was that these laws of justice and right for the poor were not being maintained. What is the true religion acceptable to the LORD? Isaiah says: “Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover him, and to hide yourself from your own flesh?” (Isa 58:7). It was the negligence of the people that led to the huge disparities between rich

and poor, landed and displaced, (cf Amos 5:10ff., 6:12, 8:4ff). The jubilee law was an economic measure designed to help displaced families to retain their inheritance in Israel. The hospitality rules were designed to allow strangers to find refuge and asylum within Israel's borders, (Exod 12:48,49; 23:9, Lev 19:33,34, Num 15:14-16). But by the time of the later prophets many of these good laws had been ignored for generations. Hence Hosea cries on God's behalf: "I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice" (Hos 6: 6).

In the ministry of Jesus the same unity between word and deed is reflected. Jesus says: "Love your enemies, do good and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:35,36). And in the narrative of the "good" Samaritan, Jesus highlights the deed with the word. When the young lawyer comes to him with the question what he had to do to gain eternal life, then, after the lawyer has given the summary of the law, Jesus says: "You have given the right answer; do this and you will live." So He does not take away the attention from what actually should be *done* to inherit eternal life. Only then does the lawyer seek to introduce a new loophole by disputing the concept of "neighbour." But that loophole is closed in the following parable, and the closure is especially evident in the explicit and abiding injunction, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

The ministry of Jesus is in its essential structure a word and deed ministry. He healed the sick, He raised the dead, He preached good news to the poor. He made the lame walk and the blind to see, and told them: "Show yourself to the priest!" (Matt 8:4, Mark 1:44, Luke. 5:14). Everything was done in the context of perfect obedience to the law of God, both its first and second table. Particularly in the opposition to the Pharisees the attention to the second table becomes the distinct point of dispute. Hosea's cry is repeated at least twice by the Lord Jesus (cf Matt 9:13, 12:7): "Go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice."

This ministry of mercy is continued by the apostles. They preach good news to the poor, but also heal the sick and even raise the dead. They do mighty works in Jesus' name. The living tokens of the kingdom are secondary to its

message, yet they are real and living supplements that have an astounding effect. Imagine seeing a well known lame beggar jumping up, walking and leaping and praising God. Peter had said: "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth stand up and walk" (Acts 3:6). So Peter cuts off the notion of a strict temporal ministry. He had no silver or gold to give away. But he did not come with another message which left the beggar in his temporal misery. He provided aid, which also affected the man's immediate circumstances.

Now we cannot make a direct parallel between the signs and wonders of the apostles and the work of mission aid today. It is not so that the doctors of today replace the miracle workers of the apostolic era. But I believe the words of Peter map out for us the line we are to follow. The mission of Jesus Christ still rings out the same call today: silver and gold have I none. We are not sent out into the world to buy Christians with our wealth. That concept is cut off at the very root because it infringes on the gospel's *sola gratia*, (by grace alone). But the reality of that miracle is this: the man was not left in his temporal misery, but was radically healed and transformed. Through Peter, Jesus provided just that aid that was a fitting complement to the essential message: redemption and life in Him.

The call to show mercy is central to the apostolic message as well. In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul speaks of a generous undertaking with regard to the churches of Macedonia and Achaia. He says to the Corinthians: "I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance" (2 Cor 8: 13, 14).¹² In my view this passage brings out in a special way the close harmony between word and deed, and also the close harmony between spiritual and physical components, as well as between temporal and eternal components. Paul is saying that there should be care in both spiritual and material things. And he is fostering a reciprocity between senders of the message and receivers of the message in such a way that there is a mutual recognition in giving and receiving: the gift of spiritual blessings are rewarded with the material tokens of gratitude of the Gentile churches.



DECLINED the call to the Free Reformed Church of Legana, Australia:

Rev. J. Poppe

of West Albany, Australia

CALLED by the church of Houston, BC:

Rev. C.J. VanderVelde

of Yarrow, BC

The thirtieth anniversary meeting and the twenty-fifth convocation of the Theological College was held on Friday, September 10, 1999 in the auditorium of Redeemer College, Ancaster, ON. Dr. N.H. Gootjes spoke on "The promises of baptism." The Master of Divinity degree was conferred on:

Frank Dong
Peter Holtvluwer

John Koopman
Theodore (Ted) Van Raalte
Ken Wieske

The Diploma of Theological Studies was awarded to

Darlene VanderPol-Smith

NOTICE OF CHANGE

Starting Sept.12, 1999, the church at Guelph, ON, will be having split services at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. in their own building at 44 Short St. and will be meeting at 4 p.m. at the New Life Christian Reformed Church building at 400 Victoria Rd. N., Guelph.

DECLARED eligible by Classis Ontario South, September 15th, 1999, to speak an edifying word in the Churches:

Mr. Dirk Poppe

505 Upper Paradise Road
Hamilton, ON
L9C 5E2
(905) 388-6222

This giving and receiving is not limited by Paul to the fellowship within the church. The church is not to be an introverted society with no thought of the need of the world. In Galatians 6: 10 Paul says: "So then as we have opportunity let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith." With Hendriks I take "all" here as defined by the first part of the verse, that is specifically that neighbour that in the course of our lives the Lord puts on our path.¹³ The neighbour is the one who in very concrete terms you meet on your way. In 1 Thessalonians 5:15, Paul also directs the attention to the neighbour outside the fellowship of the church: ". . . always seek to do good to one another and to all." Peter also calls the believers to pursue love as the crown of the works of faith, and in the context this love must be directed as much as possible to everyone (2 Pet 1: 7). There is a clear mandate to show compassion and concern to the neighbour within and without, and, as opportunity allows, to the neighbour near and far. Even when it comes to enemies, Paul, quoting Proverbs, calls us to feed the hungry and give something to drink to the thirsty, for in so doing we overcome evil with good (cf Rom 12: 20,21).

Mercy – it remains a key mark of the living character of the church. God is called the Father of mercies (2 Cor 1:3). And the manifestation of God's redemption in Jesus Christ is described as the appearing of the goodness and loving kindness of God (Titus 3: 4). Paul describes himself as one who received mercy. It was all manifested in the deed, for his sins were covered through the substitutional payment of Jesus the Saviour. So he speaks of God who is rich in mercy (Eph 2:4), and the underlying thought is that this mercy must also come to expression in the congregation (Ephs 4:11ff, 4:28,32; 5:12).

All this means to say to us that the congregation is to be a diaconal congregation. The diaconate is there for

the church. But that does not mean: the diaconate is for an introverted church. I do not say we need to follow modern liberal theology which promotes the concept of being strictly a church for others. The church must also nourish and feed its own. Yet the congregation must be a giving congregation. The living congregation is a giving congregation, recognizing the Lord's word: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). James says: "For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy" (James 2:13). It is a part of the very image of God: "Be merciful as your Father is merciful."

**The ministry of Jesus is in
its essential structure a word
and deed ministry. He healed
the sick, He raised the dead,
He preached good news to
the poor.**

We are not simply accountable for how well we have done in taking care of our own. There will also be an accounting for how well we have shown generosity and mercy to others according to the possibilities and opportunities open to us. Paul also warns against the desire to be rich, and fosters a contentment with food and clothing: "We brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of the world" (1 Tim 6:7).

The concern for the poor and needy both within and outside the congregation is a matter of mercy, but also of justice. In the church we are called to maintain the rights of the poor and destitute (Ps 82:3; 140:12,13; cf Isa 11:1-5). To care for the poor means at the same time to administer justice and right to them (Matt 5:6). The Old Testament concept of love also means to show loyalty, fidelity and obedience.¹⁴ Love in action means to give the poor their due.

¹Text of an address given at the Mission Aid Conference hosted by the church of Hamilton on August 28, 1998.

²J. De Jong, "Even So I Send You – Some Reflections on the Current Missionary Task of the Church" *Clarion* Vol 44, # 20, 21 (October 3 and 18, 1996), 444ff.

³For Kuyper there could be no preparatory grace in the sense of a preparation to regeneration. But with regard to conversion, preparatory grace was essential. This preparatory grace has a twofold character: it is partly particular grace and partly common grace, A. Kuyper, *De gemeene gratie* (2nd. ed. Kok, Kampen, n.d.) II, 216ff.

⁴The comprehensive approach was essentially adopted by the leading missiologists in the churches, cf A. G. Honig, *Bijdrage tot het onderzoek naar de fundeering van de zendingsmethode der 'comprehensive approach' in het Nieuwe Testament* (Kok, Kampen 1951). Arguing (in Kuyper's line) that mission is both the task of the church as organism and the church as institute, Honig concludes that all supplementary services have a legitimate place in the exercise of the church's missionary task.

⁵*Acta van de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland gehouden te Amersfoort 1948*, (Ph. Zalsman, Kampen, 1949) 174.

⁶*De verhouding van de zendingsarbeid tot medischen- en onderwijs-arbeid op de zendingssterreinen (Over de kwestie "hoofd" en "hulp" diensten)* (Ph. Zalsman, Kampen, 1950).

⁷*Acta van de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland gehouden van 21 augustus tot 24 oktober 1951*, (Ph. Zalsman, Kampen, 1952) Art. 166, 131, (my [somewhat free] translation).

⁸Art. 52 CO read (my translation): "In the same way the work of the ecclesiastical mission in Indonesia, in so far as it requires general provisions, is regulated by the General Synod in a Mission Order."

⁹See for example C. Haak, "Vaste beloften, ook voor allen die verre zijn. Zendingsgeschiedenis vanaf de vrijmaking" in D. Deddens and M. Te Velde, *Vrijmaking-Wederkeer. Vijftig jaar Vrijmaking in beeld gebracht*. (De Vuurbaak, Barneveld, 1944) 267. See also D. Griffioen, "Christelijke barmhartigheids betoon als onecht kind van de kerk", in *Zending in beweging* GMO, Zwolle, 1995) 70.

¹⁰*Acta van de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland gehouden te Kampen van 21 augustus tot 24 oktober 1951*, (Ph. Zalsman, Kampen, 1952) 78.

¹¹See on this A.N. Hendriks, "Ons diakonale opdracht" in *Mesozo-nieuws*, Vol 1, #5 (June 1974) 50-53.

¹²I am here quoting the NRSV because of the term 'fair balance', which captures better what the apostle means. He is not speaking of social equality, but of a mutual sharing in giving and receiving.

¹³A.N. Hendriks, 52.

¹⁴Harvie M. Conn, *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1982) 42.



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The Reformed Churches of New Zealand

By C. Van Dam

When the Free Reformed Churches of Australia were organizing my lecture tour to strengthen the bond with the Theological College, the Australian deputies for contact with other churches advised that the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) would be interested to have me visit some of their churches as well. So New Zealand was happily added to the itinerary. We experienced a very warm welcome there. It was a great privilege to begin to know more about these churches which we previously only knew in name.

Since these churches are not well known in our circles, I thought it might be good to introduce them in *Clarion*. An added incentive is the fact that both they and we share membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

Where the churches are

New Zealand consists primarily of the two large islands, the North Island, which is the more heavily populated and where one can find the famous hot geysers at Rotorua and the South Island which is characterized to a large extent by its enormous flocks of sheep and scenic snow capped mountains.

Our itinerary took us first to the South Island where I gave a lecture in Christchurch, which is very much an English city, and Dunedin, "the Edinburgh of the southern hemisphere." The Christchurch Presbytery includes two churches at Christchurch (with a third one starting), one at Dunedin to the south and one at Nelson which is on the north coast of the South Island.

In the North Island, there are two presbyteries. The Wellington Presbytery comprises three churches in the immediate Wellington area, (I spoke at the one in Wainuiomata). North of Wellington, churches are found at Foxton and Palmerston North, and northeast of the capital are found Masterton (also the site of a lecture), with Hastings the fur-



The Reformed Church at Bishopdale (Christchurch) where Rev. J.A. Haverland is minister.



The Wellington church where Rev. J. Goris pastors.

thest away on Hawkes Bay. The pastor of Hastings, Rev. Bruce Hoyt, was in charge of the overall organization of the tour and I also spoke there. The Auckland Presbytery includes 5 churches in greater Auckland (I spoke at the one in Mangere). The church at Hamilton to the south (also soon to establish a second congregation) is also part of this presbytery.

It is obvious from the above, that the Reformed Churches of New Zealand are widely spread over New Zealand's

two islands. According to their 1999 Yearbook, there are 17 congregations with a total membership of approximately 3,275.

Presbyterian or Reformed?

The attentive reader may have wondered why a Reformed church should have presbyteries. Is this not a mark of presbyterianism? So what characterizes the RCNZ?

The first churches were organized in the 1950s after some hesitation and

after it became abundantly clear that it was not possible to remain faithful to Christ and join an existing New Zealand church. A public accounting was given of the reasons for instituting the first churches of the RCNZ.

The background of those who came together in the RCNZ was diverse. There were the Dutch immigrants which came from a variety of churches – the Reformed Church (Hervormde Kerk), the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, both Synodical and Liberated, The Netherlands Reformed Churches (Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken), The Christian Reformed Church (Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk) and the Reformed Congregations (Gereformeerde Gemeenten). There were also those of Presbyterian background in New Zealand who joined in the 1950s under the leadership of Rev. Alex Scarrow. Other Presbyterians and Presbyterian pastors joined later. Right



The Reformed Church at Wainuiomata, with Rev. G.H. Milne.



The Reformed school at Masterton has its home in a building that used to be an orphanage.

A Key Resource

An excellent book on the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) is *Trust and Obey. A Forty Year History of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand: 1953-1993* written by Dirk G. Vanderpyl.

This 598 page hardcover volume gives a well written history of the RCNZ in the first 5 chapters, then covers all the congregations in a chapter each and concludes with 12 topical essays written by different ministers of the RCNZ. These include topics such as the character of the RCNZ, the theonomy issue in these churches, the Great Commission and Christian education. The book includes some photographs.

Dirk Vanderpyl is highly qualified to write this book. He served as office bearer many times, was Stated Clerk of the RCNZ from 1969 to 1989, and since then has served as official archivist of the RCNZ.

This book can be purchased for \$ 20 NZD plus \$ 15 NZD postage from:

The Lampstand
c/o Mrs. Chapman
166 McGregors Road
Christchurch, 8006
New Zealand

The best way to order would be to send a New Zealand Dollar Bank draft to the above address.

from the beginning, there was a congregation which included the Westminster Confession of Faith besides the Three Forms of Unity as their confessional basis.

The church polity is however Reformed. Although the term presbytery is used, in actual fact it describes what we would call a classis. This is how it functions and ministers are members of the congregation and not of the presbytery.

Although the backgrounds of the membership is diverse, the key unifying factor is that all those who helped found or later joined the RCNZ were united in their desire to serve the Lord according to his Word as summarized in the Reformed confessions. These churches have a strong confessional character, subscribing officially to the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession of Faith. The inclusion of the Westminster Confession took place in 1965 after twelve years of patient study, reflection and discussion. All this study

and reflection served to convince the churches that the divergencies between the Westminster Confession and the Three Forms of Unity were not contradictory, but rather correlative and thus able to be fully harmonised.¹

The diversity of backgrounds came out in our contact and interaction with these brothers and sisters, but so did the strong unity in the faith. There is something very beautiful and Catholic about a Reformed church comprising so many different elements into one bond of churches. One learns to appreciate what is of first importance and what are differences of emphasis that should be tolerated. Here is Reformed ecumenicity in action.

The life of the churches

The RCNZ has not been spared doctrinal controversy, but through the struggles has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to be Reformed. In their synods the RCNZ, for example, affirmed



The meeting place for the church at Masterton can be seen on the left of this backview of the school.



The Reformed Church at Hastings, with Rev. B. Hoyt.

that the Westminster Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism do not present contradictory views of the Lord's Day and condemned as false the Pentecostal claims to possess miraculous gifts of miracles, healing and speaking in tongues. Also in difficult moral areas, a clear stand was taken against the Masonic Lodge and against mandatory membership in trade unions. ("This system of compulsory membership of Trade Unions is a system in which the freedom and liberty of a Christian man's conscience is violated in his one and only obedience to his King, Jesus Christ.")²

In the local congregations the great importance of Christian education was more and more realized. Today association-controlled school associations function in many of the churches and operate elementary Christian schools. High school level teaching is also given in Wainuiomata and Silverstream. A

real problem is the acute shortage of qualified teachers.

Relationships and contacts

In its early years the bond of the RCNZ benefited greatly from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). Ministers were called and loaned from these sources and these included well known pastors such as G.I. Williamson from the OPC and Richard Venema and Carl Reitsma from the CRC. Due to growing concerns about the direction of the CRC, the RCNZ suspended ties with the CRC in 1995 and severed them last year. The OPC is the only sister church of the RCNZ in North America.

The closest contact has been with the Reformed Churches in Australia (RCAu) with whom they are also in a sister church relationship. In spite of the long history of close ties, there are however areas of real tension. Although the RCNZ has left the Reformed Ecumenical

Synod (now the Reformed Ecumenical Council), the RCAu has remained. Of concern is also the ambiguous position of the RCAu about whether the charismatic gifts of the early church have ceased (as affirmed by the RCNZ). Also some within the RCAu consider the issue of women in office an open question, unlike the RCNZ which considers women in office unbiblical. Because of fears that these concerns could also impact on the teaching at Reformed Theological College in Geelong, the issues are understandably important for the RCNZ since their theological students go to Geelong for training.³

The two other sister churches that the RCNZ have are Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken) and the Reformed Churches of South Africa.


The RCNZ and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have been in contact with each other for over ten years but have as yet no sister relationship.

In conclusion

It was a real privilege and pleasure to meet the brothers and sisters in the RCNZ, to enjoy their fellowship and to worship with them. It is splendid that through the ICRC we can be of mutual help and encouragement to each other. Perhaps other ways to do so more directly can also be found, in spite of the great geographical distance separating us. May the Lord continue to bless his people in that beautiful part of his creation.

¹D.G. Vanderpyl, *Trust and Obey* (Silverstream: National Publishing Committee RCNZ, 1994) 452-453.

²Van der Pyl, *Trust and Obey*, 467.

³Although the RCAu instigated the founding of Reformed Theological College (in 1954), this seminary is not an official church school but is run by the Association for Christian Tertiary Education. This Association runs the College through a Board of Directors elected by members of the Association. The RCNZ is a member church. 

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Churches Note: We invite you to link Clarion's homepage to your church's homepage.

Women's League Day June 23, 1999

The Women's Societies "Sola Fide", Tuesday Morning Society and Coffee Break, of Cloverdale, B.C. hosted the 36th Annual Women's League Day. Mrs. Fran Schouten had the honour of opening the day with us. There were an outstanding 240 ladies present at this years' League Day!! We sang Ps. 92:1,2 and 6 and Fran prayed with us. She then invited the Langley Women's Society "Guided by Thy Word" up to present their topic "God's love for us and our response; loving our neighbour." Mrs. Ria VanVliet was the chairlady for this portion of the day. The Scripture passages of 1 Corinthians 13, 1 John 3:11-24 and 1 John 4:7-22 were read as a reference text for the speech.

Mrs. Driegen entitled her speech "For the love of God." She explained that it was a loving God who gave us the Ten Commandments. It begins and ends with love. It was this God who gave His only beloved Son to be nailed to the cross and die for our sins. She refers to many Bible texts that talk of God's unfailing love for us. Our love for God will mean that we continually worship Him. All of this is only possible through the work of the Holy Spirit. After Mrs. Driegen finished her introduction we sang Ps. 89:1,7.

Mrs. Willy Scheper then invites the ladies to join in the discussion/question period. The discussion touched on many points. A question of God's love for Jacob and His hate for Esau. Did God really hate Esau or was it the other way around?

The song "Jesus loves the Children of the world" was brought up. God has a special love for His elect. Why is there such a resistance for this song?

Through constant Old Testament warning, God gives His love through repentance. But teaches doctrine of election. Is God only addressing His people or the world in general to repent. The word (love) of God is there for everyone (the World) to hear, but the people have to take it to heart and live according to what God wants and expects from 'us'. After much discussion on loving your neighbour as yourself and if God has different kinds of love, the discussion was closed and we sang Hymn 54: 1 and 5.



L. to R. Willy Scheper,
Discussion Leader, Heddie
Driegen, Speaker, Ria VanVliet,
Chairwoman



L. Rose Boeve, Speaker
R. Magdalene Vanderlinde,
Discussion Leader

Mrs. Helena VanDriel from the Lynden Women's Society read 2 poems written by her father Mr. Art Blokhuis. They were entitled For the Love of God and To Love is to cherish, after which we sang the league song and Mrs. Ina Vanderburgt led in lunchtime devotions. A delicious cold lunch of salads, buns and dessert was then enjoyed by all. Before long the afternoon session was announced.


Mrs. Magdalene Vanderlinde from the Abbotsford Women's Society was the chairlady for the afternoon session. Not only were there ladies from the Fraser Valley present, but we also had visitors from Holland, Vernon, Ontario and Edmonton amongst us for this day of fellowship, and these ladies were at this time thanked for taking the time to join us. We then sang Ps. 90: 1,5 and 7, after which Ps. 90 was read as the referring text to the afternoon topic. Mrs. Rose Boeve read her introduction entitled: "What is upbuilding about death?" She talked about how it is described in the Bible how our days will be number to 70 or 80 years. This is the average age of the early immigrants of the 50s. Death cannot separate us from God because of Christ's death on the cross. For unbelievers death is really the end. Mercy killing goes against the Sixth Commandment. It is only God who can decide when a life is over here on earth. Can we say enough, no more medicine? Life

can be prolonged but it shouldn't be stretched. What is the life value of handicapped people? God decides how these live will be while on earth. There were again many references to death and our life after death, in the Bible. One reference Mrs. Boeve used was 2 Cor. 1:3 there is always one unchangeable, one unfailing God that we must put trust in. The love of God is with those who die, but also with those who are left behind.

We sang Hymn 51:1,2,3 and 8 after the introduction and then Mrs. Vanderlinde opened the floor for discussion. A lot of time was spent talking about our Christian responsibilities and how far we are allowed to go as far as medical experiments. We must remember to always ask the Lord for guidance and we must respect the decisions that families make. It was a very emotional discussion. We finished with the afternoon topic with singing "Great is thy Faithfulness."

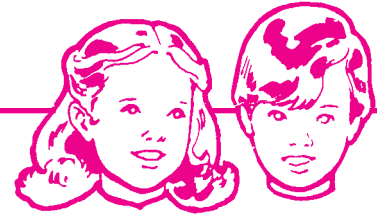
With regards to general business, a small discussion about possible changes to league day. We had a majority vote to keep it the same! We sang one more time from Hymn 59: 1,2 and 3 and Mrs. Vanderlinde closed with us in prayer.

There was a tea social afterward to allow everyone one last chance to talk with friends and family. We thank the Lord for this yearly opportunity to meet as sisters of God's church and discuss His never ending and unfailing Love.

V. Houweling 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

You are probably back at school now. Another grade, another teacher and maybe even other friends. Do you have any new students in your class? They may even be fellow Busy Beavers. Wouldn't that be really neat!

Well, I haven't had a lot of mail over the summer holidays. I feel very sad that very few of you thought to write to me while you were on vacation. My mailbox was so very empty nearly every day. I still look forward to hearing from you about your foot painting, and about the trick that you could do on someone.

Did you figure out the answer to the trapped string trick? Have you got another trick that you can send to me to that I can get other Busy Beavers to try it too?

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

OIL

Answer each question with the person involved with oil.

- Who asked the wise virgins for oil for their lamps, Matthew 25:7-8?
- Who used oil on the wounds of a man beaten by robbers, Luke 10:33-34?
- Who multiplied the oil of a widow so she could pay her debts, 2 Kings 4:2-7?
- What tribe received this blessing: "Let him be favored by his brothers and let him bathe his feet in oil," Deuteronomy 33:24?
- To whom did Jesus say, "You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet," Luke 7:43,46?
- Who poured oil on a pillar of stone and named the place Bethel, Genesis 35:14-15?
- Who asked a woman to pretend to be a mourner and not anoint herself with oil, 2 Samuel 14:2?
- Who was anointed with oil by Zadok, 1 Kings 1:39?
- To whom did Solomon give twenty thousand measures of pure oil in exchange for cedar trees, 1 Kings 5:11?
- Who told a woman to make him a cake of her last meal and oil and her supply of oil and meal would not run out, 1 Kings 17:12-16?

SOLUTION TO THE TRAPPED STRING

Very carefully bend the card into a half-circle. Don't put a fold in it though. Gently push the paper strip between the two cuts through the hole.

Now there is just enough room for you to pull one of the buttons through the strip. It's as easy as that.

Before showing this to someone else, make certain he or she cannot see that the card has been bent. You may need to make a new card just to be on the safe side.

SINS

Sometimes a person is known for one sin he or she committed. Match each person with the sin he or she committed.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. Peter | a. Took another man's wife, 2 Samuel 12:9 |
| 2. Diotrefes | b. Lied about his wife, Genesis 12:18-19 |
| 3. Saul | c. Persecuted Christians, Acts 9:1 |
| 4. Saul (Paul) | d. Ate forbidden fruit, Genesis 3:6 |
| 5. Cain | e. Denied Jesus, Luke 22:55-60 |
| 6. Ananias | f. Murdered his brother, Genesis 4:8 |
| 7. David | g. Had too much pride, 3 John 9-10 |
| 8. Noah | h. Lied to the Holy Spirit, Acts 5:3 |
| 9. Abram (Abraham) | i. Took spoils, 1 Samuel 15:9 |
| 10. Adam and Eve | j. Got drunk, Genesis 9:20-21 |

Unscramble the Animal Names

By Busy Beaver Chevon Komdeur

- ACT _____
- IDBR _____
- AOCRON _____
- ERAB _____
- OMOSE _____
- ISFH _____
- OGD _____
- CEHKCIN _____
- MINPCUKH _____



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, Chevon Komdeur. Thank you for your letter and your puzzle. It is very nice to hear that you love your mom and dad, sister and brother very much. I hope you really have a great time in Grade 3 in Smithville. You must have very good taste to have blueberries and oreos as your favorite foods. And your favorite hobbies sound like lots of fun too. Write again, won't you Chevon.

