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# Clarion

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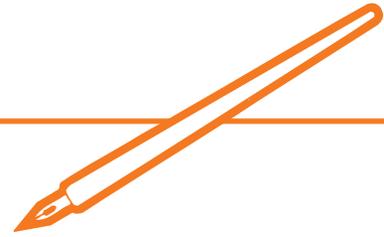


*H. Evan Runner — Life is Religion*

## INSIDE:

- *Contact with the Free Reformed Churches*
- *Urban Missions*





By R. Aasman



## Contact With the Free Reformed Churches

### Meeting an old friend

Have you ever met an old friend with whom you lost contact over the years? It is an exciting moment, but it can also be a bit daunting. Many years ago, you both thought the same and you held common interests. But over the years that you were apart, it would be easy for the two of you to become quite different. Therefore, a meeting of old friends can turn out to be a most interesting and challenging event.

In recent years, I have been meeting an old friend. Actually, it is an old relative. Along with Rev. Willem Slomp and Pieter Vanwoudenberg, I have been meeting with four ministers of the Free Reformed Churches: the Rev. Laurens Bilkes, Rev. Kuldip Gangar, Rev. Hans Overduin, and Rev. Wim Wullschleger. These meetings represent official dialogue between our respective church federations. As I just mentioned, this is like meeting an old friend and relative. Many of our church members trace their roots to the same origin as the Free Reformed Churches, although along the course of history, we did move into different church federations. Now we are meeting again, and we are talking again.

### Pleasant surprises

We have been meeting for a few years, usually once or twice a year. At first we took time to get to know each other. We talked about our respective histories. We talked about perceived or real differences between us. We discussed historical and doctrinal matters. We exchanged and listened to each other's sermons. We held public meetings in British Columbia to acquaint the church members of our activities, and to give a feel for where we are headed. We attended each other's synods. And in some places, the contacts between local CanRC and FRC were moving along in a promising fashion. In one location, the desire was expressed to move toward pulpit exchanges.

*People will often talk about the distinctives of the FRC or the CanRC, but the reality is that we are closer than some think.*

The pleasant surprise in all of this is how similar we are on many important matters. People will often talk about the distinctives of the FRC or the CanRC, but the reality is that we are closer than some think. I saw evidence of this in a very recent meeting.

### Some examples

We spent a day together discussing some key doctrinal matters along the lines of our discussions with the United Reformed Churches. Our discussions are not finished, but we made a good start. For instance we talked about the Scriptures, the confessions, creation and the covenant of grace. To be perfectly frank, it felt like a homecoming. In talking about these key matters, it was clear that we talk and think the same. We are, in a manner of speaking, of one house. The FRC hold a high view of the Scriptures as infallibly inspired by the Holy Spirit. Their love for the Three Forms of Unity is very clear. They hold to a six-day creation as recorded in the opening of Scripture. They speak of a covenant of grace which God makes with believers and their children; Christ is the Mediator of the covenant; the covenant offers both promises and demands; the demand of the covenant is for a living faith, a faith which is worked by the Holy Spirit.

*Only the Lord can and will bless our efforts.*

At times the brothers of the FRC used different terminology than we do, a reflection of their own development within a historical context. However, in our discussions we saw time and again that behind the different language lay a common meaning. I am not suggesting at this point that our discussions are finished or that there are no differences. It is just gratifying to note that when we met as old friends or relatives who have not seen each other for a long time, we are not far apart from where we once were.

### The preaching

Anyone who knows something about both the FRC and the CanRC will probably point out that one of the great differences is in the preaching. The perception is that the Free Reformed preaching is experiential, whereas the Canadian Reformed preaching promotes a sense of covenantal automatism. One could discuss this at length, even making statements that we have here a caricature of what things are really like. But I would like to share with you one important point. We can talk all we want, but the proof is in the actual experience of listening to each other's sermons.

What we did is exchange a good quantity of sermons. Rev. Slomp and I listened to and also read many sermons of

Rev. Bilkes, Rev. Overduin and Rev. Wullschleger. They also listened to a good number of our sermons. What was the verdict? It was clearly stated by all: with that kind of a sermon you can easily preach on my pulpit. In other words, the verdict is that we are not so far apart. That is a cause for great thanksgiving.

### Where do we go?

We are not nearly finished our discussions yet. It should also be noted that all of the participants in these meetings are western ministers and one elder. The east has not been involved all that much in these discussions. The east receives our reports and observations. In order for the relations between the FRC and the CanRC to grow and develop, a greater cross section of our respective churches will have to become involved, and to see what the west has seen.

Some have said: that will never happen; the east is different than the west. That may be true. But God remains sovereign, and this is his church. We do what we can in good faith and with much prayer. Only the Lord can and will bless our efforts. From my point of view, the possibility for working in the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ's high priestly prayer is most certainly a reality: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:20, 21). 

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### What's inside?

This issue covers a number of church historical or church relations matters. G. Harinck presents us with the second part of his overview of how the Liberation of 1944 was received by the Christian Reformed Church. We have a press release about a proposed common church order between the CanRC and the URC. The editorial deals with relations with the Free Reformed Churches. Dr. J. De Jong writes about Dr. H. Evan Runner who passed on to glory last year at the age of eighty-six. And finally, we have an update of the Urban Missions work which is under the capable leadership of Rev. Frank Dong.

Rev. W.L. Bredenhof supplies us with two book reviews on the subject of grief. Having just lost his mother unexpectedly early this past summer, this comes from the heart.

One of the older schools among our churches originated in Burlington, Ontario. In fact, it just had its fortieth anniversary. We have some reflections on the history of John Calvin School in Burlington. The Lord has blessed Reformed education richly.

In our column, *Education Matters*, we read about the retirement of principal A. Nap, and the reminiscing of a retired principal, M. Vandervelde. What a blessing it is to have faithful teachers and principals, and to see them continue bearing fruit during their retirement years!

Our meditation is by Rev. P.G. Feenstra. We also have a letter to the editor.

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By P.G. Feenstra

## The restraint on the ways of a man with a woman

*“Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires. Song of Songs 2:7*

When a couple grows toward one another it is only natural that they will long for greater physical intimacy. Such feelings and desires can be very strong. Song of Songs is very open and up front about it. God made us with emotions and feelings. This should not be covered by a shroud of shame. The woman in this love song stands at the door of marriage and expresses her desire to be in the arms of her lover in the most intimate way (1:2-4b). She thinks of how delightful it will be to be in his embrace.

Praise be to our God that He allows a man and a woman to express their deepest feelings of love and devotion to one another. Yet such intimacy must not only be protected by privacy, chastity and modesty but also by the boundaries of the marriage relationship. Sexual intimacy is only for the marriage bond. That is why you are playing a very dangerous and wrong game if you allow someone of the opposite sex to touch you in a sensual manner or with obvious sexual overtones.

What God has reserved for marriage can so easily be abused, twisted, and distorted – especially in a society that equates romance with getting into bed with someone, and “love” with lust. The beauty of intimacy and scenes that God created to be private affairs are openly displayed not only in pornographic material but also in popular movies. Sexuality is treated as if it were a consumer’s item.

The daughters of Jerusalem (women of the church) are given the solemn charge, a holy obligation, not to arouse or awaken love until it pleases. The author compares the beauty of true love to that of the wild deer and the gazelles whom you can only see in full view if you tread cautiously and carefully. If

you approach them recklessly they will soon disappear out of sight.

The Holy Spirit wishes to emphasize this point with us. He repeats these very same words in chapter 3:5 and chapter 8:4. Thereby the Spirit of God underlines how our feelings and emotions must be restrained. The man and woman spoken of in the Song of Songs are not looking for an illicit consummation of their love.

Feelings are described in the Song of Songs – sexual feelings that are real, natural, moral. But the LORD has made provision for these feelings and desires to be expressed and fulfilled within the bounds of marriage. The same point is made later in this same chapter, in verse 15, Song of Songs 2:15, “Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.” To protect your flower and vegetable gardens you have to trap the raccoons, foxes and squirrels that “vandalize” them. Likewise, men and women of faith are to protect those feelings and emotions that the Lord wanted to be expressed in the right manner by removing whatever may be harmful. The marriage relationship must be protected. There are “foxes” that can spoil, damage or sour the relationship. A couple must be diligent in removing them already in courtship and engagement. Avoiding communication may seem the easy way out but it could threaten or ruin the relationship.

The primary and most forceful reason women are not to stir up any wrong desires in a man (and the other way around) can be put very simply: it belongs to a life of obedience. Love, feelings and emotions may not be separated from faithfulness. Any inappropriate behaviour, action or dress that provokes and stirs up wrong and sinful thoughts

in the opposite sex is contrary to the manner in which the Lord designed us to be with one another.

For this reason we should also do away with watching movies and TV shows, reading books and magazines, entering chat rooms on the Internet, that stir up sinful and illicit thoughts and damage other relationships. Let’s not try justifying what we watch or read with such arguments as “Most of it was pretty good,” or, “They didn’t really show any nudity.” The author to the Hebrews says, “Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Heb 13:4).

Solid relationships built in Christ are under a tremendous amount of pressure in our society where promiscuity and sexual immorality is advertised and available like it has never been before. Let us therefore be diligent in conforming to God’s standards for sexuality both within and outside of holy marriage.

Where men and women solemnly pledge to honour the Lord’s design for marriage it will be of benefit to the entire church. Our relationships as brothers and sisters in Christ will become stronger. As we grow together in love for the Lord our desire will also be for a deeper relationship with one another. In the communion of saints we may arouse and awaken love for Christ as we look forward to the day when our love will be consummated at the marriage feast of the Lamb. At that time we will enjoy an intimacy with the Lord and with each other that will be far more beautiful than we can envision. 

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# The Reception of the Liberation of 1944 in the Christian Reformed Church (Part 2)<sup>1</sup>

By George Harinck

Let us continue our story. To make the situation only more confusing for the Americans, in June 1945 the news was spread that after the Netherlands had been liberated by the allied forces in May, a new exodus of Reformed people had started, and complete congregations were joining the Liberated churches. This had nothing to do anymore with the disobedience of just one professor. But there was help on the way. The Dutch church papers started publication again and the mail connection between the Netherlands and the United States was restored, although before September 1945 the mail carried no printed matter from the Netherlands.

## The first letters

In August 1945, Henry Beets was very pleased to publish one of the first letters from the Netherlands in *Missionary Monthly*. It was written in June by Prof. Aalders, the Free University professor in the Old Testament who had been an adviser to the Synod which deposed Schilder. The letter had been taken to England by a British pilot, and then was mailed to Beets. This was the first information of someone who had been involved in the conflict.

Aalders' letter was very clear and certainly helped to brighten up things. He wrote that the conflict had been mainly between Schilder and the Synod. Schilder had not been content with the synodical decisions of 1942, and, as Aalders wrote, "was manifestly looking for an opportunity to start a conflict." Schilder then found out that the Synod had not been closed for three years, but continued to convene. This was not in accordance with the church order. However, Aalders explained that the unusual circumstances of the war necessitated it. Schilder considered this

to be the introduction of hierarchy and he protested against this continuation. Consequently, several churches rejected the synodical decisions of 1942.

## Declaration by Schilder

Schilder was rebuked, but, as Aalders wrote, he "refused to admit that he was wrong. And so the Synod at last, having shown a *nearly* incomprehensible amount of patience, found itself in the necessity of suspending him." This act of Synod was followed by a declaration issued by Schilder and his friends. In this declaration the Reformed Churches "were *accused of deviation from the Holy Word of God*, and of infringing the church order." Schilder

*Schilder considered this to be the introduction of hierarchy and he protested against this continuation.*

started propaganda tours and founded lots of small churches, especially in Groningen. The liberated people criticized Kuyper's theology and tried to restore the spirit of the Secession of 1834. But Aalders knew "the fathers of the Separation would turn in their graves" when they heard about Schilder's point of view. The breach in the Reformed Churches was most deplorable, and those who started the opposition can never excuse their attitude.

According to Aalders' stated opinion, it is fully clear that Schilder caused a riot and he and he alone is to blame for the church split. A condensed and outspoken letter like this one could influence the public opinion much stronger than the dozens of Dutch brochures on the conflict, which were

received by the Americans from September 1945 on. The brochures were in Dutch and went into detail on complicated matters. It was all the more satisfactory that *The Banner* received first-hand-information as well.

In August it published a long letter by the Dutch Rev. Le Cointre, who had been a member of the Synod that deposed Schilder. He also explained that there were two aspects in the case: opposition against the synodical decisions of 1942, and opposition against the hierarchy. Prof. Greijdanus had protested "with unprecedented violence." But the conflict concentrated on Schilder, who had refused to cooperate in any way. According to Le Cointre, Synod had done its utmost to bring about a harmonious settlement but at last was compelled to suspend Schilder as a professor at the Theological School and as minister in the Reformed Churches. The decision was inevitable, Le Cointre stressed, "especially when Dr. Schilder in a revolutionary manner appealed to the churches." In August 1944, Schilder issued a declaration of liberation or return containing accusations of tyranny and binding the consciences, and summoned the churches to secede. The "schismatic faction," as Le Cointre called it, engaged in indefensible propaganda, especially toward the simple folk.

## Different spirit

In October 1945 *Calvin Forum* was able to confirm this view from a third Dutch source. This time it was an article by Rev. Prins, the Dutch correspondent of this academic magazine. He had not been a member of Synod, but explained in general terms how in the last twenty years a different spirit had crept into the Reformed Churches, a spirit which had set itself to attack pietistic trends

and developments which it considered wrong. Propagators of this opinion had constantly stressed the objective side of religion. But in their desire to fight against certain one-sided statements, they had drifted too far from the time-honored Reformed basis of operation. The Synod of 1942 condemned some of their views and that of their opponents, and tried to restore the balance. But this caused new debates.

***“They call this work Reformation, I call it revolution.”***

Just like Aalders and Le Cointre, Prins stressed that the Synod had shown no end of patience towards the opponents, but they had not listened to the admonition. They turned the issue topsy-turvy. The condemned opinions were not deviations from the confession, but the Synod with its doctrines was regarded as a danger for the church. And the liberated people called upon every church member to separate from the false church, as was the duty of the true believer. Prins was deeply convinced that a blinding spirit has seized these men who were tearing the church asunder. “They call this work Reformation, I call it revolution,” he wrote, “No longer owing to Hitler. Now a terrorism of brethren, who think they please God by travelling everywhere to make a proselyte.”

### Hoeksema

Hoeksema did not publish a Dutch view on the Liberation in *The Standard Bearer*, but in August he wrote his first letter to Schilder requesting information. Beginning in October, he offered his readers a weekly, extensive report on the Synod in 1943 and 1944, based on Dutch letters and brochures. His main impression was that the synodical decisions on doctrine and Schilder’s deposition were premature. In his series he made many critical remarks on the CRC press in this matter. He did not agree with Schilder’s views but explained that they were in line with CRC thinking. The CRC, however, would never admit this, according to Hoeksema. The CRC would just join the majority and side with the synod, even though the CRC would never state that those who were not in harmony with synodical decisions had no longer a place in their churches.

### False picture

I think, we’d better pause a while again. In the second half of 1945, a year after the Liberation started, the CRC finally got substantial information about what had happened in the Reformed Churches. The three Dutch sources confirmed what already had been suggested by Kuiper and Beets: namely that Schilder had caused the trouble. What became much more clear now, was that there was a distinction between the dogmatic and the church orderly dispute. The doctrinal insights of the liberated people were deviating from the Reformed tradition. However, Schilder had not been deposed because of his different views but because of his disobedience. Remarkable were the sharp words used by the Dutch: Schilder was a revolutionary, looking for conflict, stirring up the churches; there was terrorism of brethren, indefensible propaganda and unprecedented violence.

***These stories are constructed in such a way, that the reader got the impression that Schilder forced the Synod to depose him, almost against the will of the Synod.***

In contrast to this brutality, the Synod had been like a lamb: it had shown a *nearly* incomprehensible amount of patience and had done its utmost to bring about a harmonious settlement. These stories are constructed in such a way that the reader got the impression that Schilder forced the Synod to depose him, almost against the will of the Synod.

The three Dutch informants were friends of the Synod and ready to condemn Schilder. It is interesting that Aalders explained that he wrote his letter early, because he feared the propaganda of the Liberated people might intoxicate the CRC people. This propaganda must have been very disturbing to the synodical party because Prins and Le Cointre also complained about it seriously. The funny thing, of course, is that not a word from Liberated people was found in all of the Christian Reformed press. The real propagandists were those who feared the counter-propaganda. They bombed the Americans with synodical propaganda.

And there was no need for their worries because in America the synodical party had the field covered.

### Desire to do justice

We continue our story. On September 29, 1945, Van Halsema reported in *De Wachter* that Schilder’s weekly *De Reformatie* had reappeared in July. Now *De Wachter* wanted to do justice to the Liberated people and informed its readers on what Schilder wrote. *The Banner* saw no need for this. Kuiper was not that much interested in what really had happened in the Netherlands. Now that he had received several brochures, he concentrated on the doctrinal aspects of the issue. It is remarkable he dealt extensively with his pet doctrine of common grace, though it had nothing to do with the Liberation. Kuiper was afraid the Dutch disputes would be contagious and stressed the importance and credibility of the synodical decisions of 1942. At the end of a series of articles on the schism he concluded: the blame for the separation must lie with the group that refused to submit to the decisions of the synod, which merely maintained the classic Reformed position.

### Some reaction

Neither Schilder nor any of the Liberated people tried to reach the CRC press directly, but they did write on the American reaction to the Liberation, and it was done in a rather critical way. Schilder deplored the fact that the CRC still related to the Reformed Churches as a dependent daughter to a mother.

***It looks to me that General Synod should at least have waited until the war was over and they could contact the sister churches in America and Africa.***

The CRC did not make up its own mind by investigating the matter independently, he wrote, but simply connected his deposition to the issues that were at stake during Schilder’s visit to the CRC in 1939. Or they relied on what the synodical party said. A clear proof of this, in his opinion, was the uncritical way in which the *Missionary Monthly* had dealt with Aalders’ letter. *De Reformatie* contained a long and very critical review of this letter by Rev. Knoop.

## Some doubt

Now that in the fall of 1945 some Liberated information and reactions penetrated CRC circles, some Americans started to doubt the wisdom of the synodical decisions of the war years. Beets was disturbed by the Liberated criticisms of Aalders' letter and wrote several Dutch friends for advice. Beets had hoped that his old friend, Prof. Greijdanus, would keep him posted on events. He complained that the Dutch just did not understand how little Americans knew of their struggle. Beets now asked Greijdanus to write an article on the Liberation and also offered Knoop space in the *Missionary Monthly*. In the meantime, Beets published amazing lists of more than 100 pastors that had followed Schilder and of more than 150 liberated churches, which meant about 10 percent of the Reformed Churches. He also reported the favorable attitude of the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* towards the Liberated churches.

The large extent of the exodus made the Dutch periodical *De Volksvriend* in California wonder about the real cause. Never would thousands of Reformed people have followed Schilder, if his deposition had only been a matter of disobedience. The real reason must be something more serious. The paper came to the conclusion, that the main cause of the liberation was that the Synod had bound the churches to its decisions of 1942, and had left no room for diverging opinions. It was clear that the Synod had been very unwise in doing so. *De Volksvriend* criticized Aalders' letter for avoiding this cause and concentrating on the behaviour of Schilder instead.

## Mixed reactions

*The Banner* and *De Wachter* had definitely made up their minds on the Liberation by the end of 1945. But by that time Hoeksema became more and more critical of the Synod, while Henry Beets struggled with his doubts. In the *Missionary Monthly* of March 1946 he reported on Greijdanus' opinion on the Liberation. Greijdanus was highly respected by Beets. In several brochures the Kampen professor had explained that the main reason for the schism was that the Synod of 1942 had bound the churches to their opinions. The pulpit was barred to any pastor who did not agree with these opinions. Greijdanus wrote: "This, and this alone is the reason for the present misery on our

church life." Beets did not comment on this explanation but he did wonder why the Synod had made such a haste in deposing Schilder. The next month he confessed his doubts to his Dutch friend Diemer, editor of the Christian newspaper *De Rotterdammer*. He wrote him: "It appears to me that the Liberation is largely a matter of personality, and of misunderstanding as to the phraseology, and personally I fear your General Synod was too much in a hurry in the given circumstances to settle the matter of such great importance. It looks to me that General Synod should at least have waited until the war was over and they could contact the sister churches in America and Africa. *Don't you think so too?*"

### *The CRC officially closed its doors to Schilder and the Liberated churches.*

## CRC press unimpressed

But these comments and opinions did not change the general opinion in the CRC press that there had been no need for a secession. They became all the more convinced of their judgment, when the Liberated side failed to communicate their opinion in a clear way in one of CRC's periodicals. In October 1945, on their first Synod of the Liberated Churches, a committee was appointed to inform the churches in North America about the events in the Netherlands churches during the war years, when practically no communication with foreign churches was possible. However, at their next Synod in 1946, it was reported that this committee had not yet started its work. Thereupon this Synod decided to send a delegate to America to inform the CRC on the Liberation, but he never went.

## CRC not interested

In 1946 it turned out that the opinions in the CRC press reflected the opinions of the Christian Reformed Church as a whole. The Liberated Churches had invited the CRC to attend their Synod, but the synodical committee answered that, inasmuch as the CRC did not at the present time maintain church correspondence with the Liberated Reformed Churches, they were not authorized to send delegates. In the meantime the CRC was organizing the Reformed Ecumenical Synod,



Called to the church at Bunbury, Australia:

**Rev. T. Lodder**

of Taber, Alberta.

• • •

Called to the church at Burlington-Waterdown, Ontario:

**Rev. J. Huijgen**

of Cloverdale, British Columbia.

which took place in August 1946 in Grand Rapids. Ecumenicity was a topic many CRC people were much more interested in than doctrinal quarrels. They invited the Reformed Church of South Africa and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, who sent Prof. Aalders as one of the delegates. But the Liberated Churches were not invited. At this Synod the delegates of the Reformed Churches informed the other members on the Liberation and asked them to agree with her synodical decisions of the last years. Though the CRC delegates could have known better, they just agreed. Silently and practically the CRC did make a choice, be it only implicitly and not expressly.

But in 1947 the CRC had to come out – and it did. When the news spread that Prof. Schilder would visit the United States, the Synodical Committee made an announcement in the CRC church papers that the CRC did not sustain church correspondence with the Liberated Churches, and therefore could not invite their ministers to occupy their pulpits. The CRC officially closed its doors to Schilder and the Liberated churches.

## Conclusions

This history would all have been without much importance, if nothing had happened since. I'd like to point to four developments. First, the Reformed Churches' accusation of apostasy in Liberated Churches have proved to be wrong. They had left the classic Reformed position, while the Liberated churches kept to it. Seen in this light of history, the Liberation has turned out to be a turning point in Dutch church history, because it initiated the demise of

the world Abraham Kuyper had created and seriously weakened the Reformed presence in Dutch society. Secondly, Prof. Berkouwer, who presided over the Synod of 1944 which deposed Schilder, publicly apologized in 1987 on Dutch television for this decision. It was utterly wrong to depose Schilder, he said. And in reaction to this most personal action of Berkouwer, the Synod of the Reformed Churches in 1988 apologized for deposing Schilder and many others. Therefore we can never talk about 1944 anymore without at least mentioning 1988.

The CRC did not accept the synodical decision of 1988 blindly, like it did in 1944. But, thirdly, in America things changed as well. We cannot speak of secession and exodus in CRC circles today as a purely historical matter because in the 1990s this has become the CRC's sad reality. This real-

ity makes it less easy but maybe a bit more interesting to reflect on how the CRC judged the Liberation of 1944. And in the fourth and last place, some in CRC circles have started to rethink the Hoeksema-case. It is clear from this lecture that this has implications for the CRC view on the Liberation as well. Just as the deposition of Hoeksema, the deposition of Schilder was an irregular process, and a "blitzkrieg." It was an attempt to turn Schilder away, just as the CRC wanted to turn Hoeksema away. And the positions taken in 1944 were highly influenced by the CRC attitude towards Hoeksema.

The conclusion of this lecture is not that the CRC bet on the wrong horse in 1944. History is not about right or wrong, but it is not for fun either. It is about understanding ourselves by reflecting on the experience of others. It often makes us feel uneasy. But it is especially in studying church history

that we receive a very critical guide in our Christian life. My conclusion would be that the history of the Reformed tradition in the twentieth century is in need of a reassessment. We should leave the partisan views that function in church splits and try to understand the Reformed world and its splits in a historical way. This calls for a cooperative effort of Dutch and American historians.

<sup>1</sup>Speech held on June 22, 2001 at the conference of the American Association for Dutch- American Studies. The conference was held on the campus of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI, USA.



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## PRESS REVIEW

By J. De Jong



# A Noble Warrior

On March 14, 2002, Dr. H. Evan Runner was called home at the age of eighty-six. He was instrumental in promoting a Christian life and world view, that is, a vision of reformation affecting all areas of life. Although he was a faithful adherent of the principles of the philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd, (*The Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea*), he also studied under K. Schilder in Kampen, and had good relations with many members of the Liberated churches in the east. I was also privileged to be a student of his for one year at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. He was a dynamic lecturer, and a man with vision.

Gerald VanderZande, chairman of the *Citizens for Public Justice*, spoke a few words in memory of H. Evan Runner at a memorial gathering at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario. An adapted version of his speech was pub-

lished in *The Banner*, and we have reproduced it for our readers here:

Our good friend and faith-filled co-worker H. Evan Runner was a unique presence among us for many years. Runner consistently proclaimed an integral cultural vision and conveyed a special sense of biblical mission. He persuasively articulated the Good News. He dynamically communicated the message of radical redemption and restoration – blessings which we daily enjoy in the liberating Spirit and abiding love of Jesus Christ.

Much can be said about Runner's prophetic contributions to the early development of our attempts at a coherent Christian public witness. One gift in particular stands out for me. It is summarized in a pointed paragraph in Runner's keynote address delivered at the 15th anniver-

sary convention of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, held in Toronto on April 29, 1967. The convention occurred during the centennial-anniversary celebration of Canada's Confederation. Runner's memorable words are as relevant today as they were 35 years ago:

The most fundamental battle of our time is not to be thought of in the first place as one for the preservation of a familiar and so-called orthodox church organization, or of an abstract system of theological propositions. The struggle of our time goes much deeper: it is a struggle for the religious direction of human society in its totality. The battle of our time – as, indeed of any time – is to determine which spirit is to give direction to our civilization. A church organization, or a

world of Christian theological activity, standing alone within a culture all the other activities of which are directed by an anti-Christian spirit, must remain impotent and has become irrelevant, and it will in the long run fade away. Even to preserve the organized church, therefore, we must fight for an integral Christian society. Either there is a quickening of faith, which senses the religious unity of life, or there is the quiet accommodation, in almost imperceptible stages, to a way of life which does not, cannot, hear the Good Shepherd's voice. This is the quiet of the dead ("Can Canada Tolerate the CLAC?: The Achilles' Heel of a Humanistic Society").

Runner insightfully insisted, "Even to preserve the organized church, therefore, we must fight for an integral Christian society. And this insistence should be understood in the context of Runner's persistent call for "a quickening of faith, which senses the religious unity of life."

In the same address Runner proposed that we develop "a Christian idea of society," one in which we recognize the fact of a plurality of faiths and in which "the totalitarian demand a faith makes upon him who confesses it to give order to the whole of his life will be accepted in a straightforward way."

For, as our friend made quite clear, "Toleration is really possible to the greatest degree only in a pluralist society." Runner rightly reminded us, "We Christians no longer wish to impose our views on others who do not agree with us. We simply do not wish the *humanist dogma* to be imposed on us. We want each faith to be free to organize the several areas of life-struggle, at least those where the crucial struggles of a particular era are concentrated."

Runner openly appealed to "the humanists in our society not to allow an: old dogma (reason) to get in the way of true humanity." He urged others "to acknowledge that it will be impossible to remove the plurality of faiths that at present exist, and to work with us towards a truly pluralist and humane society."

Of course, Runner's timely words of advice to those in the grip of totalitarian *ideologies* (such as laissez-faire capitalism, con-



Dr. H. Evan Runner

sumerism, conservatism, liberalism, secularism, sexism, and socialism) are equally addressed to all doctrinaire believers who are in the bondage of totalitarian *theologies* (such as the militant fundamentalists found among Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, and other groups).

Christians and other people of faith must continue to learn to proclaim and practise life-affirming justice and liberation: mutual respect and mutual responsibility that honour the human dignity of all, and legal equality, economic equity, environmental responsibility, and social justice for all.

Especially in our deeply secularized age of rampant individualism and limitless materialism, we must challenge the destructive effects of these dominant ideologies on human community, the fragile creation, and stewardly economy. It is imperative that contemporary followers of Jesus, the Way, lovingly demonstrate their life-embracing commitment to all neighbours in need, particularly to those who increasingly suffer from the secular politics of discrimination, the capitalist economics of exclusion, and human-rights violations, both at home and abroad.

Think of the countless hungry, homeless people in North America and the refugees in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as well as the millions of desperate people who suffer from HIV/AIDS the world over. We may never ignore Jesus' abiding challenge to live our whole life out of the *whole* gospel in the face of worsening exploitation and oppression, spreading violence and wars.

We are all called, individually and in community, to communicate and demonstrate the comprehensive meaning and message of reconciliation. This God-ordained responsibility is our common calling. It is our cultural ministry for the common good. We must help develop a caring and sharing society. We must encourage all people in all areas of life to exercise their public responsibility, which seeks public justice for all, without discrimination of any kind.

May our ever faithful God continue to give us hope and go before us in the great faith-struggle for the human freedom and the communal responsibility to live unto God and for our neighbour in a world that belongs to God. That's why we are created in God's image and called to reflect God's likeness. That's why we are challenged today just as we were so powerfully challenged by our friend H. Evan Runner – to share the biblical religion as a way of life shaped by deeds of love, faithfulness, mercy, peace, and justice for all God's creatures everywhere.

VanderZande brings out many of the essential principles that Runner stood for. At the same time, we ought to be encouraged not to forget the *antithesis* that God has set in the world, (Runner often mentioned it in class) one which runs its course throughout all of history. We cannot in any way diminish our calling to reach out in all areas of life. But we should restrain our idealism with the scriptural awareness that as the end time draws near, apostasy will grow, false religion and secularism will increasingly dominate social and political life. And do we not see prophecy fulfilled in the times in which we live?

Nonetheless we may be grateful for the work of H. Evan Runner. His goal and vision was clear, and affected many followers: let the gospel go out for the redemption of human life in its *totality*. That should be the heart of the message today: from the pulpits, and through all our evangelism and outreach agencies!



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# Urban Missions January 2003:

## *Sing to the Lord, for He has done glorious things, let this be known to all the world*

By Jeannette Hoeksema

Welcome to a special issue of Urban Mission Matters. For those in western Canada this may be somewhat of a familiar newsletter but we thought it high time we fill in the rest of the country with what has been happening since the Urban Mission project first took root in the spring of 2000. We may look back on the last two and a half years with great thankfulness to the Lord for the blessings He has given this work. There have been some disappointments as well but we continue to look to the Lord for guidance in the daily work. We know that if we hold his word as truth He will bless the work of our urban missionary and his family. Throughout the time this project has gone on it has been shown that the most important part of mission work is the relationship building and the help given without hesitation when needed.

The core of the Urban Mission project has been the Chinese Christian Fellowship (CCF) which was started soon after Rev. F. Dong began his work. This group has gained and lost various members but a few have remained the same since the beginning. The CCF not only meets together on Sundays for regular services at Cloverdale or Langley and Chinese Bible Study/Service in the afternoon, but have become a social network for support and encouragement. The members of the two supporting churches have opened up their homes and given generously of their time, whether it be with donations of household items to allow new immigrants to get settled or to offer hospitality. The women have started an informal social group where they could be doing crafts, learning each other's cooking style etc. This past summer the CCF went on many day trips as well as an overnight camping trip to Cultus Lake, a first time

experience for many of them and a good time of bonding.

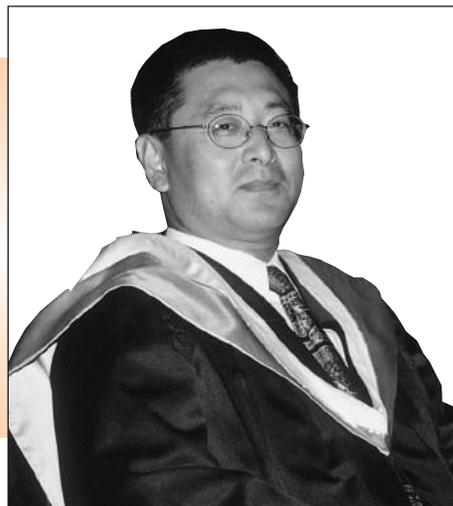
As time has gone on it has become apparent that the geographical focus will need to change. The Cloverdale-Langley area has a limited Chinese population and more of the current CCF members are moving into the Burnaby area closer to Vancouver. This area has a large number of Chinese people so it seems natural that a Chinese missionary would have fertile ground to make new contacts and thereby expand his work. We have just recently established an agreement in principle with a school in the Metrotown area to rent two rooms for Sunday worship/Bible study use starting the first Sunday in February. While this is not yet considered a house congregation, it is the first step towards independence and the formation of a Chinese Reformed Church.

One unusual aspect of this specific project is not only the cooperation of two supporting churches but also the work of the Kelmscott church in Aus-

tralia who are using today's technology working for the Lord. A website is under construction, a translation team has been assembled, duties assigned and some material chosen. We pray this site will be up and running soon so that many unreached people in China can hear and read about the Reformed faith through this versatile medium.

I had the opportunity recently to sit down and chat with the first two CCF members to be baptized and profess their faith, Joey and Sue. I wanted to get their impressions of life in Canada and the reasons they came here in the first place. I think it is fair to say that their reasons were similar to why many of our parents came to Canada in the early 1950s, namely opportunity and education for either themselves or their children. In addition the chance to live and experience another culture was a draw. Joey comes from Northern China (Dalian), while Sue comes from Shanghai. Joey went to University in China for one

Rev. Frank Dong





year to study Commercial Design, while Sue was a practicing general physician. They both lived with their parents before coming to Canada as it is unusual for single people to live on their own and even when married, couples may stay with one or other family until they could afford a home of their own.

Things are changing in China now, but in the past the only way someone could buy their own home was to have all the money first: mortgages were simply not heard of. When asked what

the most difficult part of living in Canada was, they both mentioned not knowing the culture and language, as well as meeting new people. Sue first lived in Montreal where she learnt some of her English and went to a Chinese church, and Joey lived with a host family while attending Trinity Western University. Since they attend our regular church services in the morning, I wanted to know how they found the messages. They both admitted that at first it was hard to understand the sermons and the music was different for

them. Now they find it easier but said it helps to be able to read the text of the sermon beforehand so they could follow better. The last thing I asked them was whether they thought they should integrate with our regular congregations or start their own church. They both liked the integration that they have with the Langley and Cloverdale churches now, but recognize that for most newly immigrated Chinese it would be better to have worship services in their own language so they could learn more.

It has been a busy first two and a half years but a blessed one in many aspects. The fact that our Urban Missionary and CCF can already think about finding their own place to worship is a blessing indeed. The Urban Mission Board would like to thank all those who have contributed with their time or financial resources to this work. We pray that the work of spreading the good news can go on unhindered for many years to come.

That is all for this issue. This newsletter is put out on a bimonthly (usually) basis. If you are an organization or church that would like to receive this newsletter via e-mail, send me a message at [jlh61@telus.net](mailto:jlh61@telus.net) and I will add you to my list. C

## LETTER 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.

### Dear Editor:

I read with interest the report from Rev. J. Huigen regarding General Synod Zuidhorn 2002, Holland. I feel I must take issue with what Rev. Huigen writes regarding worship services in our sister churches in Holland.

My wife and I had the privilege of being in Holland in October 2002. We went to three different sister congregations on three separate Sundays and did not experience anything similar to Rev. Huigen's report. It was just like being in our own church: we heard some solid Reformed sermons, and yes, we sang some hymns from their

new hymnal, which, by the way, are very Christ centred.

There is a saying: "If you want to hit a dog you can always find a stick." I am sure that in some congregations some things are done differently (that does not always mean that they are wrong). Maybe we could use some props in our services to illustrate a point. The prophet Jeremiah did it extensively when he prophesied to God's people of old. Some preachers make a lot more noise and use more actions than others.

I think Rev. Huigen did the Dutch churches a great disservice by writing

about them as he did. Let me illustrate with this example: If one child in a family is wild and indifferent, do you then say the whole family is dysfunctional? There may be some concern about the direction of our sister churches in Holland, but to write such an article to the Canadian people of which 95% or more never go to Holland, is not fair reporting because they may perceive it as the norm, and that is what I take issue with. (See also Lord's Day 42, Q/A 111).

Christian greetings,  
John Pruijm  
Abbotsford, B.C.

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# Forty Years of Christian Education

By Arie J. Hordyk

Forty years of Christian education was celebrated on October 24, 2002 at John Calvin Christian School in Burlington, Ontario. There was an Open House during the day for the parents, and again in the evening where everyone who had anything to do with the school during these forty years was invited – and they came. During the official half hour program, several presentations were made. Mr. John Ludwig, a former Principal, highlighted very clearly how the Lord sustained teachers, students and parents, in all areas, including travel. Mr. George Hofsink, a former student, and currently Principal at Covenant Christian School in Flamborough, presented the school with a beautiful print on behalf of the daughter school. We had a pleasant day and it was nice to reacquaint ourselves with those we hadn't seen in many years.

As a former board member and president during the preparation and first years of operation I would like to write a few words about the early years, the 50s and the 60s.

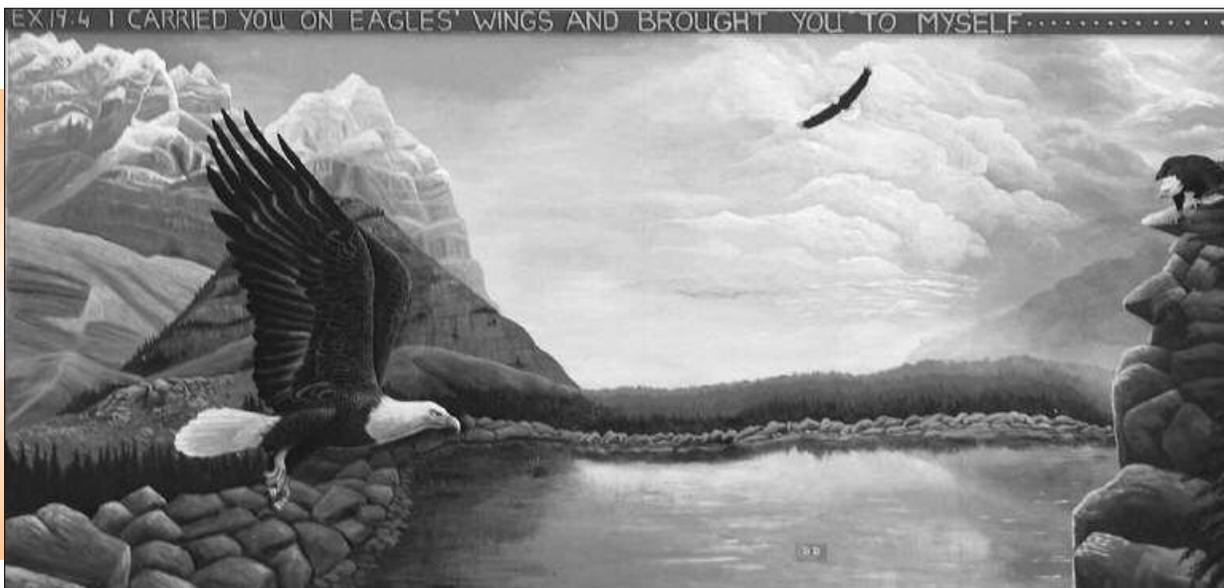
Most of our board members were young men, in their twenty or thirties. When Rev. G. VanDooren was President he may have been forty-five, and was indeed our "senior." He came to Burlington in the fall of 1955 at a time when the wages were about \$1.25 to \$1.50 per hour. There were very few new cars, and most of us lived in rented places, some even with outhouses. There were a lot of children born, and we were all very concerned about leaving their education in "public hands." This was something we would never get used to. It became clear via pulpit and daily discussions that we, as parents, should take our responsibility seriously. Rev. VanDooren's guidance became a model to his successors in making the opening of John Calvin School in September 1962 a reality. We started a building fund and raised enough money to pay for the land (including the church site) in 1957. Mind you, Ebenezer paid us back very quickly.

There was a high level of commitment to our priorities for school and church. Rev. VanDooren had taught us

that we needed a school for our congregation, otherwise our membership would move away to where a Christian school was established. And that is the reason our original four-room school was built before we finished the Ebenezer Church building. The Lord blessed us, and shortly after the school was up and running, a very reasonable loan was made available to complete our church building, and, our church membership kept growing because of John Calvin Christian School.

Rev. VanDooren was succeeded by Harry Aasman. Over the years, many others have served the Board with two, or even four, three year terms. It is nice to see that currently, Rob Wildeboer, a grandson of our late minister, is at the helm.

Psalms 127 speaks about "unless the Lord builds the house. . ." which was sung at our Silver Anniversary on October 7, 1987. We certainly have experienced this in the history of John Calvin Christian School. May our God continue to care for us. 



Gym painting



## Year-End Party: A Way to Celebrate

By Lyn Metzlar-Leyenhorst

It's a bit of a tradition in many schools for classes to have year-end parties. It's a way to say good-bye to people with whom you have developed a relationship during the school year. Although formats may vary, these parties often take up the last few hours of the school year. A few hours to close off a bond between twenty to thirty people who have been together for about 180 days.

So how do you celebrate when a principal retires. . . someone who has developed bonds with hundreds of students, parents, staff and board members over a period of twenty-four years? You throw a day-long party, of course, and invite all those people to come back and celebrate with you. That's exactly what happened on June 25, 2002, at William of Orange Christian School in Surrey, B.C. when Mr. Apko Nap ended an illustrious career that lasted forty-three years and spanned three continents.

Mr. Nap (although we all know his first name, it is seldom spoken aloud except by his closest colleagues) received his teacher training in his native Netherlands, taught in Brazil from 1959 – 1976, returned to the Netherlands to teach for two years, and then immigrated to Canada where he has taught at William of Orange since that time, the last fifteen years also serving as principal. During these years, I'm sure he never dreamt that he would spend his last working day wearing casual shorts and a bright yellow Brazilian soccer T-shirt – in honour of Brazil's winning ways in the World Cup games being played that week.

Students arrived at school on June 25 dressed according to the colours of one of the three countries in which Mr. Nap has taught: Holland, Brazil and Canada. Hallways in the school were also decorated with these colours. After students, and their parents and siblings, enjoyed a pancake breakfast in the annex, all students had their faces painted by the Grade 7 students according to the

Mr. Apko Nap



country/team of which they were part. We were ready to celebrate!

The rest of the morning consisted of a casual assembly, during which we learned a lot of new information about Mr. Nap, and at the end of which everyone was treated to a good old-fashioned goody bag. At lunchtime, Mr. Nap presented every student with a roll of King peppermints (one of his trademarks) as well as what first looked like a roll of peppermints but actually was a rolled up scroll with a story (another Mr. Nap trademark) written on it.

*This labour of love, I am sure, will continue for as long as the Lord allows him the ability to carry it out.*

During the afternoon, teams participated in World Cup soccer games, and the grand finale to a great day – World Cup water fights! Everyone was well-behaved until some unruly board members used entire buckets of water on members of the staff; student behaviour deteriorated significantly after that.

All former students, staff and board members were invited to an informal social evening on the school lawn. Thankfully the weather was wonderful, and 300 – 400 people gathered on the grass behind the school. About a dozen people – representing staff, board, and students – presented light-hearted tributes to Mr. Nap, many making reference to his main interests of story-telling and church history. At the end of the

evening, Mr. Nap was presented with a retirement gift – a travel voucher for a trip to either the Netherlands or Brazil.

But retirement will not be all travel and leisure for Mr. Nap. He has already published two church history books of the series *The Flame of the Word* and is currently working on the next one. This labour of love, I am sure, will continue for as long as the Lord allows him the ability to carry it out. As well, as he himself stated in his farewell speech, "Behind every successful man there's a lonely woman." Mr. and Mrs. Nap, we hope you will have many more years together to rectify that situation.

So how do you sum up a career of forty-three years? There is so much more that could be said but let me conclude with two sections of God's Word, both of which were used on June 25 during the speakers' tributes, and both of which reflect the attitude Mr. Nap has always attempted to maintain towards his students and his profession. Psalm 73:28 says: "But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds." And a paraphrase of Nehemiah 13:14: ". . . Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done for Your service."

Mr. Nap, we wish you well, and we will miss you. C

*Lyn Metzlar-Leyenhorst has been a teacher for sixteen years, the last three of them at William of Orange Christian School, Surrey, B.C.*

## On Maintaining our Reformed Schools

By A. Kingma

We were ushered into the cozy living room. I sat on the couch. Keith took his spot on a comfortable chair. “. . . Lord’s Day 38, which is about the fourth commandment, includes all the schools, not just the theological schools. We should have more discussion on this,” Mr. Martin Vandervelde states as he adjusts his posture to sit more comfortably.

“Another thing I like to hear more about is the connection between the parent’s promise at baptism with the need to set up our own schools. According to some people, at baptism parents vow to uphold Reformed education, but do not agree to uphold Reformed schools. But how can the one not lead to the other?” asks br. Vandervelde. “And to say that there is no evidence in the sixteenth century where baptism is connected to setting up our own schools needs to be disputed and discussed,” he adds.

As can be noticed already, Br. Vandervelde wishes for a closer unity between school and church. Let’s take catechism, for example: “The way we had it in Smithville John Calvin School was ideal: the teacher should help the students practise it and should overhear it; the minister should introduce and teach it to them.”

Teaching French is “*weggegooide tijd* (a waste of time),” br. Vandervelde states, tongue-in-cheek, but slightly serious. Why would he say that? “It is so important to train the children in the confession of your church, in giving them a solid foundation so that they can be future mothers and fathers in Israel.” Bible history, church history and teaching the doctrines of the church are much more important than teaching subjects like French. In this way too, br. Vandervelde urges this generation to keep a closer unity between church and school.

Mr. Vandervelde, presently at eighty-three years of age, may still enjoy relatively good health. He still swims regularly with his wife for exercise, visits children and grandchildren and enjoys working and sitting in his beautiful garden. Mr. Keith Sikkema and I asked him if we could visit him for the purpose of collecting his experiences and thoughts on Reformed education, espe-



Mr. and Mrs.  
M. Vandervelde

cially since he was one of the first ones who taught in a Canadian Reformed School in Canada. While we had to eke out his personal story, br. Vandervelde was more than willing to share his thoughts on Reformed education. And so we began the visit with the above issues, issues dear to his heart.

Mrs. Vandervelde comes with coffee and Dutch *koek*. During coffee, we switch to the personal experience.

Br. Vandervelde was forty-seven years old when two people knocked on his door in Holland. Before that knock, he had been teaching for twenty-five years already, and was principal in an elementary school. Mr. VanEsch and another representative of the Dutch Teacher’s College came in, saw a map of Canada on the blackboard, did a school visit, and finally broke the news: Canada needs a principal!

***“It is so important to train the children in the confession of your church, in giving them a solid foundation so that they can be future mothers and fathers in Israel.”***

These men had done their homework. They knew that br. Vandervelde had a certificate to teach in English, and they knew that he knew Rev. Scholten, Smithville’s minister, quite well from earlier days. But little did they know that it was letters from Opa DeBoer and Opa Schulenberg and others of Smithville that struck the right

chords. On July 26, 1964, br. Vandervelde came with his family to Smithville, Ontario, to be the first principal of the soon-to-be third Canadian Reformed School in Canada.

“Oh, that first year had stories of its own,” recalls br. Vandervelde. “We lived in the basement of the new four-classroom school for the first three months until they could find us a house. There were no books and no curriculum, so with the help of br. Ruggi, off we went to Burlington, where we “borrowed” books from John Calvin School, one for every subject of every grade, just to know what we had to buy. Afterwards, a young br. Bill Horsman was so kind as to give us permission.” Br. Gerry VanWoudenberg helped br. Vandervelde get the desks, and just in time, things could be ready for the school opening. Miss Freddy van Sydenborgh, Miss Ann Plantinga, and Mr. Vandervelde were the three “brand new” teachers. It just so happened that Rev. Cl. Stam was on his way to study at the Theological College in Kampen, so he provided the opening speech. The school started with 111 students. By December of that year, br. Vandervelde’s class had grown from forty-two to fifty-five, and so br. Bill Wildeboer became the fourth teacher.

Students were amazed at the direct connections made between the Bible and the rest of the subjects. “We don’t understand that you use the Bible in geography class,” one student said. I still remember that comment, and it made teaching for me in this new school so worthwhile,” stated br. Vandervelde. “That was the difference between Christian education and public education.

That was one of the reasons why the school was started."

Some people were not ready for the financial consequences. Membership, which was 50 cents a week before the school started, went up to \$7.00 a week. Some paid for others. A committee was set up to help those who had difficulties to make the payments. Teachers set up a fund to help people pay for a month or two. Br. Vandervelde urges that now too school societies should do more for temporary financial help. Schools are too much like a business now. Sending parents to the deacons is an easy solution, but are there more or better solutions?

Br. Vandervelde slipped back into issues dear to his heart; issues that he wants the coming generations to think about. "I'm in favour of the Covenant Teacher's College. Right now it experiences low support, very low, and that must be changed. Teachers must be Reformed. Teachers must be instructed in all subjects to teach reformedly. Boards and teachers should talk about how they teach in a reformed way. Teachers must daily think, How do I teach reformedly in each lesson I give? Teachers must teach doctrine, even in elementary school. Doctrine is not a negative word, it is simply the teaching of the Bible. Doctrine must permeate all what is taught."

*"By the time he retired, he had given 675 Bibles to John Calvin School. God works in mysterious and wonderful ways!"*

"I'm so thankful that we have our own schools, and they are worth fighting for. Many do not see anymore the importance of our own schools. In the Netherlands, Reformed schools are being sold: they are becoming more and more open to students and to membership. No longer are the schools "of the churches." Those who home school have lost this: do they really teach Bible history and church history reformedly? Do they present a Reformed view on history and geography? Do they think, 'How do I teach reformedly in each lesson I give?'"

"Yes, the superintendent of the public schools of Niagara helped me a lot," br. Vandervelde reminisces. "Mr. Klim gave seventy-five Bibles on the official

opening, and every year he continued to give Bibles, but he would give lots of advice too. By the time he retired, he had given 675 Bibles to John Calvin School. God works in mysterious and wonderful ways!"

Br. Vandervelde gave us a parting wish at the end of our meeting: "If any one can, they should translate A. Janse's book, *Opvoeding en Onderwijs* or Prof. B. Holwerda's book about education *De betekenis van verbond en kerk voor huwelijk, gezin en jeugd.*" These two books among others he found were very valuable tools in enabling him to teach reformedly.

Visiting a retired, first generation principal causes one to step back into their shoes, and provides one with another look at educational matters today. It could be that, when we talk to first-generation members, we notice some nostalgia, but with br. Vandervelde, we notice more than that, something deeper than that. The future of our schools seems to be pressing upon him. With clarity and with a hidden energy, br. Vandervelde speaks about keeping our schools Reformed, and in that he speaks mainly about keeping a close bond between church and school. Our schools are unique in that they are schools of the churches, or more accurately stated, schools of the parents of the Canadian Reformed Churches. He urges us to treasure that unique structure: for the maintenance of Reformed education, our schools must remain "schools of the churches."

In terms of curriculum and methodology too, br. Vandervelde urges us to remain Reformed. We need to examine more closely whether or not we are growing away from our Reformed educational focus in our choice of teaching certain subjects or topics. Our choice of what to teach must be rooted in our Reformed faith. Likewise, how

we teach must also be based on what we believe. When a new methodology comes blowing in from the east, west or south, let us take a stand-offish approach and examine it under the scrutiny of Reformed spectacles.

I believe that we, the second and third generation of teachers, have not lost or forgotten what Reformed education is. Ministers, principals, as well as the Covenant College staff, still share with us their understanding of covenantal education or Reformed education at Teacher Conventions or in print. Principals still urge their staffs to study Reformed education, but perhaps we need to do it with more zeal and fervor, with a stronger desire to remain unique in school structure, practices, curriculum and methodology.

*In terms of curriculum and methodology too, br. Vandervelde urges us to remain Reformed.*

Although br. Vandervelde will readily admit that not everything was ideal or perfect in the first years of our schools, we may say that God blessed that first generation. It is the task of that generation to pass on why they fervently desired to start Canadian Reformed schools, and it is our tasks to listen to them and to pass on as fervently the desire to maintain our schools. May God continue to bless Reformed education as it carries on into the third generation and in generations to come.



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By W.L. Bredenhof



## Two Books on Grief

The loss of a loved one is something that affects nearly every one of us at some point in our lives. As parents get older, we can expect that someday they will no longer be with us. This is the expected. Grief also sometimes strikes unexpectedly – a toddler accidentally drowned, a teenager killed by a drunk driver. I recently experienced such a loss with the sudden passing away of my mother. Soon after it happened, I found myself in a Christian bookstore looking for help in grieving. I picked up two books on the subject and in this brief article, I'd like to share with you what I found in these two books. Inevitably, somebody who is reading this article will be grieving the loss of a loved one themselves. I hope this will help you.

### *Trusting God through Tears*

The first book is the best of the two: *Trusting God through Tears*, by Jehu Thomas Burton (Baker, 2000). Burton is a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church of America, a diverse federation. Burton evidently leans towards the more evangelical wing of the PCA, yet in the main he appears to be Reformed.

Burton's story is a tough read for someone in the early stages of their grief. That's okay. Eventually, you'll be able to get through it. Burton's experience with grief was of the unexpected variety. One day his twelve year-old son was living, breathing, and playing. The next morning they found him dead in his bed – he had passed away in his sleep from a cerebral hemorrhage. Burton tells how he and his family struggled with this tragic event. His thoughts and meditations on the subject of death are both touching and for the most part scriptural. There were only one or two places where I placed question marks in the margins. Otherwise, this is a very profitable and worthwhile book for those who are grieving.

Let me just mention two matters that Burton writes about that I found very profitable. The first is that Burton eventually puts things into a proper spiritual perspective. He asks probing questions of himself: "Do I value how He has changed my family and all He has taught me more than my longing for my son? Would I give up all I have learned to have my son back in this

life?" (p. 92). Those kind of questions help to establish our priorities when we are grieving. It forces us to examine our hearts to see whether being closer to the Father is really worth the pain of grief He has given us. What do we really want? What's really important to us?

The second thing is Burton's discovery of the meaning of joy. He writes, "Joy is confidence and trust in Jesus and his forgiveness, which can exist in the face of tragedy and trial. Joy is the abiding peace and hope in the awaiting eternal life that no one can take away or destroy. No person or set of circumstances can separate me from the love of Christ. Therefore, even in the crucible of pain I can have joy." Those words struck me. For Christians there can be joy even in the midst of tragedy. These are the sorts of insights offered by Burton – I believe that anyone who is grieving will find these insights beneficial.

### *When Will I Stop Hurting?*

The second book I want to look at is from a very popular author on the topic of death and grieving, June Cerza Kolf. Her book *When Will I Stop Hurting? Dealing with a Recent Death* (Updated Edition) (Baker, 2001) is written from the perspective of a grief counselor and veteran hospice worker. She has also experienced the loss of a loved one (her husband), though this loss was not as dramatic and unexpected as that experienced by Jehu Burton.

Regrettably, Kolf does not write at all from a Reformed perspective. By that I mean to say that she does not really write from a biblical perspective. Yes, the book speaks about God, but very, very seldom about the Lord Jesus. Burton's book is filled with Christ; everywhere it is evident that Burton is a Christian. Not so with the book by Kolf. In fact, this book could be read by Jewish or Muslim readers and little offense would probably be taken.

This sub-Christian approach is everywhere evident. In several places, Kolf speaks of the importance of forgiving ourselves. There is not a single place in the Bible that speaks about the need to forgive ourselves. This concept has been invented by modern, secular psychology and imported into "Christian" counselling. Kolf speaks about the need

to channel one's anger. She suggests this be done with a tennis racket and an old pillow. Among other things, how does such a suggestion fit with the Scriptural emphasis on self-control?

Furthermore, Kolf draws on the research of Dr. Erich Lindemann. In a famous study of burn victims from a Boston nightclub fire in 1942, Lindemann came to certain conclusions about the grieving process. Among them, writes Kolf, "His research showed the necessity of feeling the hurt, the loneliness and the anguish until it becomes thoroughly familiar. Then, and only then, can it be accepted as part of life." (p.45). What Kolf does not tell us is that others have analyzed Lindemann's work and found that many of his conclusions were restricted to those who have experienced a premature loss. To be sure, there is a grieving process, but it is far more individualized than Kolf or Lindemann would have us believe.

So, is there anything worthwhile in *When Will I Stop Hurting?* What little good is in this book can also be found in Jehu Burton's book. Kolf's book is an attempt to bring comfort to nominal religious types. It is not an explicitly Christian book and contains more secular psychology than Scripture. I would be remiss if I did not warn the readers of *Clarion* to stay away from this book. This is because when we are grieving, we are not especially discerning.

Grief is hard. Our Christian faith helps us through it. One of the beautiful things about the faith is the resources that are available in the form of books. Books, when they are based on Scripture, can be God's tools for healing and growth. But they can also be Satan's subtle tools to lead us away from the apostolic Christian faith. We've seen an example of each in this article. So, if you're grieving the loss of a loved one (especially a tragic, unexpected loss), let me encourage you to search out *Trusting God through Tears*. In this special book, you'll find the familiar comfort of Lord's Day One. C

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## Press Release of the Meeting of the Combined Committees of the Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches to Propose a Common Church Order

**December 11-12, 2002 at the United Reformed Church of Dutton, MI**

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

Dr. Kloosterman opened the meeting with a brief meditation on Luke 1: 39-46 and prayer. Motions to appoint Dr. Kloosterman as chairman and Rev. Sikkema as recorder of the minutes of this meeting were adopted. Mr. Nordeman was appointed to prepare the press release.

An agenda and timetable were adopted. The agenda included a presentation of a summary of the labours of the URC committee, a presentation of a summary of the labors of the CanRC committee, discussion and adoption of a modus operandi and its implementation, and the adoption of minutes and press release. It was decided to make the most use of available time by meeting in the evening as well.

Dr. Kloosterman shared with the meeting the mandate that the committee had received from the Fourth Synod of the URCNA, Escondido 2001:

- a. That the current Church Orders of the two federations be evaluated in the light of the Scriptural and confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Dort CO.
- b. That the CO committee work together with a Canadian Reformed CO committee to develop suitable and agreeable adaptation[s] of the Church Order of Dort, retaining and maintaining its principles, structure and essential provisions.

He then explained how the committee had worked with this mandate and the

resulting proposals for a church order, having taken into consideration the Scriptures-based foundational principles for Reformed church government.

Dr. DeJong in a similar fashion gave an overview of the activities of the CanRC committee and the mandate this committee had received from Synod Neerlandia 2001:

1. To work closely with the committee re church order appointed by the URCNA synod.
2. To evaluate the differences between the current church orders of the federations in the light of the Scriptural and confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Church Order of Dort.
3. To propose a common church order in the line of the Church Order of Dort
4. To keep the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity updated on the progress.
5. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

It became clear that the respective mandates are very similar in that the differences between the current church orders of the federations are to be evaluated in the light of the Scriptural and confessional principles, and to propose a common church order maintaining the principles, structure and essential provisions of the Church Order of Dort. Both committees had done extensive work in mapping the various church orders, including the Church Order of Dort, to facilitate this evaluation. To clarify terminology used, it is understood that when speaking of the Church Order of Dort we refer to the original Church Order of 1618 and the adopted version by the CRC in 1914 in its English translation (1920).

It was agreed to work as one committee to develop a draft for a common church order with a single set of minutes and press releases. However, the meeting also recognized that in this process the occasional need for one of the sub-committees to confer privately might arise. While both committees had

prepared a draft proposal for a common church order, the meeting adopted a motion to use the Church Order as adopted by the CRC in 1914 as a starting point, and to compare it to the proposals from both sub-committees. The respective mandates used words that this be “a common church order maintaining the principles, structure and essential provisions of the Church Order of Dort.” This, however, was not interpreted to mean a slavish following of each article, its wording and sequence in the church order.

The first item in this effort was a discussion on the need for, and place of an introduction in a church order. The CanRC introduction, as recommended by General Synod Lincoln 1992, provides an overview of the history of this church order. In the URCNA church order the introduction focuses more on a declaration of beliefs and the biblical basis for a church order. The URC church order also includes a section “Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government.” The URC committee considers these foundational principles to be fundamental. While specific wording could be revised or improved on, the principles as based on Holy Scriptures must remain. Although adopted by an earlier Synod, the final status of these Principles among the churches has yet to be established. They currently read as follows:

### Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government

1. The church is the possession of Christ, who is the Mediator of the New Covenant  
Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27
2. As Mediator of the New Covenant, Christ is the Head of the church.  
Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24; Colossians 1:18
3. Because the church is Christ’s possession and He is its Head, the principles governing the church are not a matter of human preference, but of divine revelation.  
Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:18

4. The universal church possesses a spiritual unity in Christ and in the Holy Scriptures.  
Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Timothy 3:15; 2 John 9
5. The Lord gave no permanent universal, national or regional offices to his church. The office of elder (presbyter/episkopos) is clearly local in authority and function; thus Reformed church government is Presbyterian, since the church is governed by elders, not by broader assemblies.  
Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; Titus 1:5
6. In its subjection to its Heavenly Head, the local church is governed by Christ from heaven, by means of his Word and Spirit, with the keys of the kingdom which He has given it for that purpose; and it is not subject to rule by sister churches who, with it, are subject to the one Christ.  
Matthew 16:19; Acts 20:28-32; Titus 1:5
7. Federative relationships do not belong to the essence or being of the church; rather, they serve the well-being of the church. However, even though the churches stand distinctly next to one another, they do not thereby stand disconnectedly alongside one another. Entrance into and departure from a federative relationship is strictly a voluntary matter.  
Acts 15:1-35; Romans 15: 25-27; Colossians 4-16; Titus 1:5; Revelation 1:11, 20
8. The exercise of a federative relationship is possible only on the basis of unity in faith and in confession.  
1 Corinthians 10:14-22; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 4:16-17
9. Member churches meet together in consultation to guard against human imperfections and to benefit from the wisdom of a multitude of counselors in the broader assemblies. The decision of such assemblies derives their authority from their conformity to the Word of God.  
Proverbs 11:14; Acts 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 13:9-10; 2 Timothy 3:16-17
10. In order to manifest our spiritual unity, local churches should seek the broadest possible contacts with other like-minded churches for their mutual edification and as an effective witness to the world.  
John 17:21-23; Ephesians 4:1-6
11. The church is mandated to exercise its ministry of reconciliation by proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth.  
Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21
12. Christ cares for his church through the office-bearers whom He chooses.  
Acts 6:2-3; 1 Timothy 3:1,8; 5:17
13. The Scriptures encourage a thorough theological training for the ministers of the Word.  
1 Timothy 2:14-16; 3:14; 4:1-5
14. Being the chosen and redeemed people of God, the church, under the supervision of the elders, is called to worship Him according to the scriptural principles governing worship.  
Leviticus 10:1-3; Deuteronomy 12:29-32; Psalm 95:1,2,6; Psalm 100:4; John 4:24; 1 Peter 2:9
15. Since the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, it is called through the teaching ministry to build up the people of God in faith.  
Deuteronomy 11:19; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 2:2; 3:16-17
16. Christian discipline, arising from God's love for his people, is exercised in the church to correct and strengthen the people of God, to maintain the unity and the purity of the church of Christ, and thereby bring honor and glory to God's name.  
1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:13; Hebrews 12:7-11
17. The exercise of Christian discipline is first of all a personal duty of every child of God, but when discipline by the church becomes necessary, it must be exercised by the elders of the church, the bearers of the keys of the kingdom.  
Matthew 18:15-20; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:13; 1 Peter 5:1-3

After an extensive discussion the meeting reached a consensus that the introduction of the proposed common church order should include: 1) a historical background, 2) the scriptural and confessional basis, 3) foundational principles, and 4) headings of the four sections of the church order. Rev. Scheuers will prepare a draft introduction for discussion at a future meeting.

Much time was spent discussing the principle of "jurisdiction." This is an area where both federations have distinct views colored by tradition as well as recent experiences. The author-

ity of the elders and minister is unquestionably one given to the church by the Lord. But what authority do broader assemblies have in the churches? Language that is mutually acceptable must be found before articles that involve jurisdiction can be formulated. These articles must avoid language such as "jurisdiction over," but should convey words and thoughts of "original authority," "derived authority," and "delegated authority." The respective committees will give more thought to this subject before it is dealt with again at a future meeting.

Agreement was reached on wording of Art 1: "The purpose of the church order," and Art 2: "The three offices." At this point it was decided to deal with subsequent articles without numbering them. Their proper sequence within the church order will be determined later. Agreement was reached on part of the articles dealing with the duties and the lawful calling of the ministers of the Word. Also provisional agreement was reached on articles dealing with ministers being bound to a particular church, and ministers coming without a congregation from another federation. The need today for an article dealing with "Exceptional Gifts" (Dort Article 8) received much discussion. The individual committees will also consider this article before it is dealt with again at a future meeting. Provisional agreement was reached on articles dealing with provisions for the care of the minister and the retirement of the minister.

The last hour of the second day was used to review the agenda for the next meeting. In the mean time the respective committees will carefully study the various church orders, and be prepared to discuss the issues of jurisdiction, exceptional gifts, and the need for regional synods. The next meeting will take place D.V. February 13 and 14, 2003 at the URC of Dutton, MI, this being the more central location.

Appreciation was expressed to the Dutton URC for its hospitality and the exceptional help its secretary was able to give to the committee. Dr. Kloosterman, in his closing remarks, stated his thankfulness to the Lord for the brotherly manner in which the committee could proceed with its work. He wished that the churches of both federations would have seen and heard the fraternity and camaraderie so present in the discussions and deliberations. To God alone be the praise and glory.

*Gerard J. Nordeman*