



**Clarion**  
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# Our “tropical” arctic

Under this heading, Dr. J.F. Basinger of the University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon) recently reported in the Dec. 1986/Jan. 1987 issue of the *Canadian Geographic* some rather dramatic evidence that a towering tropical forest had once existed in what is now a desolate polar region, a mere 1,100 kilometres from the North Pole on Axel Heiberg Island.

## A look into the past

To be sure, evidence of tropical flora in the far north had been known since the nineteenth century in coals and fossils that have come to light. However, the present discovery is an extraordinary one because the site (a hillside) is littered with wood and dotted with large stumps, some in a random scattering, others in long rows along the sides of the hill. These remains of the past are so obvious and real that Dr. Basinger reported almost feeling the lushness of the forest — in spite of the fact that it is now a frigid wasteland where the highest vegetation, a type of willow, is hardly noticeable. Dr. Basinger noted that “the wood has not been altered through all this time; it looks and feels almost like freshly cut wood — it splits and splinters, it can be carved with a knife, and it burns as readily as kindling. Most of all, it still has that reddish hue we often find in softwood lumber. The thing missing is the scent, the oils have evaporated long ago.” Two hundred of the more conspicuous stumps were recorded for identification and tree ring analysis, and two stumps with attached root systems were dug up for examination in the lab. The excellent condition of the finds even extends to the thick mats of conifer leaves that once lay on the forest floor. It is hoped that besides seeds, also insects will be found among the leaves.

## What to think of it?

Such a find of course raises questions. How could all this have been so well preserved? Why has this not been lost to time and decay?

The answer given in the article is that catastrophic events were needed to account for it: “Such events could only have been floods of immense proportions, carrying huge quantities of sediment into the river systems and spilling out over the flood plain, rapidly burying the lowland swamp forests beneath a suffocating blanket of silt.” The silt sealed the remains from bacteria, fungi and oxygen. Not only was decay prevented, but the wood was not petrified because very little ground water could move through the sediment to reach the wood. Besides this basic theory, as is customary today, a large time frame is postulated. It is supposed that this forest grew 45 million years ago. Erosion of the sediment has brought the forest to the surface again.

As Christians we are intrigued by finds like this. Here is another page in the book of creation which can now be studied. As believers we may read and ponder it in the light of what is written in the Holy Scriptures. The Bible is not a scientific textbook. However, this does not mean that it can be ignored! After all, as the trustworthy Word of God, it gives factual information about events that happened long ago. Those data should be ful-



ly recognized for what they are in all areas of human inquiry, including the sciences, for what Scripture tells us of the past is something we need not doubt.

Now when a scientist speaks of a catastrophic flood of tremendous proportions as a necessary prerequisite for the preservation of this northern “tropical forest,” what reader of the Bible does not think of the great flood which God once sent to cover the face of the whole earth in judgment? (See Genesis 7:17-23; cf. II Peter 3:5-7.) This could very well be the flood involved. Indeed, on the basis of what is known, there does not seem to be another viable alternative. Studying this type of evidence elsewhere, Christian scientists have often drawn such conclusions. Assuming the correctness of the above, it has also been deduced that during or after the Genesis flood, tremendous climatic changes occurred so that buried tropical growth was not replaced by more of the same.

A discovery like this one in our arctic wasteland makes us stop and think. Although there are more questions than verifiable answers, it again gives reason to worship the Creator who allows us to see more and more of what He has done with respect to His creation in the past. He is also the One who has told us what we can expect from Him with respect to His creation for the future, both in judgment and renewal (cf. II Peter 3:10-13).

C. VAN DAM

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# Infant baptism — divine demand or human invention?<sub>2</sub>

## c) Infants versus adults

We come now to a third set of antagonists, which falls under the heading “infants versus adults.” In doing so, we are coming closer to the heart of the matter that separates the Reformed confessor from the Anabaptist one. The latter recognizes only a baptism for adults or for mature children and dismisses as un-Biblical a baptism also for infants. Because faith is the vital precondition for baptism and because of the absence of this pre-condition in infants, they are automatically disqualified.

However, that in turn raises the vexing question, “If infants of believers can not be baptized, what is their standing before the Lord? Does He exclude them? Does He ignore them? Are they in limbo? Do they have no rights and no standing before the Lord?” The Anabaptist does not like to have the matter approached from this angle and queried so forcefully, but these questions must be asked. Also, if he is consequent, then he will have to admit that prior to faith a person has no standing before the Lord.

Only that in turn raises other questions. For look at the OT. There you will see that God does not exclude the infants among His people. They receive a certain standing in His eyes. Genesis 17 reveals that God makes His covenant not just with Abraham, but also with all those in His house, with his infants, and even with his servants. In Deuteronomy 29 Moses summons Israel to stand before the Lord, and he does so with the words, “You stand this day all of you before the LORD, your God; the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives . . . that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the LORD your God.” You will notice here that the Lord makes no distinction between adults and infants. They all enter into the covenant with Him.

A little later, in Joshua 8:35, we are confronted with a ceremony of covenant renewal and we read, “There was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the

little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.” Again infants are included.

In addition, they are also included at occasions of worship, fasting, feasting. Think of II Chronicles 20:13, “All the men of Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. Think of Joel 2:15, 16, “Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants.” Surely these words are sufficient to testify to the fact that children belonged to the people of God in the O.T. God claims them, cares for them, protects them, promises Himself to them. His fatherly heart embraces them. One of the gravest, most anguished indictments that He ever made against His people Israel is the one to be found in Ezekiel 16:20,21, “You took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured . . . you slaughtered my children.” Need more be said about the Lord and His relationship to infants?

Still, the remark can be heard, “But that’s the O.T. In the N.T. it is a whole new state of affairs.” But is it? Remember what has been said about the unity of God’s Word and people. The teaching of the O.T. and N.T. do not contradict each other when it comes to the place of infants of believing, covenant-keeping parents. In the O.T. they belong; they belong no less in the N.T. To assert anything less is to assert that as time goes on God’s revelation to His people becomes poorer, less loving, more restrictive. Can you imagine a situation in which children belong in one testament but are bypassed in another? Does that speak of an enrichment of revelation or an impoverishment? In every other way God’s revelation becomes fuller. His promises increase. The earthly Jerusalem will make way for the heavenly one. This earth will make way for a new earth. The promise of the Saviour becomes the reality of the Saviour. The shedding of the blood of bulls and goats makes way for the shedding of that one blood, at one time, by one person. God’s revelation becomes fuller, richer,

deeper. Artificially to sever the tie between the Lord and His covenant infants in that newer and fuller testament goes contrary to the whole flow of Biblical revelation.

That is not all. For we do not need to take our refuge in logical deduction alone. Recall that episode in the N.T. where the Lord Jesus welcomes and blesses the children. The Son follows in the footsteps of the Father (Matthew 19:13-14; Mark 9:36-37; Luke 18:15-17). Now, the Anabaptists take this passage and say that it refers to a childlike faith. We, adults, should believe in the simple and absolute way that children do. But such an interpretation misses the mark. The children that are brought to the Lord Jesus are not children who are old enough to believe and to serve as models of belief. No, they are infants. They are babes in their mothers’ arms. That is what the original word means here. It is also noteworthy that the Saviour was angry with His disciples for trying to exclude these infants and their mothers as being beyond His concern, compassion, and interest. Also, the Matthew account does not even mention “childlike faith” at all. Finally, we are told that the Lord Jesus laid His hands upon them and blessed them. Does that sound like Someone who leaves children in limbo until they come to faith? The Father’s compassion is evident in the Son.

In addition, the Father’s promises remain valid too. In Acts 2:39, which we touched on already, the Apostle Peter, harking back to the words of the Lord to Abraham, says to those who have come to faith in the risen, exalted Christ, “For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are afar off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to Him.” There you meet it again. The promises of God belong to the believers and their children. Their status has not changed in the N.T.; if it had, Peter would never have spoken these words. He would either have left them out, contradicted them, or reinterpreted them. He chooses none of these options. He simply underlines and reemphasizes that O.T. commitment of the Lord to Abraham and his children.

We can even take this a step further.

For in I Corinthians 7 Paul says that certain children are holy. Which children? Even the children that arise from a mixed marriage. Such a marriage does not give rise to polluted children who should be ostracized and scorned by the believing community. No, the fact that even one parent is a believer is sufficient to render the offspring "holy," special, unique in God's eyes.

It is in this light too that we should return for a moment to what we touched upon already, namely, the "household baptisms" in Acts. Did those households of Lydia, Stephanas, the Jailer, include children? We cannot say with absolute certainty; however, we would say that the law of probability favours the affirmative. One childless household is possible, but three would be stretching both the limits of logic and the law of averages.

#### d) Circumcision versus baptism

And so it is that we come to the fourth set of contestants, which has to do with "circumcision versus baptism." The standard Anabaptist ploy when it comes to the relationship of circumcision and baptism is either to say that there is no connection whatsoever between them or else to qualify that relationship severely.

To those who insist that there is no connection between circumcision and baptism we say most emphatically that there is a connection, even a threefold one. In the first place, circumcision was a sign of union and communion with the Lord. Turn to Genesis 17:7 and 11. "And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. . . . You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you." Notice that the Lord expressly says, "I will be God to you and to your descendants." At the very heart of God's covenant there lies this concept of union and communion, a concept that comes back time and again in the Old and New Testament.

In the N.T. this communion is so often expressed in relation to baptism. "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Baptism is depicted here as that sacrament that unites us to Christ, that allows us to share in the fullness of Him and of His redemptive work. Union and communion apply to both circumcision and baptism.

Yes, and so does the matter of cleansing. In Deuteronomy 30:6 the Israelites are commanded to circumcise their hearts. Elsewhere they are told to remove the

foreskins of their hearts (Jeremiah 4:4). Clearly, the outward cutting off of the foreskin was symbolic of the need to remove drastically all defilement from the heart. And baptism urges us to do the same. In Acts 22:16 believers are told to "rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins." The water of baptism is symbolic of the need for cleansing as well as the ritual of cleansing.

Finally, circumcision was also the

**"I will be God  
to you and to  
your descendants."**

seal of the righteousness of faith. The Apostle Paul makes this plain in Romans 4:11, "He (Abraham) received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised." Circumcision was vitally related to faith. And so is baptism. As Peter says in Acts 2:38, "And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

In summary, then, circumcision and baptism are closely related. There are any number of Baptist scholars who affirm this. Robert Kingdon in his book *Children of Abraham: A Reformed Baptist View of Baptism, the Covenant, and Children* says, "It is my considered opinion that


Baptists must recognize the analogy between circumcision and baptism. It seems to me pointless to deny the existence of this analogy, yet it is often done" (p. 28). Or, "It can hardly be denied that baptism in the New Testament has much the same meaning and import" (p.28). In the same vein, Paul K. Jewett in his book *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace* says, "We have agreed that circumcision means essentially what baptism means in the New Testament" (p.96).

#### Inconsistencies?

In light of these admissions, as well as in light of Scripture, it would seem to be a futile exercise to drive a wedge between circumcision and baptism. But that does raise a further question with regard to those Baptists who, like Kingdon and Jewett, admit that these two ceremonies are similar. If you are a Baptist and yet agree that there is no difference between circumcision and baptism, have you not conceded your argument? You would think so. You would assume that if children received the sign of circumcision in the O.T. and if circumcision and baptism are the same, then children should be baptized. But both Kingdon and Jewett refuse to come to this conclusion. What they do is something very surprising and inconsistent.

Kingdon says that the covenant has dispensational and transdispensational, temporal and eternal, earthly and heavenly aspects to it. The fact that the children were circumcised in the O.T. belonged to the dispensational, temporal, and earthly elements in the Abrahamic covenant. Jewett travels essentially the same route when he says that circumcision belonged to the temporal, earthly aspects of the O.T. covenant. The covenant covered a single ethnic group who lived in a specific area. In this way they both try to picture circumcision as a purely national and racial sign of external, non-spiritual blessings and privileges of God's O.T. dealings with His people. Baptism has a spiritual dimension to it, circumcision does not.

What shall we say about this line of argument? It is contrived and artificial, to say the least. When God makes His covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17, then that covenant is not temporary but everlasting. It is still in effect today. Also, as we have seen when dealing with the similarities between circumcision and baptism, they mean the same thing. They picture for us not in the first place an ethnic reality, but a spiritual one. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant in its deepest spiritual meaning, and the same thing applies to baptism. Indeed, to say that the Abrahamic covenant was mainly concerned with earthly blessings and promises is to fall into the same pitfalls

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as the Israelites. They assumed that outward obedience was sufficient, but God judges it deficient. He wants their hearts to be circumcised as well. Circumcision is not just national or racial, it is firstly spiritual.

Thus, the conclusion can only be that because circumcision was administered as a spiritual rite to infants, and seeing that circumcision and baptism picture the same covenantal realities and promises, infants should be baptized.

### e) Normativism versus subjectivism

Yet all of this does in turn raise one more set of antagonists, namely, that of "normativism versus subjectivism." When the Anabaptist says that infants should not be baptized, on what basis does he make that assertion? It is on the basis that there is something missing in that child, namely faith. Only when faith is present can baptism take place. Now let us look closely at that assertion. What does it imply? It implies that the focus of the rite of baptism turns on the recipient and what is within him or her. Indeed, it grounds the rite in the person.

What it does is something which Reformed theology has always warned against. According to it, the focus of baptism must not be in the recipient but in the originator, in the Lord. Salvation is of the Lord. To ground the validity of an administration of baptism in something within the recipient is a departure from and a violation of the *solus Deo gloria* of Reformed theology. The infants of the believing parents in the O.T. received the sign and the seal of the covenant not upon the basis of something that the children had done or that had been supernaturally implanted within them, but solely on the basis of God's uninhibited command. Infants of believers are to receive baptism today for the very same reason.

To put in the words of Dr. J. Douma, "God has called us and our children to His covenant. For that reason our children have a place in His covenant. God's call precedes all faith, all conversion, all regeneration in adults and infants. . . . Therefore we baptize our children; not because something is present in them, but because something was expressed about them: the promise of the remission of sins and eternal life."

In baptism it is the Lord who comes and claims and promises. In His words of commitment we find comfort and strength as we seek to raise our children in an ungodly world. It is God who stands in the centre of this whole sacrament — not the child, nor the parents. Yet how little Anabaptists seem to understand of this. On the one hand, they deny the validity of infant baptism, but on the other hand, there are many of them who practice a kind of

substitute baptism called "dedication." What happens then is that parents take their infant to a worship service and there they pledge to do their all to raise this child in a Christian manner. They express the hope that some day the child will come to faith and then receive baptism. Yet here we stand amazed. Where is the Biblical warrant for such a practice? What is this but a man-made invention, a creation of people who cannot live with the consequences of their own theology? How tragic that a child has to go through a procedure of dedication, a procedure in which the parents promise everything, but God is said to promise nothing. What a desperate and empty ritual!

What a richness we have then when we see that we are to baptize our children because of God's normative command. We do so not because we presume anything about them. We do not presume regeneration. We do not presume election. We do not speculate about our children. What we know is that these children have God's promises. They also are to be fully educated in God's requirements of faith and conversion. They are children of God and they must also come to live through His Word and Spirit, as His children.

In this regard, we deny emphatically that infant baptism leads necessarily to an undermining of the need for repentance and faith. Baptism conveys the promises of God, but it also conveys the demands of God. It calls on all those who have been baptized, when they reach

their years of discretion, to cleave to the Lord in faith, hope, love, and obedience. Failure to do so does not nullify the covenant; it does something worse, it unleashes the curses of the covenant (cf. Deuteronomy 29).

In conclusion, we say about the Anabaptist position:

- 1) by excluding the children of believers from baptism it goes contrary to the whole character of God's progressive revelation;
- 2) it caters to individualism and refuses to recognize the Biblical teaching of covenantal solidarity;
- 3) it undermines the unity of the Word of God and the people of God by either driving a wedge between circumcision and baptism or else by distorting the meaning of circumcision;
- 4) by implication it makes God a God of the strong, the mature, the able, the adult but places in question whether He is also the God of the very young, the mentally disabled, and all those who can for one reason or other not meet the pre-condition of faith;
- 5) it emphasizes the subjective by making something in man the sole pre-condition for baptism.

More can be said, much more, but suffice it to say that the weight of Biblical teaching is on the side of those believers who believe that the Lord has established a covenant of grace with His children, a covenant that includes all believers and their seed.

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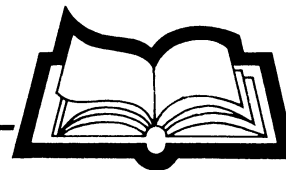
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“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and trouble about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion which shall not be taken away from her.”

Luke 10:41, 42

## The One Thing Needful

On first reading one might wonder if the Lord Jesus is being completely fair in his rebuke to Martha, given upon receiving her complaint against Mary. He had presumably arrived unexpectedly with His disciples, and there was no doubt some work involved in making them comfortable and serving them well. Indeed, service highlights Martha's role here. The word used for her work of service is the same word used for the official task of the deacons as servants of Christ: *diakonia*. Martha was totally wrapped up in her *diakonia*. What was so wrong about that?

We undoubtedly touch here on what is basic to a woman's nature. When Martha confronted the Lord Jesus and insisted that Mary come “to help me” we hear and see reflected the name Adam gave to his wife Eve: she was a helpmate fit for him. Helping is one of the most significant characteristics for a woman, an all encompassing summary of her task and office. Again, we may ask if the Lord Jesus is justified in His rebuke.

However, the point here is that Martha was overly busy with serving, and had failed to see what was most important in the visit of the Lord Jesus and His disciples. That she wanted to serve Him was commendable, and her love and faith in Him cannot be questioned. But in the process of honouring Him she had forgotten His Sender, and the commission that was given to Him. She had forgotten the central truth of the Mosaic law, that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God.

When this happens, service loses its moorings and its lifeline to the word which creates it, and so becomes an end in itself. Service runs deep in a woman's nature, and it must run deep; but it needs a lifeline in order to keep it all in the perspective of faith. Without that lifeline, it falls prey to the anxiety and care of this life, and becomes a service of slavery and drudgery which takes all joy and thanksgiving away. Thus, much as service may be the heart of a woman's nature, that nature, as all our natures, must be quickened and renewed by the Spirit of God so that all service is born out of thanksgiving to Him, and so manifests itself as the free service of love and joy for what He has done for us.

Here Mary was further ahead, and this is what the Lord Jesus also intended to point out in His rebuke. She knew of His special commission, and also knew that He was going to be with them only for a short while. So she heeded the call to hear while the Word was present. She understood the Today of the living proclamation of the good news. In the whole scale of priorities governing human life this must

come first. Only the line to the Word, and the living bond to the message of salvation can give a healing and liberating perspective on all that a woman must do. Indeed, we all are bound by the Word, regardless of our place, office and task.

The Lord Jesus had said something similar in His Sermon on the Mount, and the word used for Martha's anxiety corresponds to the word used in that sermon: “Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and the rest shall be yours as well,” Matt. 6:25, 33. Mary had focussed her attention first on the message of the kingdom, and so chose for the eternal inheritance, accepting the free gift by faith and undivided devotion. This message qualified all her service. So we find her later anointing the Lord Jesus for His burial. And we find that sitting here at the feet of Jesus she already realizes what He later says on the occasion of this anointing: “The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me,” John 12:8.

The Lord certainly does not disdain a life of service and *diakonia* in His rebuke of Martha, not does He sanction idleness in His praise of Mary. Indeed, He knew the nature of women, and commended and accepted their service often. But service does not exhaust her place and task. Beyond helping and service there is the one thing needful: hearing and obeying to the living voice of the LORD.

So all service must be qualified by the Word of life. The helping office assumed by all women, single or married, must be qualified by listening to the Word of God, by earnest study of the Scriptures, and by living prophetic utterance in the home and in the company of the saints. Only in this way is all service freed from the anxiety that genders to bondage, so that one is able to freely and joyfully deal with the cares and concerns of daily living.

Where does the real fulfillment of a woman's nature lie? In the home, in marriage, bearing children and raising a family? In acquiring skills and pursuing a career? For each God has His place. And it can be found if only we all daily seek the one thing needful, and follow through with willing obedience and humble submission to the Word of life. For the essence of what it means to be man or woman does not lie in the serving itself, but in listening to the creating Word. For the fulfillment of all our natures and our service comes when we will be “like the angels in heaven” praising God and His mercy in Christ forever.

J. DE JONG

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# Reflections on synodical practices<sub>2</sub>

## The third reason

In the third place it would be and is wrong when a classis or a regional synod receives a communication from a broader assembly because the agenda of the broader assemblies is determined by the churches represented at that major assembly and not by an even broader or major assembly.

It is the *Churches* that determine the agenda of broader or major assemblies in accordance with the adopted Church Order.

It is the *Churches* that are to go to work with the decisions of their general synods.

No classis has the right to say, "We have received a letter from the latest general synod, containing decisions made by that synod regarding a decision made by a previous classis and we are going to deal with it now."

Wrong!

The Churches receive the *Acts* of Synod, and if any general-synodical decisions require action, this action has to be initiated by the *Churches*.

If a general synod should decide to write to a classis, this classis cannot and should not do anything but "receive and file" this letter. If the general synod were still alive at that moment, not having completed its agenda, the proper course of action for that classis would be: to "return to sender" with the notice attached "Wrong Address."

I was also completely flabbergasted when I read in the Press Release of the meeting of the Board of Governors of the Theological College, published in *Clarion* of October 17, 1986, "The Board discusses the fact that one of the churches is seriously in arrears. The Board will address itself to the Classis in which this church resides."

How a board of governors of a Reformed Theological College can do anything like that is a complete riddle to me.

That they discuss the apparent unfaithfulness of a Church is their task.

That they look for ways and means to urge such a Church to fulfil its obligations within the federation — who would expect anything but that of brothers who have the interest of the College at heart

and have been entrusted with its care?

But "address itself" a. to a classis; b. to "the Classis"; and c. "to the Classis in which this Church resides," no, this is an unbelievable yet sad fact.

If such a course of action continues, we go into the direction of hierarchy.

What is a classis to do upon receipt of such a letter?

Is it allowed to take any action at all?

None whatsoever.

The letter should be returned to sender with the notation "Wrong Address," just like the synodical communication.

## "Ask Classis . . ."

We return to the decision recorded on page 64 of the *Acts* 1986.

There is one more point that should have our attention in this connection.

"Synod decides to ask Classis Ontario-South to cooperate fully with the Committee."

A supererogatory work and something which is outside the province of a broader assembly.

What is a broader assembly, i.e. a general synod, to do?

It has to judge those matters which have been legitimately presented to it.

It has to consider the matter, weigh the arguments pro and con, come to a conclusion, to a decision, and give its arguments for that decision.

*This is all.*

If a general synod goes beyond this point, it oversteps the boundaries of its task and does things which it has no right to do.

A general synod that decides to "ask" a classis "to cooperate fully" goes beyond its mandate.

It may sound very "pastoral," but it is not when it comes to the point.

Here we find a paternalistic attitude, "Come on, now, be good boys and cooperate fully."

This is something which is not becoming for a general synod at all.

The best service a general synod can render to the churches is that it remains very "business-like" in its dealings with proposals and matters. Then the Churches have something substantial to chew on and to work with.

Besides, how can a classis ever be asked to cooperate with a committee??

Such a "pastoral" attitude can be found also on page 104.

After having put a period behind "the appeal of the Canadian Reformed Church — what other Church could it have been? VO — at A. is hereby answered," synod should have continued with other business at hand.

But no, we get a little tail.

"General Synod beseeches all the office-bearers of the Church at A. to bring their views, their preaching, teaching and ruling in harmony with the Scriptures and the Three Forms of Unity, and thus in line with their ordination vows and their signature under the Subscription Form."

You almost see the tears streaming with this "beseeching."

Indeed, who would *not* weep?

Who would not weep when considering the sad condition of the Church involved in the difficulties in which general synod had to make a decision?

Who would not weep when considering that our people have not been instructed regarding the issues at stake by those who were most able to do it but failed in their obligation towards the Churches?

In spite of this, however, we must also weep when reading this last paragraph of the synodical conclusions.

I remember more such "pastoral exhortations," given by general synods as if they were called upon to either admonish or exhort, comfort or rebuke consistories and church members.

This was in the years 1942 and following, when general synods took on the airs of a super-consistory and started sending "pastoral letters."

Churches beware!

Not for one second do I doubt or question the genuine concern and deep-felt sorrow of the brothers who had to deal with the relevant controversies. That is not the issue at all.

What is the issue is what they decided and whether in their actions, decisions and pronouncements they went beyond the limits of their jurisdiction.

Our conclusion must be: they did.

We point these things out to warn the Churches for the dangers present and to prevent a repetition of mistakes made.

We now turn to some other aspects of the *Acts* 1986.

### Who determines the agenda?

In the above we mentioned already that the *Churches* table matters for the agenda of their broader assemblies.

There is little doubt that all agree with this sentence.

More and more, however, the question presses to the fore, "Are we not just paying lip-service to this principle?"

Scanning of the *Acts* of various general synods leads to surprising discoveries, discoveries which also are reason for great concern.

When giving examples, we shall omit the names of the Church members who did send communications to general synods. We are not dealing with what *they* did, but with what *General Synod* did.

That we take examples only from what our latest general synod did is not because this one was exceptionally guilty; we do so only because the list would become far too long if we went farther back into history.

What we shall quote from the *Acts* 1986 will be more than sufficient to show that we have a trend which should be reversed, yes, which should be stopped altogether.

For convenience's sake we shall follow the numbering of the various articles.

### Translation confession

In Article 91 we read that a letter was received in which Synod was requested "to return to the old reading — in Article 8 B.C., VO — 'for they are all three co-eternal and co-essential' instead of the present revised reading, 'for these three, in one and the same essence, are equal in eternity.' "

As reason for this request was given "that the phrase 'equal in eternity' is ambiguous and 'obscures the grand truth of the qualitative co-eternity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.' "

This request did not come from any ecclesiastical assembly; it came from a church member.

The brothers who together formed Synod 1983 will recall that we had quite a discussion about these words and that we came to the conclusion that: "For these three, in one and the same essence, are equal in eternity" was the correct and best translation of the Latin and French texts. For the benefit of our readers I give only the French text as found in Ph. Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*: "parce que tous trois sont d'éternité égale, en une même essence."

It is fine with me when decisions by previous synods are changed but then as long as it is done on good grounds and

in the proper manner. I still think that the translation adopted in 1983 is the correct rendition of the French — and Latin — texts.

As for the argument for the proposed change, it reminds me of the story of the father who gave his son a Bible from which he had deleted all Arminian texts. I cannot see that Guido de Brès, by putting it the way he did, "obscured the grand truth of the qualitative co-eternity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," unless I misunderstand the French and Latin texts in this respect. I shall gladly be taught by one who knows these languages better than I do.

In Coaldale's bulletin, the Rev. J.D. Wielenga, writing about synod's refusal to restore the Apostles' Creed to its ancient form by taking away the word "Christian," stated that our synods are not easily swayed by scholarly arguments. I am in agreement with him: synod was not swayed by the very substantial arguments in the case of the Apostles' Creed. It is, therefore, the more amazing that synod did go for an argument which does not seem all that scholarly to me in the case of Article 8 B.C.

However, I have a far more serious question, as I have no quarrel with the change in Article 8's translation as such.

This far more serious question is: "Which of the Churches asked for this change?"

Here a change — be it "only" a change in "translation" — was proposed and effectuated without *any* of the Churches having been involved in it or having approached synod about it.

This is a course which will prove to be detrimental if it is not blocked drastically.

Let no one say, "It concerns only a change in wording."

It is the *principle* of the matter.

Here a change was made without *any* of the Churches having asked for it.

Here a change was made upon the request by a Church member.

Totally wrong and utterly dangerous.

Once again: Churches, beware!

Synod should have replied, "Sorry, brother, we may not deal with your request. If you are of the opinion that this should be changed, try to convince your consistory to come with a proposal to this effect to the forthcoming general synod, so that it can be put on the provisional agenda for that synod. Only the Churches are allowed to put something on the agenda, not Church members."

Synod did not do so; instead, it dealt with the request and made a decision in accordance with the request.

### Hindsight

We do realize that we always speak about decisions made when standing

behind them. Hindsight is a marvellous commodity, isn't it?

Oftentimes we say, "If I had to do this again, I would deal differently with this question or proposal or matter."

Blessed shall we be when we let ourselves be taught by our mistakes and *do* deal differently with a specific thing or a similar matter.

There is one particular matter of which I did say, "We should have dealt differently with it."

Here is the point at which I should like to make a few remarks about a decision of Synod 1983 of which, with hindsight, I say, "We should have done it differently."

At Synod 1983 there was a question from a brother "to inform him whether the interpretation of the word 'Creeds' in the questions found in the Forms for Baptism and for the public profession of faith includes the Three Forms of Unity."

This question referred to the text of the questions as it had been tentatively adopted by the Synod of Smithville 1980.

The Liturgical Forms as tentatively adopted by Synod 1980 were made available in the well-known greyish-blue booklet issued in 1981.

The second question directed to the parents at the baptism of their infants reads as follows.

Secondly, do you confess that the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, summarized in the Creeds and taught here in this Christian Church, is the true and complete doctrine of salvation?

Before this, as you may recall, it read,

Second, Do you acknowledge the doctrine which is contained in the Old and the New Testament, and in the articles of the Christian faith, and which is taught here in this Christian Church, to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?

We do not wish to go too far into history. Let us state that there is no doubt about it that historically the term "the Articles of the Christian Faith" refers to the Apostles' Creed.

Let us equally firmly state that there is not the slightest conflict or contrast or basic difference between the Apostles' Creed on the one hand, and the "Creeds" or "the Confessions", on the other hand, and no one should have the impression as if a fundamental change has been made when the text of the question was changed.

Anyway, Synod 1983 received the question, "Could you please tell me whether the interpretation of the word 'creeds' includes the Three Forms of Unity?"



What *should* Synod 1983 have answered?

"Dear brother, Synod should refrain from giving interpretations and therefore cannot answer your question."

Unfortunately, we did not give that answer.

I personally take my part of the blame for this.

When this question was discussed in our committee, we came to the conclusion that in the first place we should refrain from giving an interpretation of the term; in the second place we should prevent any impression as if, when answering the questions at baptism and/or public profession of faith, all we do is say, "I fully believe the Word of God and declare that the Apostles' Creed is a faithful summary of the Scriptural doctrine," and as if other

creeds and the confessions did not come into view here and are left out of the picture.

How to go about it?

It is definitely not so — as Synod 1986 has it — that Synod 1983 "has already judged that the formulation 'the Creeds as taught here in this Christian Church' means 'the confessions as they are taught here in this Christian Church.'"

Synod 1983 did none of the sort!

Synod 1983 most certainly did *not* say: "Creeds means Confessions."

It is to be deplored that those members of Synod 1986 who were also members of Synod 1983 failed to notice and to catch this mistake.

Much less is it so — as has been insinuated — that Synod 1983 felt the urge and grabbed the chance "to tighten the

thumb-screws and to plug a loophole."

Nothing basic changed with the changed formulation.

In our committee we pondered the question how to deal with an apparent confusion and uncertainty without falling into a trap of giving interpretations of terms.

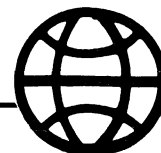
We found the solution in replacing the word "creeds" by "confessions," not to say thereby, "this is what 'creeds' means here," for then we would have fallen into the trap of giving an — even wrong — interpretation, but in order to choose a term which is clear to all. Thus we proposed to Synod, and Synod did accept our recommendations.

We should, however, have declined to answer the question at all.

Beautiful hindsight!

— *To be continued* VO

## INTERNATIONAL



### HARDERWIJK

The Classis Harderwijk (which "Classis Harderwijk"? VO) will propose to the forthcoming General Synod that a committee be appointed for the promotion of ecclesiastical unity among the Reformed confessors in the Netherlands. This committee would be charged with, among other things, preparing a public appeal along lines to be decided upon by the General Synod. In this appeal — thus the proposal — a call to seek for ways to come to ecclesiastical unity should be included. The committee would also have the task to advise the local churches within the federation regarding establishing contact and organizing meetings with Reformed believers. (ND)

It is a sad thing that a little over forty years after the Liberation things are going to be organized more and more in a hierarchical way. What could a general-synodical committee add to what the local Churches know and why do they need to be advised regarding establishing and regarding organizing meetings? Are the Consistories no longer able to do this without general-synodical advice and directives? Sad.

### LEUSDEN

The (synodical) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands are facing a surplus of

ministers and candidates of theology. This information was contained in a periodical which quoted from a report of the "Departments for Personnel Matters: Finances and Organization" who wrote that in 1984 and 1985 eighty-seven new ministers were "registered," whereas there were no more than thirty-six new vacancies to be filled. The number of women-ministers increased from 43 to 61. (ND)

### DUBLIN (AP)

The Irish Supreme Court declared that two clinics which sent pregnant women to Great Britain to get an abortion violated by this very act the provision of the constitution which forbids abortions. The court said that the clinics violate the law by informing the women about the possibility of getting a legal abortion in Britain and by offering the women the means to travel there. "There is not the slightest doubt about it," the court said, "that abortion is in conflict with the national policy, the public opinion, and the law."

Yearly an estimated four thousand women go to Great Britain for an abortion. (ND)

### LUNTEREN (the Netherlands)

The Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) [syn.], rejected a proposal that would have given

a more official character to synodical pronouncements on societal issues. In recent years synodical declarations on issues in society, notably those on nuclear weapons and South Africa, have encountered much criticism from local congregations. The proposal was to add a provision to the Church Order that such declarations, without condemning other views, are to be regarded as the official stand of the church. (RES NE)

### PRETORIA

In a statement released by his office in Pretoria on November 3, 1986, State President P.W. Botha affirmed that the South African constitution recognizes and protects the freedom of faith and worship.

In his statement President Botha was reacting to inquiries from the Moslem community over a controversial resolution adopted by the Dutch Reformed Synod (NGK) that Islam was a "false religion." The NGK synod expressed concern over the number of young blacks and coloureds who had adopted the Islamic faith, especially since 1976. A statement issued by the NGK declared that it was never in the mind of synod to offend the Muslim community."

Professor Jannie du Preez and Dr. Martin Pauw of the Theological School in Stellenbosch have asked whether it is appropriate for a church to express itself on someone else's religion. They point

to Paul's words that, compelled by the love of Christ, he tried to become all things to all people. In their view, the synod's pronouncement places those who work among Muslims in a difficult position. (RES NE)

Do the learned gentlemen now really think that the Apostle Paul would have acted and spoken like a Muslim if he had known about this error? They had better do some thorough exegesis of the Scriptures before showing their ignorance by making such pronouncements. This does not undo the fact that synods should refrain from making all sorts of pronouncements in the above vein.

### WINNIPEG (CP)

A group of Winnipeg Roman Catholics say they will ask Archbishop Adam Exner to change his mind and allow them to reinstate use of the Latin mass.

Damien Gallop, who represents more than 100 Roman Catholics requesting the ancient language to be allowed, said there has been a monthly mass in Latin at St. Francis Friary since last February.

However, at a recent service, the priest read a letter from the bishop announcing the end of the experiment.

The service typically attracted close to 30 worshippers for its service. "We want this mass as an option because we think it's a better mass than the current one because of the difficulties with English translations," Gallop said. (TVS)

### DETROIT (Reuter)

The World Council of Churches has proposed a revival of its Christian-Marxist dialogue program that was discontinued some two decades ago, a council official said.

The initiative by the council, which includes more than 300 Protestant and Orthodox churches with more than 400 million members, will go before the council's executive committee later this month at a meeting in Geneva, the official said.

He said that "the initiative, if carried out, is bound to be attacked by conservative churchmen who accuse the council of being silent on alleged Communist persecution of Christians." (TVS)

Something for the men who criticize the statement that the Islam is a false religion? Perhaps Paul would have become a marxist to the marxists if he had known them?

The 1991 World Council of Churches assembly will be held in Canberra, Australia, according to recent action taken by the WCC executive committee. The 1983 assembly was held in Vancouver, BC. (CN)

### WASHINGTON (AP)

A simmering national debate over the validity of teaching "creation science" in public schools came to the U.S. Supreme Court Dec. 10. The justices are now faced with the dilemma of deciding whether the hotly disputed discipline amounts to true science or religion.

Oral arguments were heard in a case challenging the constitutionality of a Louisiana law requiring "balanced treatment" in the teaching of creationism and evolution as theories for the origins of the universe. (CN)

Inhaling smoke from other people's cigarettes causes lung cancer and other diseases in non-smokers, a finding that should spur more limits on smoking in public places, the surgeon general said.

In his annual report on smoking, Dr. C. Everett Koop, surgeon general of the U.S. Public Health Service, said passive — or involuntary smoking was a major health hazard that affected millions of non-smokers. (CN)

### WASHINGTON

The number of unmarried couples living together in the United States has jumped sharply to top the 2 million mark for the first time, the Census Bureau reported.

"There are about 2.22 million households of unmarried couples in the United States, up from 1.98 million last year, the bureau figures show. (CN)

### NEW DELHI, INDIA

According to an article earlier this year in the *Hindustan Times*, the Muslim population of the world will reach one billion by the end of the century. The paper cited the Islam Conference organization as its source.

More than 40 nations of the world have significant Muslim populations. Four countries have Muslim populations of more than 100 million — Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India.

There are about 60 million Muslims in the Soviet Union and more than 50 million in China. (CN)

### CHICAGO (RNS)

Pro-life activists can picket the homes of those who perform abortions in three

mid-western states, a federal appeals court in Chicago ruled Dec. 8.

"This is an important national precedent for the free speech rights of proliferators," said Walter Weber, lead attorney for the case and associate general counsel of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. "Even though the ruling applies only in Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin, it will undoubtedly influence similar cases throughout the country."

Judge Luther Swygert wrote in the majority opinion, "Picketing is not by its very nature an activity inherently disruptive of the coherency of a neighbourhood."

"We ought not to be overly troubled by the resulting clamour. It is the inevitable consequence of living in a great and restless democracy." (CN)

### SEGUIN

Norman Beck wants to rid the New Testament of stridently anti-Jewish remarks.

"In some texts, Jews are called Christ killers, sons of the devil, sons of snakes," said Beck, who is preparing a translation of the New Testament. "That's not essential to the theology of the church."

Beck, chairman of the theology and philosophy department at Texas Lutheran College in Seguin, has written a book called *Mature Christianity* in which he discusses the New Testament's antagonism to Jews.

Beck said the New Testament writers were understandably eager to debunk Judaism, the parent faith against which the Christians were contending. But, he said, those statements have contributed to anti-Semitism, discrimination and oppression in later centuries. (CN)

Another fool who wants his name in the paper.

See I Corinthians 1: 18 ff.

### AMSTERDAM

The Orthodox Jewish Congregation in Amsterdam will have to live without a chief rabbi, at least for the time being, because the only candidate for the position is far too expensive.

The board of the Netherlands Israeli Main Synagogue decided not to let the Israeli rabbi Yeshaya Steinberger come to Amsterdam, although he had been formally appointed last June, because the man demands a salary and other benefits to a total of almost three hundred thousand guilders.

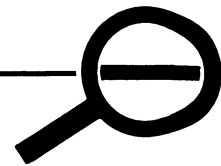
The board had declared its willingness to agree to a salary of Dfl.250,000, but later on decided 14 against 12 not to go any higher than Dfl. 180,000 per year. (DNC)

Any takers?

VO

## OUR COVER

Front cover photo courtesy:  
Travel Manitoba



## The trend towards unification

In November of the year 1986, at a combined synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (NHK) and the synodical Reformed Churches (GKN) in the Netherlands, it was decided that these two churches, one hundred years after the *Doleantie* (the Second Secession of 1886), are officially "in a state of *unification*." The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Netherlands also declared itself a partner in this process. The program of unification is called "samen op weg" (en route together), and it is expected to be fully realized in the near future.

We are to seek unity *in the Truth*. If such a unity can be realized, there is reason for joy. Sadly, such is not the case here. We quote a few lines from the December 20, 1986 issue of *Una Sancta*, the magazine of our Australian sister churches, from an article by (Rev.) K. B(runing).

### A reason for joy?

Two large church groups in the Netherlands have reached the final stage of their preparations for unification. The (synodical) Reformed Churches and the (old) Reformed (hervormde) Church are the two partners in this historical process. In the past our (Free) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and in Australia have had close ties with both church groups. It was as follows: in the beginning of the 19th century the (old) Reformed Church had seriously deviated from the way of God's Word and the Confession. The result of a heavy struggle was that in 1834 under the leadership of Rev. H. de Cock the *Separation* took place. The faithful people who left the old church continued their church life under the name of *The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands*.

Unfortunately, years later the Reformed Churches, too, came into serious crisis of unfaithfulness. In the years about 1944/1945, again, a separation took place, the so-called *Liberation of 1944*. The people who wanted to remain faithful to the Reformed Confession continued their church life under the name of *The (Free) Reformed Churches*.

So, the two large church groups which are preparing the above mentioned unification are churches which in the past had left the way of the Scriptures. After many years they try to re-unite, to become one again.

Recently, a so-called *Combi-Synod* was held; that is a sort of combined Synod from both groups. That meeting decided that both churches are now *in the process of unification*. The decisive step has been made. There is no way back. Soon, the — what they call — unity, will be a fact. It means that after the final date both churches will discontinue their existence; they will establish a new church with a new name; and another identity.

It is certain that several of our brothers and sisters will feel this development as a painful experience. The church to which they have belonged seals and confirms its way of apostasy by an amalgamation which has no Scriptural basis, does not lead to a real unity in truth and confession, and is not a fruit of a sincere conversion from ecclesiastical injustice and un-Scriptural manipulations. Both churches ignore the unrighteousness which in the past has caused much bitterness, pain and disunity. In this atmosphere, there is no reason for joy. On the contrary, this development increases the darkness in a country in which the unfaithfulness, ungodliness and normlessness have already reached an alarming level.

This trend is not found only in the Netherlands. Apparently the spiritual children of these two Dutch churches, The Reformed Church of America and the Christian Reformed Church (especially in Canada) have similar aspirations. We quote from the January 30, 1987 issue of *Calvinist Contact* the following item.

### Shall two walk together?

For some time the Canadian Classes of the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church have exchanged delegates at their meetings. Synods have encouraged pulpit exchanges and discussions at local levels. This has developed into an interest in Canada to meet, and share more formal discussions between the denominations.

A combined official committee has met regularly for two years. In a very cooperative spirit of fellowship we shared our Canadian interests.

This committee is working on a joint council meeting for November 1987 at Camp Shalom.

A concurrent Synod meeting of the denominations will be held in Grand Rapids in 1989 at Calvin College. This RCA

and CRC action seeks to promote the unity of Christ's body.

From the Dutch magazine *Kerknieuws* (December 31, 1986) we take some more information concerning this unification trend from an article titled, "Worldwide Steps to Ecclesiastical Unity."

"In the United States an "en route together" process between three different Lutheran churches has progressed to such an extent that, if all goes as was decided in 1986, there will be on January 1, 1988, one Evangelical Lutheran Church with 5.3 million members. This church will maintain the eucharist communion with the Episcopal church, while talks to come to full communion with Presbyterians and Reformed (Reformed Church of America) are at a very advanced stage. In the same United States, nine churches (Methodist, Reformed and Episcopal) met in August, 1986 and came to agreement concerning a 55-page document which lays a basis for the unification of those nine churches."

The process does not stop here. The *Globe and Mail* of Saturday, January 31, carried the following article about the unification of the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches.

### London

The good news for Christians was announced this month by Mark Santer, Anglican Bishop of Kensington, and Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Roman Catholic Bishop of Arundel and Brighton — the Reformation is over.

The two bishops are co-chairmen of the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC 2) set up by their two churches to further the work toward unity that was begun in 1970 by the first commission.

In a report presented in 1982, ARCIC 1 reached agreement on the churches' teachings on the eucharist and ministry, and a substantial measure of agreement about authority.

But however important these topics became in later theological debates, they did not deal with the central issue for Martin Luther — justification by faith alone. The ARCIC 2 has now agreed that "this is not an area where any remaining differences of theological interpretation, whether within or between our Communion, can justify our continuing separation."

So the theological chasm that led to the Reformation has been bridged.

Yet there has been no dancing in the piazzas of Rome and no canticles of thanksgiving in Geneva. The agreement did not even make the lead story in the majority of the religious weeklies because, in fact, the significance of justification by faith, so hotly disputed 400 years ago, has receded with the centuries. Salvation may be what Christianity is all about, but it scarcely figures as a topic of theological debate.

There are, moreover, unresolved problems which are readily recognized in Salvation and the Church, the first "agreed statement" to be issued by ARCIC 2. One such issue mentioned in the statement is the salvation of unbelievers — those who have no explicit faith in Christ.

More problematic is the whole question of indulgences — the Roman Catholic Church seemingly selling access to grace in order to rebuild the Basilica of St. Peter's in Rome — that first roused Luther's ire.

The practice of granting indulgences no longer plays a large part in Catholic piety, but it is still there. Only last year, the Vatican issued a new list of prayers and practices to which were attached remission of the punishment due to sin. The more evangelical members of the Anglican Communion regard this custom with abhorrence.

George Carey, a leading evangelical who is himself a member of the national Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission, expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the international commission's deliberations.

The new statement has been greeted with enthusiasm by professional ecumenists but it remains to be seen how it will be received outside that circle. The sixteenth-century polemics so polarized positions that neither side could properly appreciate alternative views, and the caricatures that resulted have become part of each church's understanding of the other. Many Roman Catholics still cling to indulgences as part of their identity.

The Vatican has still to approve the statements issued both by ARCIC 1 and ARCIC 2. Approval of the 1982 final report is not expected before next year. And while the Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales have endorsed it, the Vatican may be less eager to do so.

One influential Vatican official to express doubts about the final report is Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the head of the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith — the successor of the Inquisition.

That does not mean the report will not win approval.

Debate about differences between the two faiths has not proceeded at the same pace, however, even though there are special problems here too. At least

Christian doctrines are expressed within a system to which all the different denominations are heirs.

Moreover, Christianity has claims to absoluteness which make conversations with those of other faiths somewhat uneasy. But then, 30 years ago, Roman Catholics were claiming absolute truth for their own denomination.

In Salvation and the Church they are accepting that Luther had a point after all.

We conclude this survey with a few lines written by Rev. Peter de Jong in *The Outlook* of January 1987, from an article titled, "The Ecumenical Ship and its Destination."

It thus becomes obvious that the ecumenical course is diverging ever further away from the unity in Christ which, according to God's Word, does not include everyone, but is restricted to true believers who in John 17 are clearly distinguished from the world. The result is that

### **Ephesians 4:1-7**

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.*

serious Christians lose interest in this voyage, whose course they do not at all approve. But if your church is on this voyage, are you not in it whether you like it or not? And we can't simply say, "We'll see where the ship lands."

Furthermore, this ecumenical ship is on a course shared by many other craft; it has no course of its own. Although it flies a Christian flag, it is not guided by the compass of God's Word. Its course is determined by human reckoning and expectations of a better world that promises freedom and well-being to all. Thus Marxist ideals gain control also in the churches, as the ecumenical churches chart a course toward an earthly paradise incorrectly named "the Kingdom of God." The writer recalled the account of Paul's voyage in Acts 27, which despite its promising beginning in disregard of the Apostle's warning, ended in shipwreck. The ecumenical ship sails in the wake of the world in expectation of the unity of all mankind under one world government. A unification of all religions is supposed to cement this unity of mankind and to eliminate all wars and conflicts. The inhabitants of the world will be registered as world citizens; that registration will be required if one is to engage in commerce or industry. Preparations for such an arrangement are far advanced and it could come soon. It is evident that this unity can tolerate no exceptions. Anyone who may have conscientious objections will have to be excluded.

The Holy Scripture nowhere teaches that the church of Christ will develop into such an influential, visible world-church. It rather predicts an opposite process of apostasy. False prophets will deceive many and lawlessness will increase (Mt. 24:11, 12). Hated by all nations, the true church will become a prey to oppression and persecution. The only place left for it will be in the "Wilderness" (Rev. 12:13-17). This is not the image of a prosperous church that shares the favor of the world and its leaders.

The Bible does indeed predict the rise of a united world-church in the service of a false religion. It will be led by the false prophet, the "beast that arises out of the earth" and that will make the inhabitants of the earth worship the anti-christ (Rev. 13:11-18), whose coming is "in accordance with the work of Satan," but "whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth" (II Thess. 2:8). It is to be feared that the coming world-church, proclaimed by the Ecumenical Movement, will produce this religion of the end-time.

Let us be grateful that our Canadian Reformed Churches are not involved in this sad trend. Let us also be careful that we, in seeking unity in the Truth, let the Word of God and the Reformed Confession be our only norm.

CL. STAM



# From our Teachers' College

We are happy to tell you that our College is running smoothly, and that our Lord blessed us where we could make ends meet in our last fiscal year. We are also happy to report that there is a lot of activity by our local committees to broaden the membership base, and the reports to our Executive Committee are very promising. In some of our communi-

ties a reprint was used of an earlier publication written by br. Vanderven.

In this issue we will give you a public account of our financial affairs for the year ending August 31, 1986, which will be highlighted by br. J. Gelderman, our Administrator. Let me assure you, that one has to go a long way to find anyone with as much dedication as this brother!

In our further reports to you, we will keep you informed about our Annual Meeting, to be held in February, and we will give you in the spring a report of our Graduation evening, which usually attracts a full house!

ARIE J. HORDYK  
Chairman

## REVENUE 1985-1986 AND BUDGET 1986-1987

	Actual	Budget 1986-87
Student Fees	\$ 31,970.86	\$ 35,000.00
Membership Contributions	109,133.22	121,000.00
Stationery	896.80	
Donations	21,392.26	20,000.00
Church Collections	1,448.10	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>164,841.24</b>	<b>176,000.00</b>
Donations Equipment Fund	1,528.71	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$166,369.95</b>	<b>\$176,000.00</b>

## MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS 1985-1986

Congregation	Contributions	Donations	Church Collections
Brampton	\$ 2,602.40		
Burlington	9,265.00	\$ 2,675.00	
Fergus	1,552.50		
Guelph	370.00		
Orangeville	1,575.00		
Ottawa	275.00		
Toronto	125.00		
Chatham	4,615.00	550.00	\$ 752.00
Grand Rapids	200.00		
Hamilton	10,605.00	2,000.00	
London	2,081.41	291.41	
Attercliffe/Smithville/Lincoln	15,775.00	1,063.25	
Watford	909.65		
Carman	10,236.00		
Barrhead	100.00		
Neerlandia	11,300.00	1,324.80	334.40
Winnipeg	7,000.00	160.00	
Abbotsford/Chilliwack	6,000.00	1,000.00	
Cloverdale/Langley/Surrey	17,950.00	12,000.00	
Smithers	6,480.00		361.50
Australia		116.25	
Others	116.26	211.55	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$109,133.22</b>	<b>\$21,392.26</b>	<b>\$1,448.10</b>



## FINANCIAL STATEMENT 1985-1986 AND BUDGET 1986-1987

Organizational Expenses	Budget 1985-86	Actual 1985-86	Budget 1986-87
1. Travel Board	\$ 750.00	\$ 1,238.00	\$ 1,500.00
2. Travel Annual Meeting	2,000.00	629.54	2,000.00
3. Administration Board	750.00	1,360.62	1,000.00
4. Public Relations/Newsletter	1,800.00	1,253.64	1,800.00
<u>Total Organizational Expenses</u>	<u>\$ 5,300.00</u>	<u>\$ 4,481.80</u>	<u>\$ 6,300.00</u>
Operational Expenses			
5. Salaries and Benefits	\$137,000.00	\$127,482.17	\$138,000.00
6. Building and Furniture	4,000.00	6,754.19	7,000.00
7. Practicum Teaching	7,000.00	6,920.00	7,000.00
8. Library	8,500.00	8,859.49	8,500.00
9. Student Supply and Books	0.00	606.65	
10. Administration College	2,750.00	4,211.08	2,750.00
11. Travel Staff	750.00	1,607.08	1,150.00
12. Travel Students	3,000.00	2,979.44	4,000.00
13. Graduation	700.00	627.00	700.00
14. Miscellaneous	0.00	0.00	600.00
<u>Total Organizational Expenses</u>	<u>164,700.00</u>	<u>160,047.22</u>	<u>169,700.00</u>
<u>Total Operational Expenses</u>	<u>5,300.00</u>	<u>4,481.80</u>	<u>6,300.00</u>
<u>Totals</u>	<u>\$169,000.00</u>	<u>\$164,529.02</u>	<u>\$176,000.00</u>

### Three important ingredients for a healthy Reformed Teachers' College

- ONE: A Reformed and dedicated staff.  
 TWO: A group of hard-working students eager to be taught by that staff.  
 THREE: A healthy financial basis — and that's precisely the concern of your treasurer!

As part of the series of regular reports from the Teachers' College we present here a financial statement for 1985-1986, and the budget for 1986-1987, the current term. As a rule the membership may be "bored" by such statements, but please do take your time and just read them over — and take action where necessary!

The statements show:

- Total cost was about \$4,500.00 below budget.
- Membership contributions were about \$8,000.00 below budget as well.

While item #1 was much appreciated, item #2 was of much concern, and your treasurer had to warn the Board a number

of times that there were not enough funds in the bank for ONE MONTH AHEAD! In the end, however, we could close the year without having to use funds from the balance, saved up from previous years, because:

- we received some generous donations, totalling almost \$3,000.00 above budget.
- we also received \$1,448.00 resulting from various church collections.

Our conclusion must be that our Teachers' College will never become a financially healthy institution unless we can budget on the expectation that the *total* cost of operating the College will be borne by a committed membership. Yet, although that time has not yet arrived, the LORD has found ways for funds to be received so that we could continue to operate this institution for the benefit of our Reformed schools, for the education of His covenant children.

JAN GELDERMAN  
Treasurer CRTCA

**Consulaat-Generaal  
Der Nederlanden  
CONSULATE GENERAL  
OF THE NETHERLANDS**  
One Dundas Street West  
Box 2, Suite 2106  
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1Z3  
Phone: (416) 598-2520

**OPSPORING ADRESSEN:**

NIJHUIS, Hendrik Herman, geboren op 26 mei, 1935 te Oldenzaal, naar Canada

vertrokken in september 1957, laatstbekende adres alhier: RR #? te Gilford, ON.  
 POTMA, Theodorus Cornelis, geboren op 13 augustus, 1921, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Leeuwarderweg 1C, Sneek, naar Canada vertrokken op 2 oktober 1951.

MUSTERS, Adrianus Johannes, geboren op 23 september 1921, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Curacaostraat 33, Breda, naar Canada vertrokken op 16 oktober 1960.

SMIT, Jacob, geboren op 25 mei 1921, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Reestraat 8, Hilversum, naar Canada ver-

trokken op 28 mei 1953.  
 SPIERING, Willem Adrianus, geboren op 27 mei 1921, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Scheepmakerij 37, Delft, naar Canada vertrokken op 24 juni 1952.  
 STARK, Johannes Andreas, geboren op 24 april 1921, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Heggerankweg 39, Amsterdam, naar Canada vertrokken op 15 augustus 1966.

De COUNSUL-General  
voor deze:-  
Mevr. G. SCHNITZLER  
Fgd. KANSELIER

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# Farewell sermon — Rev. W. Huizinga

“ . . . the whole counsel of God has been preached to you . . . . ”

On Sunday, November 30, 1986 the congregation of Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton listened to Rev. W. Huizinga's farewell sermon. He had been our pastor for ten years, and the following would see him and his family embark on the long journey to Armadale, Australia.

As expected the church was filled to capacity, even the balcony which had not been used for over a year, was filled.

Rev. Huizinga began his sermon by remembering when he received the call to Hamilton some ten years ago. That call had been difficult to accept, he was young and much work had to be done in the congregation. However, the Lord led him to Hamilton and looking back over the past ten years Rev. Huizinga could see how the Lord has blessed us. Many activities took place in and around the church — the building of Guido de Brès High School, the building of Ebenezer Villa for seniors, the establishment of a teachers' college, the expansion of mission work with Hamilton becoming a sending church, the expanding work of evangelism, the institution of Ancaster Church — all activities richly blessed by the Lord. And now the time had come to say, “God be with you.”

The text for the sermon was Acts 20:26, 27 and the theme “I testify that the whole counsel of God has been preached to you and I am innocent of your blood.”

Rev. Huizinga explained that Paul's farewell to the Church at Ephesus and to all the churches, makes this text relevant to us since we are an apostolic church. Like Paul, Hamilton's pastor and preacher has announced the gospel faithfully every week. Paul did not hesitate to declare *all* of God's counsel (plan), as did Rev. Huizinga for example with his faithful preaching and teaching of the catechism. The plan of God became known to the catechism students who were told to “maintain their confession and it would profit them eternally.” However, the preaching was not always easy, in Hamilton, to preach that plan of God. Nevertheless as difficult as a subject may be our minister did not shrink back from proclaiming the gospel. The danger of mixed marriages and mixed courtships was preached; a steadfast pro-

motion of our schools and colleges took place; and organized evangelism was spearheaded by our minister.

Rev. Huizinga explained doctrine vs. action and told us he preached both sides. Again he stressed that he preached the *whole* counsel of God, and warned the congregation to beware of false dilemmas. We were reminded that God is sovereign however, man has a covenantal responsibility.

In conclusion, Rev. Huizinga again stressed that in the past ten years, he tried to preach the whole Scripture. We were told to be Reformed in a straightforward simple manner, keeping to the Bible

and keeping the whole counsel of God. That plan of God includes everything we need — we are to fight for it. Rev. Huizinga is innocent of our blood and commended the congregation to God and His grace.

After the service, as consistory, we shook hands with our pastor and his wife — no doubt the last time for a long time to come. There was no shame in the tearful farewells.

Hamilton's loss, is Armadale's gain, however to Armadale too, Rev. Huizinga can now say “I preach to you the *whole* counsel of God.”

T. A. ZIETSMA

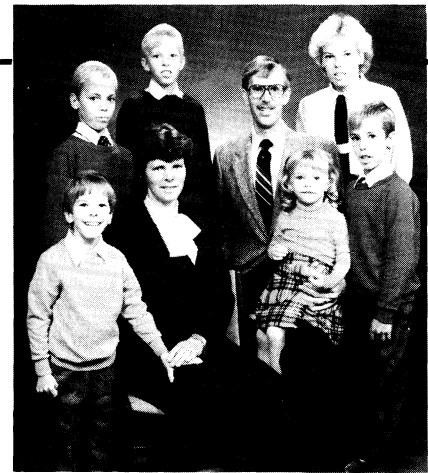
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## Farewell Huizingas

The evening that no one in the Hamilton congregation really wanted to come, and indeed had been postponed a number of times, had finally broken. The date is November 28, 1986; the place is the Guido de Brès auditorium. The banner on the wall, expertly fashioned by the Timothy elementary school, aptly summarized the purpose of the meeting — it read, “Farewell Huizingas.”

Some three hundred to four hundred members of the Hamilton and Ancaster congregations had gathered together this evening to bid farewell to their (former) pastor for ten years and his family, who three days later would take off from Pearson International Airport in Toronto bound for Armadale, Australia. After ten years of faithful service the time to say goodbye had come. And goodbye was said in many ways and many forms; no less than nineteen entries were listed on the program.

The evening started with the little ones, the lower grades of Timothy, who sang among other things an adapted version of



Top row (l-r): John, Dean, Rev. Huizinga, Gerrilynn. Bottom row (l-r): Laurence, Mrs. Huizinga, Geraldine, Bruce

“Home on the Range.” No roaming buffaloes in this song. Instead, the kangaroos were hopping away. The senior grades continued with a heart throbbing dramatization of “Waltzing Matilda.”

After the school, the Boys' and Girls' Club and the Young People's Societies took to the stage. We are sure the Huizingas will make a good use of the survival kit offered to them by the Ancaster Society. The many useful items this kit contained took away a lot of our anxieties about our pastor's departure to this country dangling at the bottom of our globe.

The choir “Sursum Corda” continued

with a musical goodbye. The last song in particular, "The Lord Bless You and Keep You," was a beautiful and fitting contribution to this evening.

After the music it was time for the poets. A number of the members of the Married Couples Bible Study Group had divided the letters of the word "Australia" among themselves and each participating couple produced a little gift accompanied by a rhyme based on the assigned letter. I tell you, the Customs officers better not check the Huizingas' luggage too closely or they may send them all back yet (which may have been the intention of the couples). What with a jar of Canadian topsoil, a bag of ice, and a snowball.

I am sure that the following quote from one of the rhymes expresses the general feeling of not only the members of the Couples' Club, but of all present this evening:

One thing we're sure of and want you to know,  
We felt that you brought us the Word of the Lord.  
Never your own words you did afford.  
For this we thank you from our heart,  
And pray that God may bless you as you depart.

No less than three women's societies continued the program. The Ancaster society produced some striking drawings highlighting some of the more personal characteristics of our pastor. His passion for gardening and, before a back breakdown, for jogging, were captured in expressive sketches. The drawing that sticks most in mind, however, is the one on our pastor's experiments with his facial hair. Over the years he presented us with many faces: with beard and mustache; beard only; mustache only; parting in the middle; parting on the side; etc.

The "Dutch" women's society had delegated sr. Walinga to express their thanks and surprise each member of the family with a gift that would remind them of



Presenting congregation's gift to the Huizingas

Canada when basking in the Australian sun.

The "English" Hamilton women's society got everyone present to sing a song explicating the linguistic problems our pastor will encounter in his new country. If we must believe this song it will be a formidable problem, but, knowing the linguistic talents of our pastor, not an unsurmountable one.

The last study society to make a presentation was the Hamilton men's society which, not being comprised of proficient singers, dancers, or actors, had delegated br. Jack Boot to express their appreciation and present a gift. The gift will ensure that our pastor will maintain a vivid image of the Canadian mountains which formed the backdrop of the setting in which he grew up.

The evening was concluded with a series of short speeches by representatives of the theological college, the two congregations, and the two consistories. Important events were remembered, notably the institution of the Ancaster Church, and the qualities of our minister were highlighted, especially his lack of pride and his sober but effective style of working. He was also urged to pay special atten-

tion to his family for the first number of months to bridge the void that will exist for a while with relatives and friends being far away.

The speeches were accompanied by a number of presents, the most memorable being a cheque for \$1,385 for the purchase of a camera from the Hamilton congregation and a beautiful painting of a Canadian winter scene from the Ancaster congregation.

Finally Rev. and Mrs. Huizinga took to the stage. Let us finish this report with the words of gratitude spoken by the minister on behalf of his family:

... In conclusion allow me, on behalf of my family, to express our deep gratitude for the way you, congregation, have supported us in the last ten years. You have prayed for us, cooperated in God's work, and given us a place and purpose in Christ's body. We felt at home here. Four of our children were born here. Four attended Reformed schools here. Our children enjoyed it in your midst. They carry fond memories of friendships, and the post office undoubtedly will benefit from that. We benefitted from the communion of saints. Though it was often hectic, it was satisfying work.

Specifically, we thank the consistory for its help and supervision over us. We express our appreciation to Timothy and Guido de Brès schools, and the teachers who helped us to train our children in God's wisdom. These schools have enriched our family.

For fifteen years we worked in Classis South. We arrived as strangers, but we leave, having gained many friends, brothers and sisters. We will keep many and fond memories of our ten years here. Hopefully, D.V., we may be able to see one another again. If our Lord directs differently, then we hope to meet you in the better homeland.

Goodbye. God be with you and us.

H. VAN BEELEN



The gymnasium was "packed"



## Dear Busy Beavers,

Thank you very much for all your letters and puzzles and riddles, etc. etc.

I was very happy to hear from so many of you!

And now we have lots of "goodies" to share today!

Remember our Finish the Story Contest last fall?

A great big "thank you" to all the Busy Beavers who sent in their story. Keep up the good work!

And now I will tell you who are the winners. We are proud of them! They are Busy Beaver *Tonya Beintema*, Busy Beaver *Annette De Jong*, Busy Beaver *Kelly Kleefman* and Busy Beaver *Marjorie Barendregt*.

Congratulations to you all!

I hope sometime we will have room to let you read some of the stories!

## MARCH

Time for birthday wishes!

We all join in wishing these Busy Beavers a very happy birthday and many, many happy returns of the day. Here's hoping you have a super day celebrating with your family and friends!

Above all we wish you the Lord's blessing and guidance in the coming year.

*Corinne Versteeg	3	Steven Leyenhorst	15
Joanne DeBoer	4	Katrina De Haas	17
Yolanda Van Spronsen	4	Jodi Bouwman	22
Heather Vandenberg	6	Amanda Bartels	23
Sheila Wierenga	9	Melanie Werkman	23
Gwendolyn Werkman	11	Helena Beijes	24
Betty Bergsma	12	Marjorie Helder	27
Nancy Lodder	14	Annette Jonker	31
Mirjam Bikker	15		

\*Busy Beavers: please look up the Jan 9/87 *Clarion* for a note about *special* birthdays.

Will you do it now and help with birthday surprises for these *far away* Busy Beavers.



## From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Brian Jager*.

We are happy to have you join us. Be sure to join in all our Busy Beaver activities, Brian! And will you write again and tell us about your family and your hobbies?

Hello, *Brenda Oosterveld*. It was nice to hear from you again. How are you doing? Thank you for your letter and the puzzle. I hope you soon get a pen-pal! Let me know, all right?

Congratulations on your new brother *Donna Pieffers*. Are you allowed to help look after him? Will you write and tell us? Thanks for the puzzle, Donna. But we'll have to save it for a bit!

Did you enjoy skiing during the Christmas holidays *Marjorie Barendregt*? I'm glad you read that nice series of books, Marjorie. I agree with you they are very good. We can learn from those people, right?

Thanks for a nice chatty letter and all the "goodies" you

sent in it *Pearl Vandeburgt*. You've been a real busy beaver all right! How did your brother like your gifts, Pearl? And was the evening fun? I'll bet it was!

Hello *Wendy Beijes*. I see you've been practising with your calligraphy set! Do you practise every day Wendy? Do you think you could send in a sample to share with the Busy Beavers? Thanks for the puzzle!

How is your rug hooking coming along, *Helena Beijes*? What a big puzzle you sent in! That was a lot of work! Thank you very much. Bye for now.

I'm glad you had such a nice holiday, *Leona De Haas*. It sounded as if you had fun at the wedding, too, and on New Year's Eve! Thanks for the puzzles, Leona. Keep up the good work!

Sounds to me as if you had lots of fun in the snow during the holidays, *Betty Bergsma*. It must have been cold for that fox to freeze, though. Do you write many poems, Betty? I like your poem about the months. Keep writing! This one we will share sometime with the Busy Beavers, too.

Hello *Tonya Beintema*. I see you've been a real Busy Beaver again! Thanks for the puzzles. Keep up the good work! Are you enjoying winter, Tonya? Or are you looking forward to spring?

Busy Beavers we need a (*girl*) pen pal for  
Brenda Oosterveld  
779 Spring Garden Road  
Burlington, Ontario  
L7T 1J6

A Limerick by Busy Beaver *Lucy 't Hart*

### HAM

A baby Piggy in his pram  
Looked around and said "Oh Mam!  
The butcher's near  
And I greatly fear  
That you'll be turned  
into a slice of HAM!"

### JOKES AND RIDDLES

by Busy Beavers *Marjorie Barendregt*,  
*Christina Bredenhof* and *Rebecca Boersema*

1. What age is important to a car?
2. When is an artist sad?
3. Why do spiders make good ball players?
4. What is a volcano?
5. What animal has two humps and is found in Alaska?
6. What gives milk and has only one horn?
7. What did the flower say to the bee?
8. What goes clomp, clomp, clomp, swish?
9. What has 6 legs but uses only 4?
10. Why does B come before C?

(answers next page)

Farmer: Excuse me, little girl, I have to water my horse.

Little girl: What does that mean?

Farmer: I mean I have to give water to my horse.

Little girl: Excuse me, I have to milk my cat.