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# Clarion

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**PROMOTED TO GLORY?**





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# Promoted to Glory?

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*If we want to speak of promotion, then it is found  
by grace, through faith, in Christ alone*

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Now and then in an obituary I come across the expression that a deceased person has been “promoted” to glory. This formulation mostly makes me feel a bit uneasy. Understand well, I do not automatically consider anyone who uses this expression to be guilty of perpetrating a heresy. But especially at a death bed, a funeral, or a graveside we want to be accurate in the usage of our words.

It can very well be that the deceased person led an exemplary life or persevered in great trials. Are we not allowed at the death of such a loved one to use the stirring words: *promoted to glory*? Why would this make anyone feel uneasy? Is this not rather a beautiful testimony? What about people who are not buried with such applause? Are they not promoted?

We should note that it is not a *biblical* notion. I do not read anywhere that a dead person was promoted to glory. We also note that in Lord’s Day 22 of the Heidelberg Catechism it says that when we die our soul *immediately* goes to be with our Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is not my problem either, for I accept and teach without any reservation what we confess in Lord’s Day 22. I simply have some concerns about the word “promoted.”

## Only or Lord Jesus Christ

This becomes even more important when we realize that the notion of promotion is really only applied to Jesus Christ, our Lord. I think here of a passage in the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Philippians. About our Lord Jesus we read in Philippians 2:9 that “he *humbled* himself even unto the death on a cross and that God therefore *exalted* him to the highest place and gave him a name that is above every name.”

When we speak about promotion, we speak about our Lord and Saviour. This is of the first importance. No one will be “promoted” as the Lord Jesus is, for his exaltation is above all other being in whatever shape, place, or form. No one has served as he did, and no one will be exalted as he is. We may think that this speaks for itself, but it doesn’t always.

It is true that in Christ and through him we may also look to heaven with full confidence that we will be glorified. But there is a caveat. “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:11). We shall not claim a place of honour, but we may receive it from our heavenly Lord.

The Lord is gracious. With respect to his faithful servants, he says, “Well done, good and faithful servant, come and share in your master’s happiness” (Matt 25:21). The joy and honour in which we will share is freely given to us through Jesus Christ. It is not *our* happiness but the *master’s* happiness. If we want to speak of promotion, then it is found by grace, through faith, in Christ alone.

## The Salvation Army

Sometimes it is beneficial to consider the *origin* of an expression, not to add criticism but to further clarify it. The expression “promoted to glory” finds its origin in the ranks of the Salvation Army. It is mostly attributed to Herbert Booth, the son of founder General William Booth and of his wife Catharine Booth. It is found first in the Salvation Army’s news publication “The War Cry” (late 1882), used by Herbert Booth at the occasion of the burial of his mother. *The War Cry*, by the way, is in its 135<sup>th</sup> year of publication and very early issues are collectible. I am

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Issue 21 begins with an editorial from Rev. Klaas Stam. He is discussing the phrase "promoted to glory." Does this perhaps suggest something we do not mean to say? After all, he writes, my salvation does not depend on me.

Continuing a series from the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad, this time we have an article from Rev. Anthon Souman, "Your Sister in Indonesia." There is also an article from the church in London, ON reporting on their farewell to Rev. Reuben Bredenhof and family.

Throughout this issue we have regular columns such as Clippings on Politics and Religion, Treasures New and Old, Education Matters, You Asked, and Ray of Sunshine. There are also several press releases.

*Laura Veenendaal*

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always searching for collectible items like “The War Cry,” so if you have the 1882 memorial edition, let’s negotiate.

The notion of being promoted to glory comes from statement no. 9 of The Salvation Army’s official creed, “We believe that continuance in a state depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.” Note the words “depends on.” If you do not have the required obedient faith sometimes, you can be *demoted*.

Your glorification (the eternal state) depends on your efforts. This is a typical Arminian thought. You can easily fall back and be demoted! You are never assured of being saved in this life. This is the message of The War Cry. If you sometimes think that I am too militant, check out the war cry. My cry is a feeble voice cut off by the wind.

Please do not think that Klaas has entirely gone off his rocker. Now he’s bashing a fine, upstanding and charitable organization like Sally Ann! Please be kind to me, I am doing nothing of the sort. The Salvation Army is one of the western world’s greatest service organizations and there is much to be appreciated here. I always donate to the Christmas Kettle collection fund. But when we take an outfit seriously we are allowed to ask some pertinent questions, *como?*

### The perseverance of the saints

We do have the *Canons of Dort*. These are non-negotiable. The fifth head of doctrine is about the perseverance of the saints. There we confess that “God is faithful

and powerfully confirms them [the saints, the elect] in the grace once conferred upon them and powerfully preserves them in that grace *to the end*!” Even though they sometimes fall into serious sins, God will not permit his elect to be lost. What keeps us standing is the grace of God, which is *sovereign*. God does not depend on us, but we may be assured of his preservation. We are sure of this preservation, and know that it is powerfully and un-failingly effective. This is the certainty of faith.

My salvation now and eternally *never depends* on me. I almost broke out in a song, “Stand Up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross.” That’s what the Canons of Dort do: stand up for the Lord Jesus. The Canons also explain that this doctrine of sovereign and free grace is abundantly revealed in Scripture, yet the flesh does not understand it, Satan hates it, the world ridicules it and heretics attack it. Wow!

Salvation does not depend on me but it does *involve* me. This certainty does not make believers proud and complacent. It is rather the true root of humility, child-like reverence, genuine godliness, endurance in every struggle, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering, in the confession of the truth, and lasting joy in God. It also is an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works.

Actually this is really the true comfort of any believer. Put all you want in the Christmas kettle. But do not take one line out of your confession. C





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# Save Me For I Am Yours

***“Save me, for I am yours.”*** (Psalm 119:94)

This short statement is a prayer that rests in God’s sovereignty and grace. The psalmist is really saying, “I belong to you LORD. I am yours and you are mine. Save me from what is harming me.” He identifies himself as the Lord’s and that is the basis for his prayer. He would have been overwhelmed by his situation if he did not have the delight and comfort of being keenly aware of his relationship with the Maker of heaven and earth. Within that relationship – what God calls his covenant – he knows and experiences God’s love and responds to that love. He knows who God is, he knows God has spoken, he knows God has acted in history and in his life, and he knows that even though he goes through incredible pain and sorrow he can trust in the God to whom he belongs. That deep-seated awareness and confidence underpins his prayer: Save me, for I am yours.

In Jesus Christ our confidence in our relationship with God is unspeakably strengthened and deep-

ened. Through Jesus we know even more about God’s covenant faithfulness and his love toward us, and we can also rest in the knowledge that our side of the relationship – our response to God and his love – is secure in Jesus Christ. We are right with God because of what Jesus Christ did for us. Nothing can separate us from the love of God through Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:39)! We can go through all of life resting in our covenant relationship with God, confident in his sovereign power and grace.

The Reformation was about recovering this gospel of God’s sovereignty and his grace and turning away from a reliance on human ability and a theological system of earned salvation. We see God saving his church. However, the danger for us today is that we consign that recovery of the gospel to 500 years ago and not realize that it is happening now, and that it needs to happen within us. When we look around us here in Canada, but also abroad,

we see a hunger for a deeper understanding of the gospel. God is doing something right now and it is something we can pray for and participate in. Don’t simply long for the great days of the sixteenth century – long to see what God is doing right now. But don’t stop there. Look at yourself and be sure to recover that gospel of God’s sovereignty and grace in your own life. Recover that wonder of our Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, Renewer, and how he has loved such broken sinners as we are, and pray that he will continue to break you and remake you. We are always being re-formed by the power of the Holy Spirit after the image of Jesus Christ – that is the gospel. Embrace God’s reformation of the church in the sixteenth century, embrace God’s reformation of the church today, and embrace God’s reformation of your heart as well. The church has prayed, “Save me, for I am yours.” Let that be our prayer as well. **C**

## For Further Study

Reformation begins with an understanding of God’s sovereign power and his grace, both in the church and in our lives. In what parts of your life do you find most room for growth in your understanding of God’s sovereignty and grace? Find those places and let the light of who God is and what he has done shine there and be reformed after the image of Jesus Christ.

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# Your Sister in Indonesia



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## Muslim country

Indonesia is known as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. The Republic of Indonesia has a population of over 255 million people. It is estimated that eighty-seven percent of the population is Muslim. In 2010 Christians made up almost ten percent of the population; seven percent Protestant and 2.9% Roman Catholic. Indonesia is divided into thirty-four provinces. One of those provinces is Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) and the three major islands in this province are West-Timor, Sumba, and Flores. The capital of this province is Kupang in West-Timor.

## History

Since 2010, the Canadian and American Reformed Churches have had a sister church in Indonesia: the GGRI-NTT. This doesn't mean there weren't Reformed churches in Indonesia before that. In fact, there are several Reformed churches and we have contacts with some of them. If you read the report of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to General Synod Dunnville, you will find several names or abbreviations and it may be quite confusing for many to keep track of all the different churches. Later on I will write a bit more about other churches with which we have contact.

Indonesia is a former Dutch colony and the Dutch Reformed churches have been doing mission work in many parts of this country. After the Second World War, Indonesia became independent. If you ask an Indonesian, he will say it was in 1945. If you ask a Dutchman he will probably mention 1948. That is because right after the Second World War several movements in Indonesia started the fight for independence, but it was not until 1948 that the Queen of The Netherlands signed the law that

gave Indonesia official independence from The Netherlands. That already is an indication that the separation from The Netherlands did not go very peacefully. It also made mission work difficult from time to time. Still, our Dutch sister churches did take up the mission work in Indonesia again. The church in Zwolle sent missionary S.P.J. Goossens to Sumba. Rev. Goossens was later suspended and dismissed by the church of Zwolle, which led to a split in the mission churches in Sumba. Some churches remained faithful to Rev. Goossens and were called the Bebas Churches (Free Churches). The other churches remained in contact with the church in Zwolle. After the split in 1967 in The Netherlands, the Bebas churches with Rev. P.P. Goossens (son of S.P.J. Goossens) received support mainly from the Dutch Reformed Churches (Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken).

In 1975 the Reformed Churches in Sumba federated into the GGRI-NTT. GGRI stands for Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia, which means: Reformed Churches of Indonesia. In two other provinces Reformed Churches also federated: Kalimantan Barat and Papua. These churches also chose the name GGRI and each federation added the abbreviation of the name of the province behind the name GGRI. So the churches in NTT became GGRI-NTT and in the other two provinces respectively GGRI-KalBar and GGRI-Papua. In 2012 these three federations came together in their first National Synod and decided to become one national federation, with the name GGRI. When we use the name GGRI then we mean the national federation, and if we use the name GGRI with the addition NTT, then we speak about the Reformed Churches in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur or NTT.





*Rev. Souman meeting with the deputies of the GGRI-NTT in July 2015*

### **Present situation**

At the moment, the GGRI-NTT have around 7,000 members, twenty instituted churches, and several mission posts. In total there are seventy-five places where the Word is being preached. Over the past four years the membership has been quite stable, with maybe a slight increase. The number of instituted churches increased with one over those four years, but the total number of preaching points has seen a slight decrease from seventy-nine to seventy-five. Preaching points can be mission posts, but also “branches” of instituted churches. Those branches are in fact local congregations which are under the care of a neighbouring consistory because the offices could not yet be instituted at that place.

In the past the GGRI-NTT had a seminary which was set up by the Dutch missionaries, but it closed twenty years ago. In 2007 the GGRI-NTT decided to restart this school again and at the moment there are twenty-four

students being trained at this seminary. This school is not only for the GGRI-NTT; the GGRI-Papua and the GGRI-KalBar also decided to send their students to Sumba. In the past this seminary was situated in Waimarangu, but it moved to the big city of Waingapu. There a building is being rented for this purpose. With the support of the Dutch and Australian sister churches, the GGRI-NTT hope to build their own building sometime in the near future.

### **National federation**

The Canadian and American Reformed Churches accepted the GGRI-NTT as sister churches in 2010, but in 2012 the GGRI-NTT became part of the GGRI. The GGRI-Papua has about 16,000 members and the GGRI-KalBar around 6,000, so the new federation has a total of approximately 29,000 members. Synod Carman 2013 did not have sufficient information to decide to enter into a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GGRI. Synod mandated the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to gather as much information as is needed about the national GGRI to come to a good recommendation for General Synod 2016.

In Indonesia the modern means of communication are not as widespread as in North America. This, as well as the large distance between these three provinces, does not make it easy to collect this information. Therefore the CRCA mainly relied on information which was received from the GGRI-NTT, as well as our sister churches in Australia. At the moment there are a few questions and concerns left, which may be answered at the next national synod which will be held in 2016 in Sumba.

### **GGRC**

The GGRI-NTT has an official relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with another church federation in the same province, the Calvinist Reformed Churches (GGRC), which are mainly in West Timor and Rote Island. Shortly after the Second World War, the GGRC left the large Christian Evangelical Church (GMIT), which is the dominant church in the province. During the decades that followed they were searching, until they came into contact with the missionaries of our Dutch sister churches who were working in Sumba. That was about twenty-five years ago. Rev. Eli Fangidae, who was a leading minister



*One of the graduates from STAKRI*

in the GGRC, requested that several young men from the GGRC would be allowed to attend the Theological School which the Dutch missionaries had set up in Sumba. Two of these young men were the brothers Yonson and Edwer Dethan. Most of the ministers who are serving in the GGRC as well as in the GGRI-NTT at the moment have been trained at this school.

The GGRC also adopted a church order which was based on the Church Order of Dort and is very much like the church order of the GGRI-NTT and also the Canadian Reformed Churches. However, over the past twenty years the GGRC have been struggling greatly to implement this church order in their church life and are still having a hard time abiding by it. That is the main reason that several synods of the Canadian Reformed Churches have decided to wait with accepting the GGRC as sister churches. At the moment the CRCA continues to encourage the GGRC to apply the rules which they have in the church order and is monitoring the developments.

The GGRI-NTT and the GGRC have been in contact with each other for over twenty-five years now. Although their ministers have been trained at the same seminary in Sumba and they both have the same church order, there is no real progress in the process of becoming one federation. In fact, at the moment there is hardly any contact between these two federations.

### **Mission work of Smithville**

In 2003 the church of Smithville started mission work in West Timor by calling Rev. Edwer Dethan and sending him there as missionary. There was no relationship between the GGRI-NTT and the Canadian Reformed Churches yet. Rev. Edwer Dethan came from the GGRC and the mission work started in the proximity of GGRC churches and with the help of GGRC members. The intent was therefore to work together with the GGRC. Once the GGRC became sister churches with the Canadian Reformed Churches the mission churches which would be established could join the GGRC. However, as just mentioned, the GGRC are still struggling to implement the Reformed church order which makes it difficult for the mission churches to join the GGRC.

At the moment there are nine churches instituted as the result of the mission work and if the LORD continues to bless the work, it is to be expected that several more will follow in the near future. In order to train brothers for the ministry of the Word in these churches, a Theological School has been established in Kupang (STAKRI). This school is not only training students for the ministry of the Word but also teachers. It has just under 100 students, about twenty percent studying for the ministry and eighty percent for teacher. The school received full accreditation from the Indonesian government, which means that the diplomas and certificates are all officially recognized by the government and are valid throughout all of Indonesia. Reformed teachers are even allowed and do actually teach at public schools and have a great opportunity there to spread the gospel. This school and the work being done by this school has been tremendously blessed and is a great support for the mission work. Also the GGRC was invited to send their students to this school and call their ministers from those who have been trained at this school. However, so far this has not happened and it is very unfortunate to see that the GGRC recently decided to call and ordain three



ministers from totally different seminaries in Indonesia. This is not a good development for the Reformed character of the GGRC or for unity between the Reformed churches in the province.

The Theological School for the training for the ministry which was set up by the GGRI-NTT is on the Island of Sumba, which is only about an hour flying from Kupang (or a day traveling by boat). So far this school has not received government accreditation. For this and other reasons the Canadian Reformed Churches, together with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, have encouraged the GGRI to work together with STAKRI in Kupang. If both the GGRI and the GGRC work together with STAKRI, this school could become a great encouragement for church unity.

## Conclusion

Summarizing the situation in the province of NTT: since 2010 we have the GGRI-NTT as sister churches, mainly on the islands Sumba and Sabu with a Theological School in Sumba; since 2003 the church of Smithville

has been doing mission work in West Timor with the result that nine churches have been instituted so far and in 2006 a Theological School started operating in Kupang. Since the GGRC are sister churches of the GGRI-NTT, the Canadian Reformed Churches have been maintaining contact with the GGRC in the hope that a sister church relationship will be possible in the future.

In a predominantly Muslim country it is important that these churches all work together to maintain and spread the Christian faith and the Reformed heritage. So far there has not been much cooperation, but it is our prayer that this will grow so that all these Reformed churches may share their blessings and help and encourage each other in the important task of preaching God's Word in a world that lives in darkness. Christ gathers his church also in Indonesia. May he bless our brothers and sisters in Indonesia so that they may remain faithful to him and that his name be preached also there among a mainly Muslim population. We know that God's power is made perfect in weakness. C



*Yerusalem Church:  
the first church which was instituted  
through the mission work of Smithville*

# A Pilgrim Farewell to Rev. Reuben Bredenhof Family

On May 24, 2015 the Pilgrim Canadian Reformed congregation of London assembled together for worship with Rev. Reuben Bredenhof as her minister for the last time. Rev. Bredenhof assured us with the words of Hebrews 6 that although change is constant, we have hope. Paul exhorted the believers to not lose hope but to place it in God



who, when he gave his divine promise, confirmed it by an oath. This oath he swore by himself since there is no greater Truth. It is this God, who is unchanging in his purpose, who is our hope. As a church in the world, we are like a ship at sea and at times there is a gathering storm but God does not leave us rudderless when our minister leaves. Pilgrim has nine faithful elders and deacons but even more importantly we have a steady anchor, Jesus Christ, “our hope that enters into the inner place behind the veil.” In Christ we have a sure hope, firmly placed. Our anchor links us to God in heaven. Through Christ we have access to *all* the riches and power of God and he is unchanging in his resolve to bring Pilgrim’s needs to the Father. The congregation responded with singing Hymn 71, “That hope must soften all our sorrow. Come fellow pilgrims, heads then high.”

Following the worship service, delegates from neighbouring churches in Classis Ontario West (Kerwood,

Chatham, Glanbrook, Ancaster, and Blessings) and from Cornerstone URC in London thanked Rev. Bredenhof for his faithful preaching and counsel within our churches and Rebecca was thanked for her musical and committee work at Covenant Christian School.

Afterwards the congregation assembled in the fellowship hall to enjoy a potluck dinner, the last of many we have shared with the Bredenhofs. Being duly nourished for both body and soul, we again assembled in the auditorium for a farewell program. For the past five years Rev. Bredenhof and Rebecca had worked diligently among our congregation and they, along with their girls Abigail, Sasha, Kyra, and Tori, had endeared themselves







to our members so with reluctance we presented our farewells. Each society came forward with various memories, Aussie facts and trivia, well wishes, and words of advice as the Bredenhofs transition to life down under. The Pilgrim singers serenaded us with a version of Waltzing Matilda and they spoke for all of us when they sang "God Be With You Til we Meet Again." Council expressed their deep appreciation to Rev. Bredenhof for his faithful and fruitful work of preaching, teaching, and visiting among our congregation, acknowledging with thankfulness God's provision for us and trusting that he will again provide us with a shepherd in due time.

It was then time for the Bredenhofs to extend their farewells. The girls expressed their mixed feelings by means of poetry: joy for the friendships they had in London, sadness for leaving them behind, and excitement for the prospect of new things. Reuben and Rebecca expressed their thankfulness for the bonds of faith and friendship that they were able to enjoy in their work and with their family and assured us that he who is faithful will continue to care for us all on our pilgrimage wherever we go.

The bonds of faith that unite us are greater than the distance that separates us. God be with you until we meet again! C





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# The Refugee Crisis

Even before the current refugee crisis, the make-up of Europe's population has been undergoing historic changes. Soeren Kern writing on the Gatestone Institute website (August 31, 2015) noted, for example, how Germany is undergoing what he called a Muslim demographic revolution. It is being propelled by a flood of immigration unprecedented since World War II. A record 800,000 migrants and refugees, almost one percent of Germany's total population, are expected for 2015, four times as many as in 2014. Almost half of those arriving are economic migrants, not refugees fleeing war zones. Kern noted that according to projections, Germany will have almost six million Muslims giving it the highest Muslim population in Europe. Critics charge that German officials "are ignoring the long-term consequences of taking in so many migrants from the Middle East and North Africa. . . . The surge in Muslim immigration will accelerate the Islamization of Germany, a process that is already well under way." Islam is the fastest growing religion in Germany and an increasing number of churches are converted into mosques. One consequence of this reality, as Kern noted in an earlier article (August 1) for the Gatestone Institute, is that social tensions are rising and in the case of the industrial city of Duisburg, there

are areas of lawlessness that are becoming "no-go" zones for police, areas where native Germans fear to go.

The situation is no better in the other two major European nations, the United Kingdom and France, where growing "no-go" zones have been documented. There is a well-founded concern that current trends point to an eventual Islamization of Europe.

## A dilemma

In light of this reality, what is a Western nation to do when confronted with the humanitarian disaster of millions of Muslim war refugees in the Middle East? Should they all simply be admitted? It should be noted that a country has the right to seek to maintain its own identity. God ordained the existence of nations (Gen 11:1-9; Acts 17:26). As I have tried to make clear in chapter 6 of *God and Government* (2011), a nation can take steps to protect its identity by the way it admits immigrants of different religious and cultural backgrounds. There is no room to discuss all that here, but the point is that it would be ill-advised for any Western nation to open the flood gates of Islamic immigrants simply on humanitarian grounds. There are other weighty factors to consider as well. Although Western countries, including Canada, should continue to do what they can within reason, the long-term well-being of the host nation needs to be taken into account as well. For example, Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, was within his rights when he voiced concern about the Muslim influx threatening Europe's historic Christian identity. He has been severely criticized for his politically incorrect stance but his worry about the growing destabilizing influx of followers of Islam is valid.

It seems that it is considered intolerable in the politically correct mainstream media to criticize Islam, but Christianity is fair game for criticism and even discrimination. In this connection a disturbing trend is emerging in several Western nations.





## Discrimination against Christian refugees?

Raymond Ibrahim, writing on the Gatestone Institute website on September 6, 2015, showed that in far too many cases the United States and the West generally are victimizing Christian refugees. “Since the start of 2015, 4,205 Muslims have been admitted into the U.S. from Iraq, but only 727 Christians. For every one Christian the U.S. grants asylum, it grants asylum to five or six Muslims – even though Christians, as persecuted ‘infidel’ minorities, are in much greater need of sanctuary, not to mention more assimilating to American culture than Muslims.” Even after they have managed to reach the U.S., Christians face enormous challenges.

In San Diego “a group of 20 Christians who fled the Islamic State in Iraq have been imprisoned indefinitely, some since February, at the Otay Detention Facility in San Diego, even though they have local family members and Christian leaders who vouch for them. . . . Some have been imprisoned for over seven months with no hearing date for release even set.” According to a spokesperson from the Institute on Religion and Democracy: “This follows the disturbing pattern that we have seen from the State Department of ignoring the particular targeting of Christians by ISIS while giving preferential treatment for asylum to other groups with expedited processing – like Somalis, Iraqis, and Syrians, some of whom could very well be members of jihadist movements.”

Similar trends appear in the United Kingdom. Ibrahim noted that “church leaders accuse David Cameron of ‘turning his back’ on Christians facing genocide in Syria and Iraq by failing to grant them refuge in the UK – even though thousands of Muslims have been allowed entry.” Indeed, “Lord Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, signed a petition calling on the UK government to ‘welcome Christian refugees and give them priority as asylum seekers,’ emphasizing that ‘Syrian and Iraqi Christians are being butchered, tortured and enslaved.’” Ibrahim concludes that “most European governments, especially those that are Christian explicitly or implicitly, are failing in their duty to look after their fellow Christians in their hour of need.”

Remarkably, this is not necessarily true of east European countries. Along with countries like Poland and the Czech Republic, “Slovakia recently went so far as to say it will only accept Christians when it takes in Syrian refugees under an EU relocation scheme. The Slavic na-

tion argues that ‘Muslims would not be accepted because they would not feel at home,’ including because there are no mosques in Slovakia.” There is wisdom in the approach taken by these nations.

In this connection, a question arises. What are the Muslim nations doing with the refugee problem?

## The response of Muslim nations

Tarek Fatah, founder of the Muslim Canadian Congress, made some noteworthy observations in his *Toronto Sun* column on September 3. He was commenting on the death of Alan Kurdi, a three-year old refugee boy, who along with others drowned in the Adriatic Sea when their flimsy boat sank en route to a Greek island. This tragedy ignited world-wide outrage at the plight of Middle East refugees. “If there is anyone who is guilty of this crime [the death of this boy], it is Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UN, all those who have refused to embrace hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing war.” He notes that these refugees could easily be accommodated in Turkey and Saudi Arabia. “Strictly from a management perspective and common sense, Saudi Arabia has the land, the resources and lies in the vicinity of the crisis. The refugees and the Saudis speak the same language and settlement and integration could happen sooner and at a fraction of the cost.” But why are these options not publicly discussed by politicians and the media? The answer is that it is not politically correct and you may alienate Canadian Muslims, an important consideration during an election campaign now being waged in Canada. As Fatah noted, neither of the two main opposition parties “dare say a single word against Turkey, Saudi Arabia or even Pakistan for fear of losing the imagined Muslim vote.”

Already at the end of last year (December 5, 2014), Amnesty International had pointed out in a news release that “the six Gulf countries – Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain – have offered zero resettlement places to Syrian refugees. Other high income countries including Russia, Japan, Singapore and South Korea have also offered zero resettlement places.”

As one can see, the current refugee crisis facing Europe is not a simple issue to resolve. The matter is complex and has many causes and aspects. At the same time, it has the potential to transform parts of Europe into Islamic entities and that scenario should give pause to sober long range thinking.





# Antithetical?! Really?! (Part 1 of 2)

Keith Sikkema  
Full-time lecturer at Covenant  
Canadian Reformed Teachers  
College, and secretary for the CCMC  
when its report was prepared.  
[sikkemak@gmail.com](mailto:sikkemak@gmail.com)

In 2003, the Curriculum Coordinator Management Committee (CCMC) of the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies (LCRSS) reported on the curriculum vision it was asked to develop. The report characterized Reformed education as covenantal, confessional, and antithetical, and as sharing a unity of purpose of home, school, and church. Of these four markers, the *antithetical* characteristic drew more than average attention, and was soon rephrased as *recognizing the antithesis*. This two-part article introduces the matter and what was envisioned.

## Antithetical?!

One evening, not long after the CCMC report was published, following a full day of fine presentations at a conference of Reformed educators, and contentedly relaxing with a glass of wine and some cheese, I noticed a few esteemed colleagues looking in my direction, talking and gesturing as if in deliberation, and then sauntering towards me. Without chitchat, they held out the shell, the fuse lit: “*Antithetical!*” Theirs was an incredulous perception that the CCMC report was antithetical to what *they* believed characterized Reformed education. *Antithetical, oh horrors!* I explained what was intended, and how the phrase had been changed. They remained skeptical.

Years later, after outlining the markers to some overseas colleagues, one asked what “antithesis” meant. Another teammate based his explanation on the idealist philosopher Georg Hegel’s (1770-1831) dialectical evolution of truth. Based on his observations, Hegel found that truth, our understanding of reality, evolves. He calls truth the *thesis*. Something conflicting with this thesis he calls the *anti-thesis*. Thesis and antithesis are opposing or dialectic poles, and, in the search for better truth, they must be reconciled for a resulting *synthesis*. For instance, when I was young, it seemed right to eat peppermints in church,

and desirable elsewhere – the thesis. Later, my dentist identified some associated problems – the antithesis. I now held that eating peppermints *in moderation* was acceptable, and reduced my intake – the synthesis. This became my new thesis; a new antithesis could be that declining peppermint in church is rude, and the process of reconciling clashing ideas would rigorously repeat itself again, and again, until the ideal truth was found.

More seriously, at the Synod of Dort, 1618-1619, our fathers humbly accepted scriptural authority and man’s total depravity (thesis). However, “enlightened” thinkers embraced human goodness and abilities – which clashed with scriptural doctrines of depravity, dependence, and need for atonement (antithesis). For a solution, progressive theologians distrusted Scripture, sidelined God, and designed a “modernist” *Liberal Theology* (synthesis), which contributed to the Secession of 1834 and the Doleantie of 1886. The theory of evolution and communism are also linked to such dialectic thinking. If my esteemed colleagues believed that the CCMC report condoned the dialectic evolution of the Truth, they would have been rightly dismayed.

## Neo-Calvinism

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was initially sympathetic to Liberal Theology, but became known, among others, for his “neo-Calvinist” leadership in theology and the 1886 Doleantie, politics, and education. To be brief about Kuyper’s neo-Calvinism, his best known assertion is that *there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: “Mine!”* Considering God’s sovereignty, his “common grace” of restraining the effects of sin, people being made in God’s image, and our society’s technological and cultural advances when compared



to “wild tribes,” Kuyper was positive about progress in fulfilling the cultural mandate. Of course, non-believers would reject God’s authority and revelation, in which Kuyper recognized the *antithesis* as an irreconcilable gulf of enmity between devotion to God and idolatry, between God’s kingdom and the Devil’s power in every sphere of life, without a chance of Hegelian synthesis.

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***If my esteemed colleagues believed that the CCMC report condoned the dialectic evolution of the Truth, they would have been rightly dismayed***

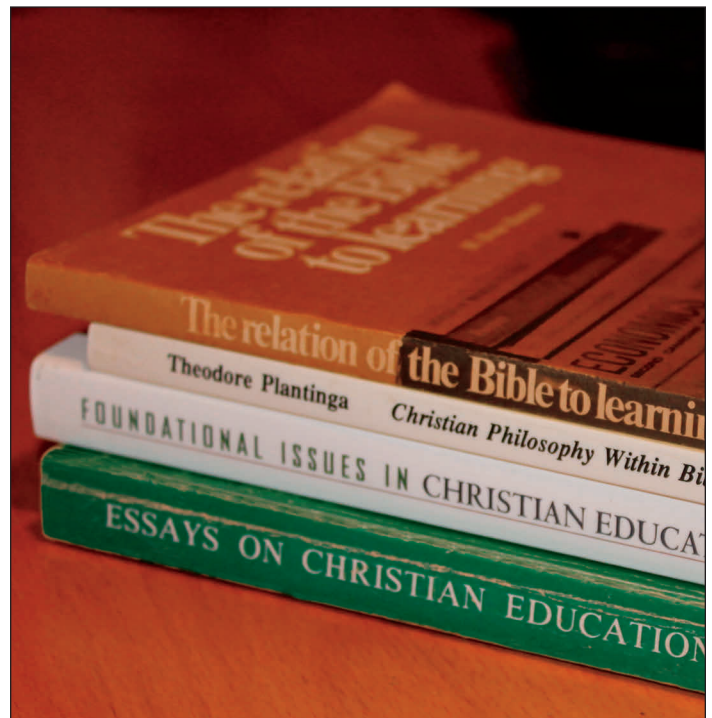
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In Kuyper’s neo-Calvinist system of thinking, *common grace* provided space for people with diverse world-views toward similar goals. Further, his idea of *sphere sovereignty* allowed these different groups (Reformed, Roman Catholic, Socialist, Progressivist, etc.) to each develop independent vertically integrated organizations, “pillars,” for purposes as varied as education, politics, and hospitals. Under his amazing leadership, Dutch society now became socially, educationally, and politically *pillarized*, which, among others, provided a framework for obtaining full recognition and educational funding for each of the pillars by 1917. Remnants of this structure remain today. Neo-Calvinism spread to North America through Kuyper’s own work (e.g., his 1898 *Stone Lectures*) and immigration.

Apart from neo-Calvinism, on both sides of the ocean, there also existed an inward-focused, sometimes pietistic, mindset in people with primarily 1834 *Secession roots*. It stressed private piety of experiencing the gospel in walking with God, biblical and confessional tradition, and an aversion to intellectualism and worldliness. It encouraged withdrawal from, rather than interaction with, secular culture, and fostered reservations about Kuyper’s neo-Calvinism with its 1886 *Doleantie roots*. In education, this led to parochial or semi-parochial schools, strong ties to the Three Forms of Unity, and suspicion of “outside” influences. This was one end of a spectrum of Reformed thought.

At the other end of this spectrum, a neo-Calvinist *common-grace*-dominated approach, sometimes called Positive Calvinism, favoured cooperation and finding common goals with people of different beliefs, with a drive to engage and transform culture. Emphasizing God’s sovereignty as well as his restraint in executing judgment over sin, it noted that all people are made in God’s image, and are capable of some cultural good. This outlook favoured limiting restrictions on school enrolment, embracing new ideas and the fruits of secular science and culture, and using the school for transformative social action to usher in the new creation. Minimizing the antithesis, this view risked assimilation with the culture of the day.

Somewhere between these positions, an *antithesis*-conscious neo-Calvinist mindset stressed the enmity between serving God and idols, and the struggle that runs through everyone’s heart. It encouraged developing scholarship and culture, but with hearts committed to biblical principles. These people could accept the fruit of unbelievers’ labours, but also wanted to be



obedient pilgrims who would withdraw when God's good gifts were abused. This required "antithetical" Christian institutions, such as schools, in which the call for discernment and making God-fearing choices became an important characteristic. My esteemed colleagues would not object to this meaning of "antithetical."

Subsequent to the 1950s influx of Reformed immigrants to North America, Prof. Runner of Calvin College addressed Christian education. Rejecting the neo-Calvinist *National Union of Christian Schools'* (NUCS) promotion of an American blend of cultural assimilation with private piety, Runner led CRC immigrants to stress *cultural transformation* through strong and independent Reformed institutions. In his view, Reformed people should choose the thesis of obedience to God's Word

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### ***Reformed schools do not at all want to be theologically liberal***

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over the anti-thesis of disobedience. *All of life is religion*, he said, and the Word of God must transform all of culture. The anti-thesis was "the difference of response to the Word of God, which, coming into the world as a revealing light for our life (Ps 119:105), effectuates with the sovereignty of its Divine Author an abiding line of division between ways obedient and disobedient (cf. Ps 1, Prov 1, 2)." Humanistic American culture, in which religion was a private matter, was at odds with this anti-thesis (*The Relation of the Bible to Learning*, p. 43). Runner did not reject the neo-Calvinist emphases of cultural transformation and personal relevance. However, the CRC's drift towards accepting theistic evolution, homosexuality, and gender equality in the 1970s and 1980s inevitably affected the schools, and Runner's good students recognized this liberalizing and assimilating trend as *antithetical* to orthodox doctrine. This was the meaning of "*antithetical*" my esteemed colleagues rightly rejected: Reformed schools do not at all want to be theologically liberal.

Finally, as a boomer growing up in a Liberated Reformed Dutch context, "*antithesis*" acquired a neither uncommon, nor universal, but specific sense for me, closely connected as it was to thinking about the true church.

#### **CALLED**

Called by the Bethel United Reformed Church of Brockville, ON and the Cairns ward of the Free Reformed Church of Armadale, WA:

#### **Candidate Randall Visscher**

#### **DECLINED**

Declined the call to the Pilgrim Canadian Reformed Church at London, Ontario and the Providence Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton, Ontario:

#### **Rev. R. Vermeulen**

of Glanbrook, Ontario

### **CHURCH NEWS**

Departing from an antithesis between church and world, the line was drawn between the *true church, us*, and the false church, *them*; everything beyond us was suspect. When my grade 11 Church History teacher, P.K. Keizer, counted the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* (i.e., FRCNA) "in", I doubted his orthodoxy and would never date a girl from *them*. Here, "*antithetical*" meant being against, or wary-of, *those-not-of-the-true-church*. Its meaning implied that a tight connection to the true church was imperative for attaining Christian goals, often cloaked in terms like "ongoing reformation" and "ethical conflict." I will elaborate on that next time.

#### **Summing up**

To call Reformed education "antithetical" was problematic. Hegel saw "truth" evolve in a synthesis of a thesis and an anti-thesis, such as Enlightenment rationalism with scriptural elements in *Liberal Theology*. Kuyper saw the antithesis as the enmity between devotion to God and idolatry; he promoted Christian institutions, but *common grace* allowed cooperation with unbelievers in a *pillarized society*. North-American Reformed immigrants' mind-sets range from piety and withdrawal-from-the-world, to a neo-Calvinism that stresses common grace and societal transformation. Other neo-Calvinists stress upholding biblical principles in view of the antithesis, and will withdraw from cooperation when the principles are compromised. Prof. Runner called Scripture the thesis, and rejecting it the anti-thesis; for him, "antithetical" was to be against Scripture. Finally, I briefly related the "ongoing reformation" notion I grew up with.

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*The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Arthur Kingma [akingma@ech.ca](mailto:akingma@ech.ca)*





## I am thankful for . . .

*“That I am not alone in this world. I have Jesus and other neighbours in my life. Together we can overcome evil. Thanks be to God!”* – Ron DeWitt

*“My family like my nieces and nephews, my Twin Oaks family, and the Anchor Association. I am also thankful for Jesus who paid for my sins on the cross.”* – Derrick VanderHorst

*“I am thankful for all my friends and family. I would like to say God Bless you all!”* – David Rawson

*“Going to church, and singing”* – Nancy Schipper

*“A cup of coffee”* – Fred Ludwig

*“Living in this house (the Beacon Home)”* – Derek Kok

*“When Rolie Ravensbergen takes me out”* – James Buikema

*“Animals”* – Nick Prinzen

*“God giving me the gift of music”* – Jim VanderHieden

*“Wendy my counsellor, and Maria”* – Clarence Zweip

*“God, that he looks after me”* – Paul Dieleman

*“My health”* – Janell Deboer

*“My job on the farm”* – Eddie VanRootselaar

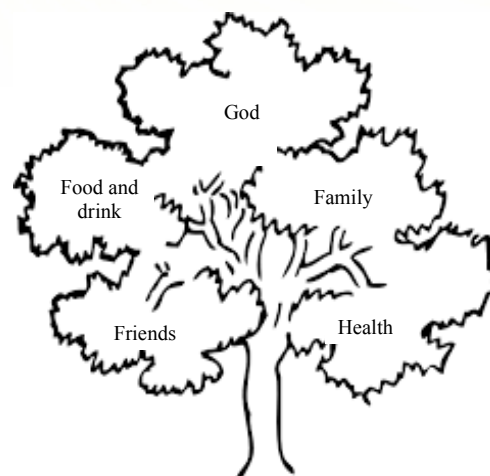
*“The sunshine and food”* – Jason Herrewynen

*“My mom and dad”* – Julie Ostermeier

*“God, staying at home, mom and dad, playing games, and watching funny videos”* – Lars Huigun

Thanksgiving has already come and past us this year, but I thought it would be a good opportunity to reflect on thanksgiving for a moment again. I am sure most of us enjoyed a festive thanksgiving dinner with family or friends and we could reflect on how the Lord has richly blessed each and every one of us.

These statements show us how much we all have to be thankful for. May we all continue to strive to serve the Lord and show him our thankfulness in our everyday lives. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this month’s article.



## November

### 3 WILMA VAN DRONGELEN will be 58

306-33375 Mayfair Avenue, Abbotsford, BC V2S 1P4

Congratulations to you Wilma on your birthday. May our heavenly Father be with you in this new year, and give you an enjoyable day together with your family and friends.

I am working on an updated list of all our contacts. Could I ask everyone to email me their contact information: name, address, phone number, and email address. Thanks!

## A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

*If there are any address or other changes that I need to be aware of please let me know as soon as possible.*

Rachel Vis

731 Lincoln Street, Wellandport, Ontario L0R 2J0  
tom.rachelvis@gmail.com • 905-329-9476





William den Hollander  
Minister emeritus of the  
Bethel Canadian Reformed  
Church of Toronto, Ontario  
[denhollanderw@gmail.com](mailto:denhollanderw@gmail.com)

Q

**When our Saviour cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34b) was our Saviour at that moment hanging on the cross strictly as a human (or in his human nature), or did he also still at that moment maintain his Godly nature? As the Trinity is three Persons, the Trinity can never be missing one. So when Christ cried out this question he seemed to have been removed from the oneness of the Trinity. I hope you can understand what I am aiming at. It is about the best I can do to express my puzzlement about this issue.**

A

It is not surprising that the questioner has difficulty formulating the question, expressing puzzlement about the matter. We are dealing here with the *mystery* indeed of the unity of the two natures of Christ: his human and his divine nature. It seems best, therefore, in coming to an answer to this question, first to let the Scriptures speak. At the same time, up front we have to realize that this is a *mystery* and that we need to *leave it* a mystery! We are dealing here with a matter that must be admitted to be the ultimate end and limit to our human understanding and comprehension.

The Scriptures reveal to us that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is true God and true man; the Immanuel, God with us, in the form of the baby in the manger. During his life on earth he showed himself a true man with all its infirmities, needs, emotions, and limitations; yet, by his actions he also manifested his divine nature in his power over creation, healing the sick, raising the dead, and forgiving sinners. In John 9:6, 7, for instance, he showed himself as true man with human saliva, yet true God with healing power. In John 11:35 he displayed his

true human emotions of grief over the loss of a loved one; yet, in verse 43 he manifested his divine power by raising Lazarus from the dead. In John 10:31 he said, “I and the Father are one,” yet he also said in John 14:28 that the Father is *more than I* (cf. Mark 13:32, He also knows more!). Christ was true God (Col 2:9), and by his divine power rose from the dead (Rom 1:4), yet Colossians 2:12 also says that he *was raised* from the dead (namely, by the power of the Holy Spirit). The *unity* of his two natures shows very much as well in such expressions as used in Acts 20:28, where Paul speaks about God who bought the church with his *own blood*; or in 1 Corinthians 2:8 saying that they crucified [Jesus, true man] the *Lord of glory* [God]!

These are only a few examples to highlight the two natures of the Lord Jesus. Hence, on the basis of these and other examples we confess in Belgic Confession Article 19, However, these two natures are so closely united in one person that they were not even separated by his death. Therefore, what he, when dying, committed into the hands of his Father was a real human spirit that departed from his body. Meanwhile his divinity always remained united with his human nature,



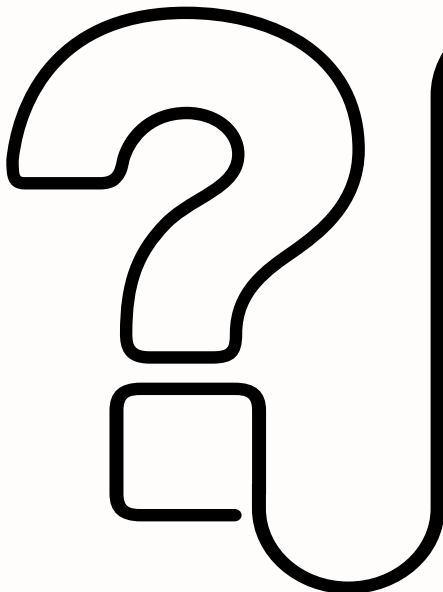
even when he was lying in the grave. And the divine nature always remained in him just as it was in him when he was a little child, even though it did not manifest itself as such for a little while.

Then the conclusion in this article also applies very much to the question stated above: “For this reason we profess him to be true God and true man: true God in order to conquer death by his power. . . .” That was exactly why our Mediator and Redeemer Jesus Christ had to be true God, as we confess in the Heidelberg Catechism: “So that by the power of his divine nature he might bear in his human nature the burden of God’s wrath” (Q/A 17).

It is this truth and reality that we see expressed at the moment of Christ’s exclamation, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” He was experiencing and undergoing as true man in his human nature the god-forsakenness and eternal wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race. The only way he could do so was by the power of his divine nature (LD 6). He bore it for us and in our place, and did so as man! That comes

out clearly in that he cried aloud in his mother tongue, in Aramaic. Though he could speak both, Aramaic and Greek, when he came into crises, was upset or emotional, he used his mother tongue (as we all are inclined to do). From his weak human flesh God the Father took everything away from which it could still have flourished: he took his love away, his mercy, the communion, the comfort of his Spirit, etc., and in the meantime all the temptations of the evil one were coming to him!

The Trinity could not be broken, and God could not die, but with his divine power Jesus had to conquer death; a man only could die. That’s why our Mediator and Redeemer Jesus Christ had to be true God and true man. As we confess in Belgic Confession Article 19: even in the grave (and on the cross, we may add) his divinity was omnipresent. The purpose and intent of those closing sentences of Article 19, however, are only to *confess* the inseparable and wonderful unity of Jesus’ two natures, but certainly not in order to explain or solve in this way the mystery of this unity!



**Is there something  
you’ve been wanting to know?**

**An answer you’ve been looking for?**

**Ask us a question!**

**Please direct questions to Rev. W. denHollander**

**[denhollanderw@gmail.com](mailto:denhollanderw@gmail.com)**

**23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0**

### **Press Release for Classis Contracta, Classis Northern Ontario; held in the Emmanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Guelph. Thursday, August 20, 2015**

Rev. Peter G. Feenstra opened the meeting on behalf of the convening church, Emmanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Guelph. He read Psalm 48 and led in prayer. The credentials were found to be in order, classis was constituted. Appointed officers were for Chairman, Rev. P. Feenstra and for Clerk, Elder B. Niezen.

The Agenda was adopted, the correspondence received and accepted. After examination of the pertinent and necessary documents, the date and time of Rev.

VanderVelde's release and transfer of responsibility was confirmed. Classis Contracta granted honourable release for Rev. VanderVelde from Classis Northern Ontario with date and time to match release from Elora. The chairman expressed thanks and appreciation for the faithful work of Rev. VanderVelde within the classis. Rev. VanderVelde responded in kind, thankful for his experiences and memories, grateful of the cooperation received within classis.

Grand Valley requested Rev. Marc Jagt of Fergus North to be their counsellor and Elora requested that Rev. Jack Moesker be their counsellor. These requests were granted. Elder H. Terpstra closed the meeting in prayer.

*Brian E. Niezen, (clerk at that time)*

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### **Press Release of the Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary held on September 10, 2015**

The Board of Governors met at CRTS in Hamilton, Ontario on September 10, 2015. All the governors were present at the meeting. Rev. R. Aasman opened with the reading of Psalm 113 and prayer.

#### *Memorabilia*

The following brothers and sisters were remembered: Srs. K. Deddens and J. Faber, Dr. J. de Jong and his wife, Dr. N. Gootjes and his wife, Prof. J. Geertsema, Dr. C. Van Dam.

#### *Minutes and agenda*

The minutes of the Board meeting held on Jan. 15, 2015 were adopted. The agenda for the meeting was established.

#### *Receipt of reports-material agenda items:*

- a. Report on Visits to the Lectures at the CRTS on March 24-25, 2015 were received from Rev. R. Aasman and Rev. A. Souman. These reports gave reason for thankfulness since the students are being taught in faithfulness to the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity.
- b. The Key Thrusts and Key Initiatives of the "One Page Strategic Plan for CRTS" were reviewed. One example of a Key Initiative is a committee was tasked with proposing a Satisfaction Survey to be filled out by the

churches. Its proposal was discussed, amended, and adopted. The Committee was mandated to get it sent out as soon as possible with a reminder to church councils that this should be a cooperative effort. A new measure tracking the response rate will be added to the Metrics Report. The goal is to get at least a 50% response rate in the first year. One example of a Key Thrust (3-5 Years) is The Evaluation of the Sabbatical Program spearheaded by Dr. G. Visscher. In considering the issue of sabbatical review, the Board requested that the method of evaluating each sabbatical be documented and presented to the Board at the next meeting. Consideration will be given as to how each sabbatical, and the sabbatical program as a whole, support the Statement of Institutional Purpose and the core values of the Seminary.

- c. The Board approved the Sabbatical proposal of Dr. J. Smith. This is a full sabbatical which will run from January-June of 2016.
- d. Reports by the following professors were received for information:
  1. ATLA Conference Report by M. Alkema
  2. Calvin Studies Conference Report by Dr. T. Van Raalte
  3. CSBS Ottawa Conference Report by Dr. J. Smith
  4. Report on the International Meeting of the Norwegian Summer Academy for Biblical Studies by Dr. C. Van Dam



5. Christian Higher Education Canada (CHEC) Winnipeg Conference Report by Dr. G. H. Visscher. Since full membership status in CHEC requires membership in the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), the Board accepted the recommendation of the Academic Committee to appoint Dr. A. Pol and br. B. Medemblik to investigate membership in the EFC and to make a recommendation to the Board about membership in this organization.
- e. The chairman and vice-chairman reported that they had met with the principal as per the Assessment Plan to review his performance and that everything is going well.
- f. The Governance Committee submitted items among which were changes to various bylaws and corresponding sections of the College Handbook. The bylaw revisions will be sent to General Synod 2016 for approval.
- g. The Annual Reports of the Finance and Property Committee (F&P) for 2014 and 2015 were received. The Annual Budget 2016 and the Financial Statements 2014 were approved, as well as a Health and Safety Policy drafted by the F&P.
- h. The Draft Report to General Synod 2016 was reviewed. Corrections were suggested and noted by the Corres-

ponding Secretary who will make the changes and complete the report. A final draft will be sent to the Board for approval before sending it to the convening church of General Synod.

- i. With regard to the ongoing assessment in connection with membership in the Association of Theological Schools (ATS): A Strategic Information Report was received for information, as well as a Letter from ATS requesting a report on Assessment Plan and Rubrics by October 15. Dr. G. Visscher noted that the report is near completion.
- j. The results of the Alumni Survey 2015 were discussed.
- k. Next meeting of the Board was scheduled, D. V., for Jan. 14, 2016 at 1:00pm.

#### *Press release and closing*

The completion of the press release was delegated to the Vice Chairman in consultation the Executive and the Principal, and Br. F. Oostdyk closed the meeting with prayer and thanksgiving.

*On behalf of the Board of Governors  
of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary,  
Rev. J. Ludwig, Vice Chairman/Corresponding Clerk*

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### **Press Release of the CRMA (Canadian Reformed Missions Association) Conference September 12, 2015**

On September 12, 2015, delegates of the Canadian Reformed mission organizations met in the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary chapel for the third annual meeting and conference hosted by the CRMA. Represented were the following groups: Abbotsford (Mexico), Aldergrove (Brazil), Ancaster (Streetlight), Cloverdale/Langley (Asia), Hamilton Cornerstone (Brazil), Hamilton Providence (Philippines), Mission Aid Brazil (BC), Owen Sound (ERQuebec), Smithers (Prince George), Smithville (West Timor), Toronto (Papua New Guinea), Winnipeg Redeemer (S. Manitoba), Yarrow (Brazil-ATC), CRBA (Voice of the Church). Representatives of the CRWRF (Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund) and Brampton (Word & Spirit Center) attended as observers.

At the AGM, the executive led the members through various items. Rev. James Visscher (chair) noted that all Canadian Reformed mission groups have joined the CRMA. It is fully understood that the CRMA is not another level of bureaucracy or hierarchy, but rather a clearinghouse for sharing information and best practices in foreign and cross-cultural missions. Dr. Arjan de Visser (vice-chair) gave a brief overview of the year's activities; Otto Bouwman (treasurer) presented the financial picture (fees will go down again!). Rev. John van Popta (secretary) introduced the CRMA website ([www.reformedmissions.net](http://www.reformedmissions.net)) which will serve members as an easily accessible resource for mission related issues. Any member of the CRMA can request access. The goal is to share policy documents and agreements as appropriate, so as not to reinvent the wheel or work in silos in each corner of our federation.

Dr. Karlo Janssen was given opportunity to lead a discussion on a paper that had been circulated to all

delegates: *Outreach and the CanRC Homefront*. In it, Dr. Janssen raised concerns about the complications that arise when various churches are involved in various mission projects – alone or in cooperation. He advocated for a closer look at our principles, process, and practice. Just one example, what can a church – hoping to start a local project – do when existing missions efforts keep expanding and requiring increased financial support? Is that congregation obligated to continue support? No conclusions were reached, but the paper served to air some current issues. It is available at the CRMA website.

### *Serve, Proclaim, Disciple*

The first speech, *Serve – Proclaim – Disciple: An Informed/Reformed Approach to Doing Short-Term Missions*, was by Rev. Matt Filbert, the missions director for the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North-America (RPCNA). One of his main tasks is the organization of short-term mission trips (STM) for the young people of his church. RPCNA STMs (two – six weeks) are typically carried out under the guidance and supervision of the local church leaders in the destination congregation, whether that be in North America or overseas. This church would send in a request to the missions director for a team to come serve for a specific purpose that the local session has planned. For example, one project was a summer-long VBS for a small Free Church in Scotland. The local session planned, and the young people implemented. Once the project was completed, the team could hand off the project to the congregation.

The RPCNA motto for STMs is “Serve, Proclaim, Disciple.” Most STMs focus on serving, and the RPCNAs do that as well, allowing participants to grow, mature, and explore how they can find their expression in Christ’s church. The “Proclaim” focus ensures that evangelism, rather than just “hands on work,” becomes a normal part of the mission trip. Participants learn to get beyond their fear of speaking the gospel. Each STM also offers opportunity to “Disciple,” perhaps with a pastor or elder by their side. Team members learn to avoid a McMission approach to STMs and realize that the church is in it for the long haul. Faithfulness takes priority over “success.” The goal is to carry out missions from a consistently biblical and Reformed perspective, confident that Reformed theology will compel and propel God’s people into a needy world. The ensuing discussion allowed attendees to explore how such a program might function in their own particular context ([www.RPMissions.org](http://www.RPMissions.org)).

### *Lessons learned while bringing “Word” and “Deed”*

The afternoon session gave opportunity to Rick Postma – a Word & Deed North America director and past

board member of Free Reformed Missions International for seventeen years – to present his speech *Lessons Learned while bringing “Word” and “Deed” to the Developing World*. Mr. Postma’s presentation highlighted some of the challenges of working in the developing world, both with respect to poverty alleviation and building up the church. He recommended that North American assistance function as scaffolding rather than as part of the foundation of any projects we support. From the start, every assistance or missions project should build in an exit strategy.

From a wealth of twenty-five years’ experience some specific examples proved to be cautionary tales how well-intentioned plans could prove problematic. A generous gesture of paying more than market value for a mission-connected property in Central America had the unintended consequence of years of inflated land values in the area. Postma cautioned against “founderitis” where a project becomes identified with the person who started it, poured heart and soul into it, and now can’t let go. He encouraged that any positions funded by North American monies should as a matter of course include a plan to decrease foreign and increase local support. Encouraging independence in the mission field should have priority. He also cautioned against training indigenous pastors in North America and then returning them to their home country with a North American salary. Training and equipping should occur within the local context.

Mr. Postma concluded his speech with some pointed questions that churches in the developing world have for North American churches. Can you bring the gospel without bringing along Western materialism? Are you prepared to serve in a hostile world, where you might lose your wealth or your charitable status for the sake of the gospel? Do you still have a prophetic role in your own North American society or do you simply mimic your culture and entertain its members? Do you have the humility to learn from us? Do you have a magnanimous spirit to work alongside us in genuine, respectful partnership? Or are we simply the means to fulfill your own mission plans in our country? Good questions for reflection, indeed ([www.wordanddeed.org](http://www.wordanddeed.org)).

As the conference wrapped up, some delegates took opportunity to connect over dinner with counterparts from across our land. Lessons learned in hand, each will return to their own particular mission organization further equipped to carry on bringing the Good News to the ends of the earth.

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