

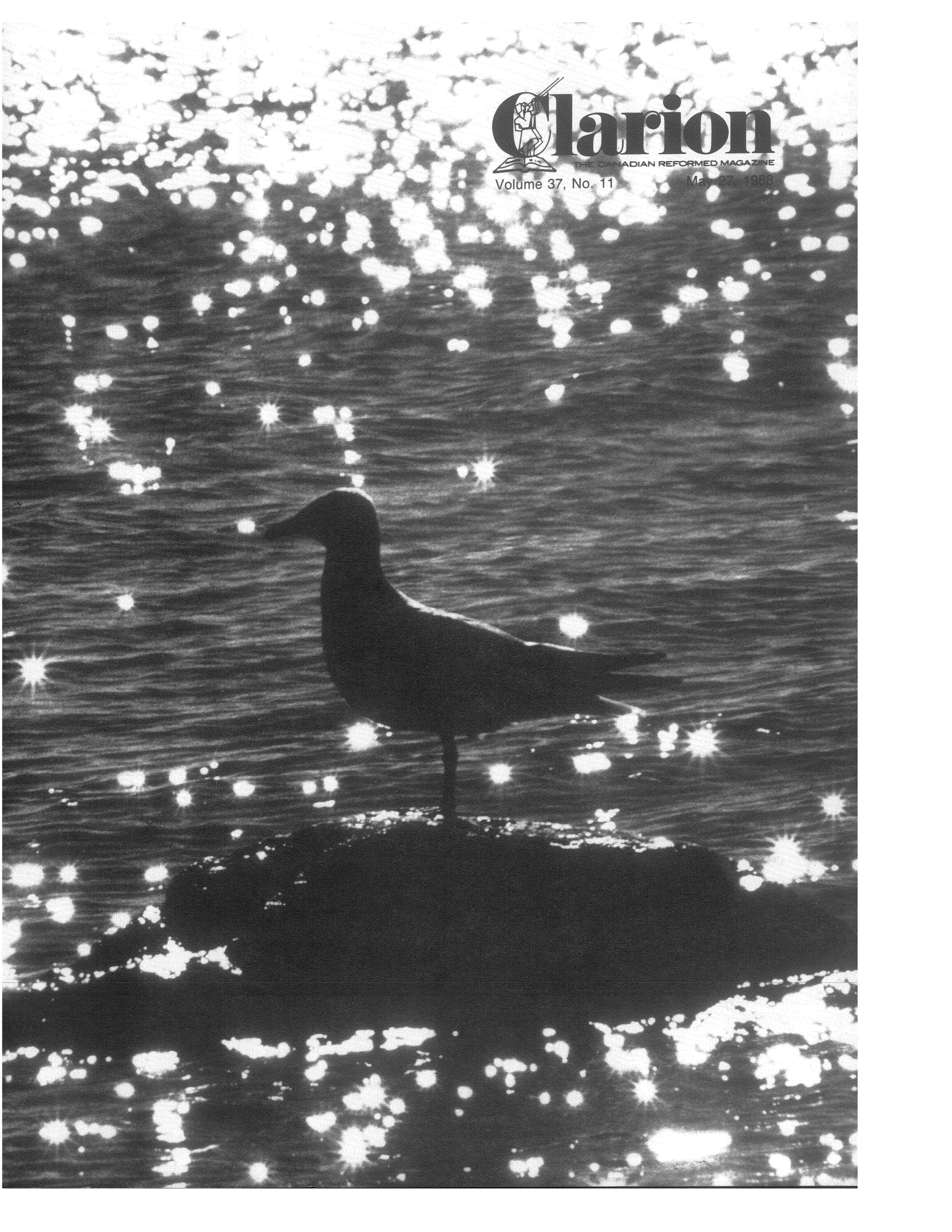


# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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# Living in the age of moral relativity

## An analysis of the abortion law crisis

In the aftermath of the recent pronouncement of the Supreme Court of Canada, resulting in a holocaust for the unborn and unwanted, we do well to consider the implication of the present-day morality which could allow such a result. It is indeed a time of upheaval, recognized also in our federation of churches, requiring the dedication of a special day of fasting and prayer. In discerning the spirit of our time, we witness a coalescence of the material and spiritual destructive forces.

We are all somewhat acquainted with the Theory of Relativity primarily promoted by Albert Einstein. The theory, simply put, places time and space in relation to constant movement. Absolutes, fixed and constant, were replaced by relative motion.

The Theory of Relativity revolutionized our society. It culminated in the development of the nuclear bomb, employed in 1945 by the United States of America to crush the Japanese war machine, and end the Second World War. Without overstatement, the 20th century is marked by these "advances." The profound implications of a scientific theory may not have been entirely foreseen by those propounding it some 40 years ago.

Similarly, it is my conviction that the shocking legal development seen particularly in the abortion decision of the Supreme Court of Canada is the outcome of earlier theory. The general application of a theory of moral relativity, resulted in Canada in the development of an "atomic bomb" in the form of the 1982 *Charter of Rights*, the effects of which are now being felt.

How is this *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* being used in the Canadian Courts? The Supreme Court of Canada, in the recent Morgentaler decision makes the following statements:

"The *Charter* is predicated on a particular conception of the place of the individual in society . . . Liberty in a free and democratic society does not require the state to approve the personal decisions made by its citizens; it does, however, require the state to respect them." (per Madam Justice B. Wilson)

This type of language points to the underlying view that, with the *Charter*, individual decisions are not to be restricted. But what if such decisions conflict with, the essence of a democratic society: how far can the individual's rights and decisions be extended?

"A question of proportionality thus arises: it is for Parliament to attempt to achieve that proportionality which satisfies the *Charter*, S.1 for the state has an undoubted interest in the foetus, and the question is only when does that interest arise in law and in conformity with . . . the *Charter*?" (per Mr. Justice Beetz)

While this member of the Supreme Court of Canada does not attempt to answer this question, Madam Justice Wilson concludes: that under the old abortion control law, an expectant mother

"is truly being treated as a means . . . to an end which she does not desire but over which she has no control. She is the passive recipient of a decision made by others as to whether her body is to be used to nurture new life. Can there be anything that comports less with human dignity and self-respect?"

Our Chief Justice, Brian Dickson, concludes:

" . . . state interference with bodily integrity and serious state imposed psychological stress . . . (caused by unequal accessibility to accredited abortion centres — HF) . . . constitute a breach of security of the person."

If your spine is not tingling after reading these comments, read them again! By creating a dilemma between the interest of society in the protection of the unborn (which is acknowledged) and the right of the woman (who should have control over conception, birth and death, according to Justice Wilson), the two are weighed off against each other, to achieve the correct "proportionality."

The practical result of the judgment is to condemn thousands of unborn to death, with the added irony that because of its "legality" government funding is mandatory. The Supreme Court of Canada could, had it so desired, have granted time to the federal government to amend the abortion laws (S.251 of the *Criminal Code*). This has been done in the implementation of French language rights in Manitoba.<sup>1</sup> In that instance, the Supreme Court of Canada noted that the lack of valid provincial laws would result in anarchy. Apparently, the resulting anarchy in the care for the unborn did not warrant such special consideration.

On the other hand, the Supreme Court of Canada, by striking the existing abortion law (which allowed abortion, in principle, subject to the approval of a therapeutic abortion committee), stripped the issue bare of all fiction: the legal issue of the rights of the unborn is at stake. Morally, the sanctity of life is at stake, and now this principal issue confronts the Canadian law makers.

Unfortunately, moral relativity prevails. It therefore appears that, again, trade-offs will be made. Based on some stage of the fetus' development, the decision to abort will be again, sanctioned. The relative rights of mother and child will be put over against each other.

In great contrast to the prevalent thinking in our highest court and parliament, we believe in a system of Biblical absolutes, in a God-given right and wrong, as well as individual rights should never be put over against each other, as appears to be the aim of the moral relativists. Are we being unrealistic in these views?

It is a sad fact that, even if the law were to ban all forms of abortion, the morality of our society would likely not change. However, as the administrator of God-given authority, it is the government's duty to promote the will of God, the Creator and Sustainer of Life, regardless of man's sinfulness.

The moral state of our society cannot be used by our

government as the reason for avoiding absolutes. It is therefore our task, in this era of moral destruction and spiritual attack to heed the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, "This will be a time for you to bear testimony" (Luke 21:13). We are to effectively call upon our law givers, to call our government to consider well its God-given responsibility (e.g. Hebrews 13).

We must consider the task of giving account, as individuals, by speaking and writing to our elected representatives. Communally, we may work to bring our message through political organizations, such as the Christian Heritage Party. But, to be sure, the attacks on Biblical norms and morals, as typified in the recent decision of our Supreme Court will con-

tinue. Let us make use of the means still available to us, to proclaim the sovereignty of our heavenly Father over all of life!

HERMAN FABER

<sup>1</sup> In the Manitoba Language Rights case, the Supreme Court of Canada delayed implementation of its decision, to avoid undermining the principle of the Rule of Law, which it called "a fundamental principle of our Constitution" as the preamble to the Constitution states: "Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the *Rule of Law*." To suspend this "fundamental principle" would bring chaos, the Court concluded. It is saddening to see the other "fundamental principle," the supremacy of God, to rally ignored in considering the effect of suspending all control over abortions.

## Response to Rev. Stam

### re: Further reflections on Synodical practices and Rev. Stam's Postscript, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 76-80

The February 19, 1988 issue of *Clarion* contained our submission regarding recent changes made to the liturgical forms for public profession of faith and for baptism. The same issue contained a response from Rev. Cl. Stam. In order to clarify our view, it will be necessary to evaluate br. Stam's view of church history as well as his views on the subordinate standards and the place of public critique of these standards.

Firstly, with respect to Rev. Stam's view of church history the following remarks can be made:

- He fails to give proof for his interpretation of Synod of Utrecht (1923). The position favoured by Rev. Stam to include reference to the Three Forms of Unity (T.F.U.) was held by a *minority* and rejected. Now it may be true that today within our circles it has become the *majority* opinion, but that does not mean it was so in 1923. The burden of proof lies with those who want to introduce the *minority* opinion of 1923. Therefore, the wish to make a "clarification" (i.e. introduce the *minority* opinion) exceeded the mandate given by Synod Coal-dale (1977).
- He suggests that we create a *false dichotomy* between faith and knowledge. That is simply not the case. We said that it was questionable whether a believer can give allegiance to *all* the formulations in the confessions. Rev. Stam seems to imply that our position is that they must know nothing or little at all. He says it is a matter of growth . . . . That is precisely what we said in footnote 12.<sup>1</sup> The "core of the confessions" is summarized in the Apostles' Creed says Bouwman, and the Catechism may be used as a guide to instruct our

youth in these matters.

- He confuses the activities of doing public profession of faith and the signing of the Form of Subscription. If every member of the church has always been bound to *everything* in the confessions at the time of public profession, why was it necessary to create a Form of Subscription?
- He believes we are bound to everything in the confessions because this does justice to the historical progress of the church. We agree that the central tenets of the Reformation can only be rejected with great cost to one's understanding of Scripture, but since the time of the Reformation *further* insight into Scripture has found the confessions wanting in *certain* respects. This too is progress! The solution to this conflict between Scripture and confession is not to absolutize the confessions, but humbly bow before Scripture. This does not mean a negation of the confessions (we honour them as guides of inestimable help) but it allows one to *fully* honour the Reformation principle of Sola Scriptura.

In addition, another danger connected with those who espouse Rev. Stam's position is to remove the confessions from their historical context.<sup>2</sup> Thus, some who seek to save *everything* in the T.F.U., say that the terms must not be read historically. Yet if one were to follow this course of action, it would allow anyone to read his or her viewpoint into the terms used by the confessions. The whole debate about the "true church" in our federation is a case in point. The proper understanding of any historical term and document can only be obtained by

leaving it in its proper context.

Secondly, Rev. Stam confuses the Supreme Standard (Bible) with the subordinate standards (T.F.U.). Thus,

- he refers to the confessions as "*normative*"<sup>3</sup> even when they do not conform *in every respect* to Scripture.
- he binds members of the church to *everything* in the T.F.U. even when Article 7 of the Belgic Confession states that we must reject *whatever* does not agree with the infallible rule of Scripture.
- he forces people to a *prior commitment* concerning the truth of the confessions even when discussing its weaknesses.
- he views the confessions as almost an end in themselves. He refuses to admit that the purpose of the confessions is to act as "tool" or as Wiskerke puts it, a "goede gids," to point believers to the Bible, to accept it as the *terra firma* — the unshakable foundation — of their faith. Schilder warned about this danger of confessionalism and said it would lead to "dead orthodoxy."<sup>4</sup>

Thirdly, Rev. Stam accuses us of taking "blank shots" at the confessions and feels that *Clarion* is not the place to discuss the weaknesses of the confessions. We believe he is misguided on both points. We are not taking "blank shots," but are following a tradition of critique that has been practiced among others by A. Janse and J. Wiskerke. We have amply footnoted our position and wish Rev. Stam would do the same with respect to his views. He feels our critique has no place in the press but fails to mention that the critiques of Janse and Wiskerke have received ample coverage in the Dutch press.<sup>5</sup> He may not like that there is critique, but that does not mean it does not exist. While Rev. Stam "wonders whether

the aversion against the expression 'summarized in the confessions' is not in fact a negation of the normative function of the Reformed confessions," we wonder whether his prior commitment to the complete soundness of the confessions<sup>6</sup> makes him uneasy when critique is forthcoming.

In conclusion, we wish to underscore once more that our intention is *not* to do away with the confessions. That would be to say that we are in no way indebted to our forefathers for theological insight. Rather, we seek to safeguard the principles of historical accuracy, intellectual honesty, and Sola Scriptura.<sup>7</sup> The old adage is true: A Reformed church is always reforming itself. If these are not sufficient reasons for returning to the original wording ("the articles of the Christian faith") perhaps Rev. Stam could give us the "solid grounds" for doing so.

Your brothers in Christ,  
B. MOES  
P. ROUKEMA  
P. SCHÖN

<sup>5</sup> Even though A. Janse's work was published decades ago, it continues to be used by numerous scholars today. J. Wiskerke's work was published by, among others, *De Reformatie* and *Lucerna*. A collection of his articles, edited by Prof. C. Trimp was published by De Vuurbaak in 1978. In his introduction Trimp praises Wiskerke's work in the following words: "Zijn historische eerlijkheid, wetenschappelijke allure en confessionele trouw staan daarvoor borg." (p.10) The dilemma is not as Rev. Stam pictures it: either accept everything in the confessions or reject everything in them. Rather use them as helpful tools always explaining and evaluating them in the light of Scripture which says "in Thy light shall we see light." (Psalm 36:9 KJV)

<sup>6</sup> While Rev. Stam does not want to say that the confessions are infallible, his practical application of them comes perilously close to that position. In an article entitled *Catechism Preaching* published in *Clarion*, November 20, 1987, he speaks of the terms and expres-

sions used by the Heidelberg Catechism in absolutist language. He wrote: "Catechism preaching is accurately explaining and proclaiming the Word of God summarized in a particular Lord's Day, using the *formulations* and the *expressions* which the churches have accepted as *fully biblical*." He also "canonized" the flow of the Lord's Day, saying that the minister's "theme and points will them be formulated from out of the contents and flow of the Lord's Day with which he is dealing." This seems somewhat different from Wiskerke's approach who, when dealing with the *weakness* of Q&A 21 of the H.C. says that although he accepts the answer, he will further elucidate the matter with reference to Scripture. His points are not dictated by the *flow* of the Lord's Day but by God's infallible Word. — c.f. J. Wiskerke *op.cit.* page 60. Further knowledge of Rev. Stam's position can be obtained from *Reformed Perspective*, Vol 4, No. 9 page 2, 3 and 8.

<sup>7</sup> This is also the reason why we see no need to swear an *oath* on the Three Forms of Unity.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bruce K. Waltke's "Dogmatic Theology and Relative Knowledge" which deals with the fact that "the faith delivered to us is eternal and unchanging, yet our understanding of that faith is relative and progressing." He illustrates this with reference to I Timothy 4:11, 15 and II Timothy 2:2, 15. — *CRUX* Vol. XV, No. 1, March 1979.

<sup>2</sup> This position is taken by C. VanderLeest, in *Wat is Gereformeerd?*, Uitgeverij De Vuurbaak, b.v. Groningen, 1978, page 15-33. His willingness to openly discuss the weaknesses of the confessions, however, is commendable.

<sup>3</sup> The attempt of some to seek refuge in the term *norma normata* (normed norm) still does not adequately deal with *errors* in the Three Forms of Unity. It still seems best to refer to the confessions as tools, guidelines or some similar term.

<sup>4</sup> The first passage, attributed to Schilder and cited by Wiskerke reads: "Nooit enige belijdenis kan Hem (die in zijn Woord spreekt — W.) uitputten. Toch onderwijst het Woord, geeft het tastbare dingen mee. Dat is te zien in de belijdenis. Alleen, omdat de belijdenis het Woord niet uitput, nooit de werking van het Woord in de belijdenis afsluiten! Dan wordt de belijdenis dood kapitaal en gaan we te gronde aan dode rechtzinnigheid." In another passage based on G.C. Berkhouwer's *Conflict met Rome*, Wiskerke writes: "waarschuwing tegen z.g. ('praktisch'-W.) confessionalisme, waarbij in de levenspraktijk de belijdenis de Schrift gaat vervangen, zoals een excerpt uit een eens gelezen boek voor een student het boek zelf vervangt, b.v. bij voorbereiding voor een examen; valt men daaraan ten slachtoffer, dan is er verrassende overeenkomst met Rome, dat de Schrift tot onwerkzame achtergrond devalueert, en maakt men zichzelf steriel en gaat de zegen van de doorwerking van het woord van God te loor." — J. Wiskerke, *De strijd om de sleutel der kennis*, Uitgeverij De Vuurbaak b.v. Groningen, 1978, page 51.

## CHURCH NEWS



The Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches announces that Dr. J. Faber, principal of the College and professor of Dogmatics since 1968, has requested to be retired on August 31, 1989. The Board is also aware that Dr. K. Deddens is slated to retire as professor of Diaconology and Church History on May 31, 1990, the Lord willing. In view of these retirements, the Board has petitioned the Convening Church of General Synod 1989 to meet in the Spring of 1989 so that proper appointments can be made in time to allow for continuity in the teaching at the College.

For the Board,  
CL. STAM, secretary

\* \* \*

The Canadian Reformed Church of Winnipeg, MB, convening Church for the next General Synod, informs the churches that the Board of Governors of the Theological College in Hamilton, ON, requested an earlier General Synod due to the retirement of Dr. J. Faber (August 31, 1989) and Dr. K. Deddens (May 1, 1990).

The consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church of Winnipeg decided to convene the next General Synod, D.V., on Tuesday, April 18, 1989.

\* \* \*

The Rev. K. Bruning, emeritus minister of the Free Reformed Church of Armadale, Western Australia, will be in Canada from June to August 1988. He is both willing and permitted to preach in our churches, if invited.

\* \* \*

The International Conference of Reformed Churches will meet in the Cloverdale/Langley area of British Columbia from June 19-29, 1989.

On Monday, June 19th in the evening a Prayer Service will be held in Cloverdale.

From Tuesday, June 20 to Thursday, June 29, the Conference will meet in Langley. Thus far the following speakers and topics are known:

Dr. K. Deddens — *Contextualization in Mission*

Dr. J. Douma — *Apartheid*

Dr. J. Van Bruggen — *Hermeneutics and the Gift of the Spirit*

Dr. C. VanDam — *The Elder as Preserver of Life in the Covenant*

The Committee on Relations  
With Churches Abroad

J. VISSCHER (convener)

# The Reformed confessions

## Accepted norms or useful tools?

The brothers B. Moes, P. Roukema and P. Schön have done me the honour of reacting to my postscript regarding their earlier submission on Synod 1983's decision to change "articles" to "confessions" in the questions in the Forms for Public Profession of Faith and Holy Baptism. Interested readers perhaps remember the issue.

I need not regurgitate the whole matter again. I still believe that when the Dutch Synod of 1923 adopted the expression "summarized in the Articles of the Christian faith," it did not thereby imply that the Three Forms of Unity were no longer binding in the church for all members. It chose the reference to the Apostles' Creed because this eminently trinitarian and ecumenical creed clearly refers to the promises made at baptism, but the Synod did not mean to indicate that the Three Forms of Unity ceased to be functional standards in the Reformed churches.

### The church and the confessions

The brothers suggest that my view on the position of the confession in the history of the churches is not correct. For the good order of things, then, it is important to note what the churches themselves have said in the past about the function and position of the confessions.

When the Dutch federation of churches was formed in the years 1568 (Convent of Wezel) and 1571 (Synod of Embden), the churches followed the example of the French churches and officially adopted the Reformed confessions.<sup>1</sup> The communion of the church was clearly perceived as a confessional unity!

The Synod of Dortrecht in 1618 and 1619 emphatically maintained the Reformed confessions over against the Remonstrants. This Synod also decided that the Heidelberg Catechism should be used in the worship services and revised the Belgic Confession. And we know of the binding effect of the Canons of Dort!

Let us examine the official document called the Act of Secession of 1834 (Acte van Afscheiding). We find there that the following declaration was made, "we declare also to desire communion with all truly reformed members, and to unite

ourselves with every assembly based on God's infallible Word, wherever God has united the same, testifying with them *that we hold in everything to our old Forms of Unity, namely the confession of faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of the Synod of Dortrecht held in the years 1618-1619.*" (italics mine, C.I.S.)

The same kind of declaration was made in the time of the second Secession or "Doleantie" in 1886. Prof. Kamphuis has written, "Because the Secession and Doleantie saw the church and the communion of the church as being totally subjected to the Word of God, they saw the unity of confession as an absolutely necessary condition for the functioning of a federation."<sup>2</sup>


Perhaps we might also look at the Act of Liberation and Return ("Acte van Vrijmaking en Wederkeer") which functioned as an important document in the time of the liberation from synodical hierarchy in 1944. We find there the following, "... we decide to liberate ourselves from all unlawful and ungodly suspen-

sions and depositions . . . in order that [the churches] may return to and together remain under the obedience to the Word of God as this is confessed by [them] in the forms of unity, previously accepted by these churches, and in them alone."

It is clear that at key moments in the history of the Reformed churches, the return to and the acceptance of the Reformed confessions was seen as a maintaining of the "sola Scriptura" of the Reformation. Liberals have always tried to wean the churches away from the confessions, for then they can freely attack the authority of the Scriptures in the church! But the churches have by God's grace been able to uphold the Reformed confession and so remained true to the Word of God.

### Form of subscription

It is true that there is a difference between making public profession of faith and signing the Form of Subscription. I do not confuse the two, but I do connect them in this way: what is implicit already

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<p><b>SUBSCRIPTION RATES</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Regular</th> <th>Air</th> </tr> <tr> <th>FOR 1988</th> <th>Mail</th> <th>Mail</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Canada</td> <td>\$25.00</td> <td>\$44.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>U.S.A. U.S. Funds</td> <td>\$27.00</td> <td>\$41.50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>International</td> <td>\$36.50</td> <td>\$63.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Advertisements: \$6.00 per column inch Second class mail registration number 1025 ISSN 0383-0438</p>				Regular	Air	FOR 1988	Mail	Mail	Canada	\$25.00	\$44.00	U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$27.00	\$41.50	International	\$36.50	\$63.00	
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when we make public profession of faith must be made explicit when we become office-bearers, namely, that we wholeheartedly accept the Three Forms of Unity as being in full agreement with the Word of God. For this is the historic position of the Reformed churches since the sixteenth century!

We have heard before the talk that the members of the church are not bound to the Three Forms of Unity. Prof. J. Kamphuis has remarked about the late sixties when there was a conflict in our Dutch sister-churches about the function of the confession, "The Liberation was reduced to mere provincialism ("klein vaderlands gedoe") and the Reformed confession was made relative ("werd gerelativeerd"). That was the climate here. We then were told, for example, the congregation is not bound to the Three Forms of Unity, only the office-bearers."<sup>3</sup>

The ultimate result was that also office-bearers felt at liberty to disagree publicly with the confessions. First the congregation is not bound, then the office-bearers are bound only "insofar," and finally nobody feels bound to the confessions. That's how it has often gone, and this is the risk which the brothers are taking with their position, but do they realize what is really at stake?

If the members do not take their public profession of faith seriously, the office-bearers will not take their subscription to the confessions seriously. I do not confuse these matters, but I do believe that they are closely related. We do not have one standard for members and another standard for office-bearers; that is a Romanist position which separates clergy from laity, but we believe that the church is a communion of faith of all its members.

## K. Schilder and the confessions

I was happy when I saw that the brothers refer to the term *norma normata* and to Prof. K. Schilder. I am afraid, however, that they have not understood what this term means nor what Prof. Schilder's position is in this respect.

Explaining Article 7 of the Belgic Confession, concerning the authority of Scripture, Schilder writes the following, "The authority of the Scriptures means also that one does not add to it on one's own authority. This is among other things directed against Rome, which added the apocryphal books and the depositum fidei (collection of credal statements and confessional material) and later the infallible papal decrees. But the confession may also not invent anything new, but may only for a certain purpose clarify what has already been said. Even less the tradition may be brought to bear, for it must be tested according to God's Word. *Therefore the Bible is called norma normans*

*(the norm which gives the norm, with an authority of its own) and the confession is called norma normata (the norm which is subject to the norm), because the confession is normative, but must in turn recognize the Scriptures as its standard; it is always subject to the Bible."*<sup>4</sup> (italics mine, Cl.S.)

The brothers assure us that they do not wish to do away with the confessions but that they have a healthy respect for them. After all, they are "indebted to our forefathers for theological insight." This reminds me of the position of Karl Barth, the famous German-Swiss dialectic theologian. K. Schilder has written about Barth's position the following, "No, Barth would not dream of withholding due respect from the confessions. In the dogma's and confessions the church of the past speaks; she speaks with honour and respect, and may not be neglected. . . ."<sup>5</sup> It is clear that Barth sees the confessions as historic documents, interesting relics and even useful tools, but not as an accepted norm also for today!

Schilder writes, "The reformed do not have the least objection to considering the confession always subject ("appellabel") to a higher authority, *norma normanda* then, which means, a norm which itself is always subject again to a higher norm. *But they do continue to see the confession as norm, as standard, because the Bible can indeed function for them as a concrete norm . . .*" (italics mine, Cl.S.)

Was K. Schilder "seeking refuge" in a confusing and unsatisfactory terminology when he spoke of the Bible being the supreme norm and the confession as *norma normata*?

## The confessions and criticism

The brothers suggest that I am afraid of critique on the confession. It is rather my opinion that all this critique — as listed by them — does not really amount to much. Most of it has been refuted or is outdated. It strikes me that the churches have absorbed this critique graciously and still maintained the binding character of the confessions. None of this criticism was of such a nature that it led to any major revision.

I am afraid of what the brothers intend to achieve with their list of critique. Do they wish to demonstrate that the confessions do not agree with Scripture and contain fallacies? Do they wish to uncover the perceived weaknesses of our credal standards so that people do not feel bound by them? In that case, they should go the proper way seeking revision at the major assemblies.

Reformed scholars who respect their confession are very careful not to cast doubt on the binding character of the con-

fessions. I am happy that the brothers mention that Rev. Wiskerke despite his criticisms on certain formulations in the catechism still declared that he accepted the answer itself! We would not have expected anything else from a man who has signed the Form of Subscription.

The brothers wish to maintain "intellectual honesty." In 1901, Dr. H. Bouwman (mentioned earlier in this discussion) spoke on the topic "The Significance of the Reformed Confession for Science."<sup>6</sup> Bouwman makes these remarks, "The confession receives its authority only from Scripture. It does not want to be anything except an explanation of the Word according to the Word." Therefore, "on the basis of the confession" means for a reformed person nothing else than "on the basis of the Word." And Bouwman continues, "as a member of the Reformed Church the man of science is in his inward conviction already bound to God's Word and the confession. He accepts that confession. It is the expression of his faith. Its contents do not first have to be presented to him so that he may investigate it further and then declare that he knows it to be the expression of his faith. On the basis of the confession, no force but freedom."

Bouwman dared to speak even with respect to intellectuals, people of science and knowledge, of a "prior commitment" to the Reformed confessions. Since the church has accepted this confession, and we are confessing and communicant members of that church, we too, no matter how intellectual we are, wholeheartedly accept it as well.

## Confessionalism?

The brothers suggest that I am guilty of confessionalism or that I am in danger of it. Confessionalism is that someone places human documents on par with or above the Word of God. I find this intimation a bit of a cheap shot.

I had made it quite clear in my postscript that "all our standards are subordinated to the Word of God" and that we should uphold the validity of the confessions "without placing them on the same level as the Word of God."

I do not think it quite to the point to introduce material from another article, namely, one on catechism preaching, to try to prove the suggestion that I think in confessionalistic terms. For in that article I was dealing with a matter of homiletics, how best to preach on the catechism. I consider it in homiletical terms the better and more proper way, when preaching on the catechism, to use the format and formulations of the catechism itself. But that does not mean that I elevate the catechism to the status of the Bible.

The brothers see the confessions as

useful tools, as the Three Forms of *Utility*. I am afraid that in this way they become the Three Forms of *Futility*. The quickest way to removing the principle of "sola Scriptura" is to dismantle the authority of the Reformed confessions.

I see the confessions as accepted norms, accepted even of old, as being in agreement with the Scriptures, and for

that reason only as binding standards of faith. For me they are truly The Three Forms of *Unity*.

CL. STAM

<sup>1</sup>J. Kamphuis, *Zo Vonden Wij Elkaar*, De Vuurbaak, Groningen, 1971, p. 42, where he quotes from the Acts, Art. 2 of the Synod of Embden.

<sup>2</sup>J. Kamphuis, *Op Zoek Naar De Belijdende*

*Volkskerk*, De Vuurbaak, Groningen, 1967, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>Peter Bergwerff and Tjerk de Vries, *Met Open Vizier*, De Vuurbaak, Barneveld, 1987, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup>K. Schilder, *Christelijke Religie*, vandenBerg, Kampen, n.d., p. 26, 27.

<sup>5</sup>K. Schilder, *De Kerk II*, Oosterbaan en Le Cointre, Goes, 1962, p. 331 ff.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted in J. Kamphuis, *Verkenningen II*, Oosterbaan en Le Cointre, Goes, 1964, p. 137 ff.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Re: Further reflections on Synodical practices; and From "articles" to "Confessions": an illegal move? Volume 37, No. 4 February 19, 1988

We believe that Rev. Cl. Stam does give a clear reply to the first article, but one clarification is needed.

He states that "In my opinion such a list does not belong in the press . . . ." This with regard to a list of "objections" against our Confessions, and after he wrote "But we have in our churches accepted a proper way of presenting objections against the formulations of the confession, and this way should be followed at all times . . . ."

Of course. But how many readers are, or have been at one time or other, office-bearers? He does refer to a form which is signed by all ministers and office-bearers when they enter the office. And each time when they enter that office again.

I would very much like him to print that form and its history in Canada for the information of *all* church members.

Also: taking the position of the first writers into consideration, and the rebuttal of Rev. Cl. Stam re: the above form for office-bearers, we are getting into a wrong dilemma. Something, I'm sure Rev. Cl. Stam does not intend.

Office-bearers must sign a commitment to the confessions. The first writers do not want such a commitment from the church members. We have heard such voices before in other churches.

An office-bearer must accept, and know, the confessions. A member, upon joining such a church must only accept Christ as his/her Saviour. (e.g. O.P.C.)

This would even be sufficient within our churches; no one can deny that, but today this can hardly be maintained.

With all the "pluriform" movements going on, where it is tried to "wash away church distinctions," a church must have a clear voice.

This is not achieved with finding minute faults in the confessions.

The first writers have, at times, had a strong voice within a certain group of members. They should have gone the way Rev. Stam pointed out to them, years ago.

Please, Rev. Stam. Show *all* of us the way by printing and explanation and history of that form.

JAN GELDERMAN

*We gladly comply partly with the suggestion of br. Gelderman and print a translation of the subscription form as that was adopted at the Synod of Dordt 1618-'19. Our Consistories and Classis, as well as the (Theological) College have basically this very same form, even though the translation may vary here and there. The Synod of Dordt determined that also elders, deacons, professors, and school-teachers were to sign this subscription form. You can find it all under the 164th Session of the Synod, in the Post-Acta.*

### FORM OF SUBSCRIPTION

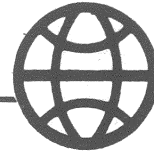
We, the undersigned, Ministers of the Word of God, of the Classis of . . . . . do hereby, sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this our subscription that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed Churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, agree with the Word of God in everything.

We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either openly or secretly, either directly or indirectly, teaching or writing anything against this doctrine.

We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned Synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church free from such errors. And if it would happen that we get hereafter any objections or different sentiments against the

aforesaid doctrine, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing; that we will first reveal such sentiments to the Consistory, Classis, and Synod, that the same may there be examined, being ready always willingly to submit to the judgment of the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, under the penalty, in case of refusal, of being by that very fact (lipso facto) suspended from our office.

And if at any time the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion and in order to preserve the unity and purity of doctrine, may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any article of the Confession of Faith, the Catechism, or the explanation of the National Synod, we do hereby promise to be always ready and willing to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned, reserving for ourselves, however, the right of appeal in case we should believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the Consistory, the Classis or the Synod, during which time of appeal we will acquiesce in the decision and judgment of the Regional Synod.



## PENSACOLA, FLA

Christians may worship and preach only in recognized places of worship, according to new regulations being circulated in Uganda. These regulations mark the end of eight years of religious freedom in Uganda, according to Don Dunkerley of Proclamation International, a US-based support organization for the Presbyterian Church of Uganda (PCU). Godfrey Mamukuma, Civil Intelligence Officer of Jinja issued instructions in November 1987 to police commissioners that "no permission shall be given for [worship] gatherings that take place in an individual or private houses, schools, hotels, parks or stadiums." The ban particularly affects all-night prayer meetings, common among evangelical Christians in Uganda.

The government of Uganda is a marxist government that came to power in January 1986. The ostensible reason given for the new restrictions is to reduce

the Muslim-Christian conflicts. Although the present leader, Yoweri Museveni, was raised in a Christian family, he appears to be taking orders from his Libyan sponsors. Uganda also receives considerable help from China, Yugoslavia, and Cuba. (Proclamation International and *Missionary Monthly*) (RES NE)

## AMSTERDAM

The council of the Delfzijl congregation of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands (GKN) (syn.) has issued a statement that it has not instituted nor even blessed a divorce. The church was reported last month to have held a closed service at which a liturgy of divorce was read.

The two persons did not wish, the council noted, to divorce without praying for a blessing for each other in their now-separated course of life. There was no approval or institution of the divorce, no

blessing for what had happened, but a prayer for blessing for the future.

In a commentary, Dr. K. Runia, editor of *Centraal Weekblad*, objected that there was still no reason why this had to take place in a church service, rather than a session of pastoral counselling. He also said that no church service should be "closed" and could not understand the reasoning of the pastor that there was no time for a discussion of the matter in the congregation. (RES NE)

## VATICAN CITY

The Russian Orthodox Church officially has invited the Vatican to send a delegation to the celebration of the 1000th anniversary of Christianity in Russia. This was announced by Cardinal Willebrands, president of the secretariat for the unity of Christians. (ND)

VO

### 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:

BEERENFENGER, Johan Frederik Wilhelm, geboren op 8 juni 1923 te Leiden, gehuwd met Phyllis Joyce Gail, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Beethovenstraat 61, Voorschoten. Naar Canada vertrokken op 7 nov. 1976.

BRAKBAND, Floris Pieter, geboren op 24 januari 1923, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Meente 28, Leerdam. Naar Canada vertrokken op 25 mei 1962.

GROENEVELT, Jan Willem, geboren op 23 januari 1923, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Stationsstraat 7, Voorthuizen. Naar Canada vertrokken op 13 januari 1954.

HORN, Daniel, geboren op 26 april 1903 te Amsterdam, laatstbekende woon-

plaats in Nederland: Baarn. Naar Canada vertrokken op 6 mei 1952.

HUIJBENS, Hendricus Antonius, geboren op 23 januari 1923, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Pr. Bernhardlaan 406, Haarlem. Naar Canada vertrokken op 23 juli 1953.

KROONDIJK, Jacob, geboren op 16 augustus 1945, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Zweteweg 30, Haule. Naar Canada vertrokken op 21 augustus 1987.

MAHLER, R.G., geboren op 15 december 1923, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Zagwijnstraat 24, Eindhoven. Naar Canada vertrokken op 8 juli 1969.

ROELE, Yvonne, geboren op 3 april 1954 te Den Helder, gehuwd geweest met W.J. de Wit, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: P. Slothplantsoen 5, Den Helder. Laatstbekende adres in Can-

ada: RR 1, Brock Road N., Pickering, ON.

SNEEK, Nicolaas Anna, geboren op 28 januari 1923, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Malakkastraat 80, Den Haag. Naar Canada vertrokken op 13 maart 1951.

WENSVOORT, Johannes, geboren op 1 maart 1923 te Schiedam, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Archimedesstraat 22, Schiedam. Naar Canada vertrokken op 29 januari 1955.

BAAN, Marinus, geboren op 7 december 1922, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Dorpsstraat 191, Capelle a/d IJssel. Naar Canada vertrokken op 9 mei 1957.

BALVERT, Petrus G., geboren op 5 maart 1922, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Dorpsstraat 51, Nieuwkoop. Naar Canada vertrokken op 23 april 1953.

DOL-BAKKER, L.J., geboren op 10 augustus 1929, naar Canada vertrokken op 26 februari 1954.

De Consul-Generaal  
voor deze:-  
Mevr. G. SCHNITZLER  
Fgd. KANSELIER

## OUR COVER

Photo courtesy:  
Travel Manitoba



By Rev. W. W. J. VanOene

The report did try indeed to cause the Churches to come back on that decision and was far from a loyal effort to arrange only those matters which had been left for future scrutiny when the conditions for a merger were fixed and adopted by both Synods.

"When judged by set-up, language and style, the report reveals the hand of Prof. Bavinck," someone wrote.

We recall here what Dr. Bavinck wrote to Dr. Kuyper after the Synod of Leeuwarden 1891 decided that the Theological School was to remain: "In my view it is only a question of time."

The brothers tried to shorten the time.  
Were they to succeed?

### *The Synod of Dordrecht 1893*

The General Synod of Dordrecht 1893 was opened on August 29.

The Rev. J. Van Andel, a member of the Board of Governors of the Theological School, was chosen as its chairman.

On the next day, August 30, the report from the Board of Governors was dealt with. The Board expressed as its judgment "That the Draft Arrangement cannot be dealt with as starting point and guideline for the required arrangement, because it is in conflict with the stipulations of the Leeuwarden Synod."

After this, the report of the Committee was put up for discussion.

All Provincial Synods had submitted proposals, which were further explained by the brothers from the respective areas. Some were of the opinion "that the Deputies overstepped the boundaries of their mandate. What was expected of them was an arrangement regarding training and ecclesiastical examinations, but a proposal for a merger was given instead."

"In general the sentiment prevails that it is desirable not to adopt the submitted 'Draft Arrangement' since the unity of the Churches could be greatly endangered if it were adopted."

Dr. H. Bavinck was the reporter. In his address defending the report he also defended the committee against the accusation that "Deputies intended to overthrow the stipulation of the union. Their mandate was as wide as possible; he was of the opinion that in case of relocation the Churches' own institution will be preserved, and expresses as his expectation that agreement will be reached."

Several days are needed to accommodate all the speakers and to discuss all aspects fully.

The one states that the concept deprives the Churches of their own institution; the other pleads for merging the two faculties as soon as possible; again others propagate as the solution that the Theological Department of the Free University places itself under the supervision of the Churches.

One argument which sounds sort of strange is that Deputies did not violate any Stipulation and that they were even unable to do so because they did not enter into any. It was Dr. A. Kuyper who argued this point. A stipulation, he claimed, is possible only when there are two parties. It loses its character as a stipulation as soon as the two parties have become one.

A strange reasoning, indeed. Two parties decide to merge on certain conditions; but once they have become one, the conditions lose their character???

As happens so often, so also Dr. Kuyper stated that he had been "misunderstood," and this made him submit a clarifying statement to Synod on Sept. 5, 1893. Three speakers, he declared, gave another meaning to his words than he had intended.

In five points Kuyper argued that the character of a stipulation requires that there are two parties, but that it loses its character as soon as the parties have become one.

"However, when the character of a stipulation is lost, the matter which it concerns is not *weakened* but *strengthened*."

"When two groups of churches merge, both with the declaration that the Churches must have their own institution for the training of Ministers of the Word, it would be conceivable only with repulsive deceit or purposely dishonest negotiations, that what was contained in the stipulation should then not be found back as the well-founded conviction of all the Churches together."

We wonder why, if indeed it was the conviction of all the Churches together that they should have their own institution, the committee came with the proposal they did submit and why Dr. Kuyper spoke as he did, making matters more complicated and murkier than was necessary.

The whole history in this respect makes the impression that politics played a larger role than might appear on the surface or be admitted.

The ultimate decision of Synod 1893 was such that exactly the opposite was achieved of what the proposal by the committee had tried to bring about. The proposal which was ultimately unanimously adopted was signed by, among others, Dr. H. Bavinck and Dr. A. Kuyper.

Explaining how and why deputies could propose to lay aside their own draft Kuyper said that they did this because they discovered that acceptance of their proposal at the moment was not in the best interest of the Churches. He added, "The undersigned leaves Dordt enriched by the heart of the brothers. The existing situation may then be continued and brother Littooy c.s. may then depart with the total spoil, but because it has been said, 'we should not change before the conviction has changed,' there is hope for a more complete unity of heart and mind than has existed thus far."

Synod stated as its judgment that it is the calling of the Churches to have their own institution for the training for the ministry, at least as far as the theological training is concerned.

This "as far as the theological training is concerned" refers to the fact that there was a so-called "literary department" connected with the Theological School, where men were instructed in the disciplines which were usually taught at high school. Later on this department was separated from the Theological School and became a separate high school, a so-called "gymnasium."

Synod also declared that by "their own institution" is meant "a seminary for ministers of the Word, wholly and solely established by and provided for and governed by the Churches."

It further declared that the Theological School in Kampen was this institution and that it was in no way the intention to close it down.

Synod decided

"1. To thank the Deputies who have served the Churches with advice in this matter for all their work; but with a view to the idea found with a large segment of the Churches that this advice is in conflict with the contents of one of the stipulations which last year were adopted by both groups of Churches, and with a view to the tension and unrest which occupy the minds of many, to lay aside the Draft Arrangement.

"2. to appoint a committee to come with proposals during this Synod for the arrangement of urgent matters.

"3. to appoint deputies who, in accordance with the above and taking into account what in this matter was determined in Amsterdam (1892), will have to come with proposals to the next Synod regarding the following:

"a. which arrangements are to be made to promote equality of study and examina, according to Art. 1 (chapter VIII, Training for the Ministry) of the regulations.

"b. what provisions for the needs and which changes of existing regulations of the Theological School are necessary.

"c. on what terms a closer tie between the Churches and the Free University, specifically the Theological Department, can be brought about."

Various ballots were needed to determine who were to be members of this committee.

Neither Dr. H. Bavinck nor Dr. A. Kuyper were chosen.

#### Aftermath

It could not be expected that the waves, caused by the report of deputies gave way to a mirror-like surface immediately after Synod had been closed. Too many and too strong were the emotions aroused by the proposal of the committee.

Synod's decision, however, spread oil upon the waves. In order to defend himself against the accusations that he had discarded The Stipulation as having lost its binding character as soon as the merger of 1892 had become reality, Kuyper sent a "Letter to the Editor" to *De*

*Bazuin*, dealing with his statement given at Synod and mentioned above.

*De Bazuin* was a periodical within the Seceded Churches. The first issue appeared on August 4, 1853. After the opening of the Theological School on Dec. 6, 1854, the owners donated it to this institution which benefited greatly for a great many years from the profits made by this publication. For about forty years the Faculty of the Theological School formed the Editorial Board; after 1885 there was one editor assisted by a staff of contributors.

"This statement was made in order to take away even the appearance as if I no longer attached any importance to what was agreed upon at that time. I still am fully convinced that in no point there was any deviation from what was earlier agreed upon. The *General Synod* has at all times the right to deviate from that, but in no case did five *Deputies* have this right."

Kuyper was totally wrong in stating that a General Synod would have the right to deviate from what had been agreed upon as conditions for the union of 1892. Such conditions stand and neither can nor may be violated later on by anyone or by any assembly.

Opponents of the Theological School found it apparently hard to swallow that the effort to merge the Theological School with the Free University had suffered shipwreck.

In *De Heraut*, Kuyper's weekly, the complaint was heard that the result of the Synod was very meagre, that the delegation to Synod was the result of partisan actions, and that the defenders of the training at the Theological School formed the "anabaptist current" over against the "Calvinist school" which desired training at a university. As for the accusation of partisanship, *De Heraut* of September 24, 1893 contained the following passage, in which the "meagre result" of Synod 1893 was bewailed.

"Partly this has to be explained from the pressure under which this Synod was chosen. A summons had gone through the land that five Synodical deputies had conceived of the evil plan, with violation of solemnly agreed upon stipulations, to bury the Theological School unnoticed.

"This brought about tension in the hearts and aroused unrest. It was being foreseen how that, if this evil intention became reality, a big schism towards the side of the Rev. van Lingen could be expected. And in that fear people then applied all their power and influence, without being too picky, to deputize such brothers to the Synod who were chosen not mainly because of their talent for Church government but because of their attachment to the Theological School. This, now, came home to roost and broke the strength of this assembly."

Over against these allegations protests were heard that it was "offensive to write that the Synod could not produce much strength because the delegation by the Provincial Synods had been partisan. It is definitely untrue that in the discussion of the 'Draft Arrangement' the battle was between the Anabaptist and the Calvinist line."

— *To be continued*

# The Teachers' College on the move!

In September of 1981 our Canadian Reformed Teachers' College opened its doors. These doors however were not its own. For the past seven years the College has occupied rented rooms in the basement of Hamilton's Cornerstone church building.

As the College grew and more students enrolled, as staff members were added and books and resource materials multiplied, as a variety of services to Reformed education were added, it became obvious that the Teachers' College needed its own building.

The current pressing need for more qualified teachers, who are trained to teach in the distinctive Reformed way, is giving added emphasis to the College's potential and need for growth. The 29 College graduates who since 1983 have joined our schools and are currently (or soon will be) teaching there are convincing evidence of the College's credibility and past achievements.

Increased respectability, steady growth in the services provided to our schools and the obvious and immediate need to meet the growing demand for more teaching professionals, encouraged the College Association to explore opportunities for the purchase of its own building.

Several earlier attempts to obtain either a building or land had failed. But recently, after thorough discussion at the Executive Committee level and polling of the College Governors from Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia, the Association at last purchased its own College building.

This building is located at 245 Mohawk Road West in Hamilton and was previously used as a Jehovah's Witness Hall. The property has a frontage of 145 ft. and is about 155 ft. deep. There is generous parking around the building and sufficient room for future expansion.

The building is conveniently located along a major Hamilton artery and close to the Timothy and Guido de Brès Reformed schools, the Theological College and the Hamilton Church.

Executive, Building Committee, and staff members who inspected the building



*Present home of the Teachers' College. A photograph of the new facilities is not available*

were satisfied that this facility meets the needs of the College.

The building, complete with all of its furniture and fixtures, was bought for \$300,000.00. On the main floor is a 150 seat, air conditioned auditorium, and there are several additional rooms, a kitchen and library in the basement.

This facility has been purchased entirely with mortgaged money over the personal signatures of several Association members. The Executive has formed a committee from within the group of supporters in the congregations of Ancaster and Hamilton and asked them to organize a fund drive to pay off the entire mortgage by the end of 1988, or earlier if possible. Borrowing costs will add as much as \$3000.00 a month and therefore immediate repayment of this mortgage is very desirable.

During 1988 the Teachers' College Fund Drive Committee will be asking all who support Reformed education to donate a small fraction of what they already contribute to the schools to eliminate this \$300,000.00 mortgage.

Where commitment to Reformed education has accustomed us to making sacrifices for our schools for the eternal gain of our children, this is a reachable goal. This is a necessary goal because without a Reformed, progressive institute for training our teaching professionals,

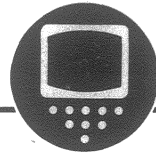
our hard won schools will lose their Scriptural vigour.

We must remember this generation of 2750 children who presently attend our 24 American and Canadian Reformed Schools. We must make more serious efforts to provide in the continuing vacancies among the 150 full-time teaching positions in our schools. We do well to remember that 1 in 5 of these full-time teachers are graduates of our Teachers' College (which is not to count the graduates who teach part-time or have joined Education Committees). We must keep in mind the importance of continuing education and upgrading by those now teaching in our schools. We must place the cost of operating our College and the cost of this modest building in the perspective of the combined annual budgets of our schools which probably already approach, or possibly exceed, \$5.0 million.

Against that background and with these objectives we may be confident that this relatively small effort, which has such great potential for lasting and widespread benefit, will meet with much approval and success.

The Fund Drive is expected to begin next June and will continue until the end of the year. We will keep you informed.

For the Committee  
J.J. KUNTZ, Hamilton



## Classis Pacific, April 29, 1988

**Opening:** The Rev. G.H. Visscher, chairman of the convening church, the Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church at Surrey, BC, opens the meeting. He welcomes the brothers, requests them to sing Psalm 108:1, 2, reads the same Psalm and leads in prayer.

**Credentials:** The delegates from the church at Smithers report on the credentials. They are found to be in good order. One church sends an alternate. Instructions are received from the churches at Chilliwack, Cloverdale and Houston.

**Constitution of Classis:** Classis is declared constituted. The following officers are appointed: chairman — Rev. G.H. Visscher; vice-chairman — Rev. J. Visscher; clerk — Rev. C. VanSpronsen.

The chairman mentions a number of highlights since the last Classis. The church at Chilliwack has experienced a number of disappointments in her attempts to fill the vacancy. The church at Cloverdale is represented for the first time by her new pastor, the Rev. J. Moesker. The church at Houston will soon be vacant due to the fact that her pastor has accepted a call to the Edmonton (Immanuel) Church. Houston has called the Rev. M. VanLuik of Watford, Ontario, to minister in her midst. The church at Vernon is represented officially for the first time at Classis as a full-fledged church.

**Adoption of the Agenda:** After some additions are made to the agenda, it is adopted.

**Signing of the Form of Subscription:** The chairman reads the classical Form and requests the Rev. J. Moesker to sign it. He does so.

**Preparatory Examination — Drs. D. Moes:** Br. D. Moes, a member of the church at Langley and a graduate of Kampen, requests to be examined with a view to be declared eligible for call in the Canadian Reformed Churches. He submits the following documents:

a) a copy of his diploma from the Theologische Hogeschool, Kampen, the Netherlands;

b) a letter from the Theological College, Hamilton, Ontario, stating br. Moes has received a theological education equivalent to that provided by the College;

c) a letter or attest from the church at Langley recommending this brother to Classis Pacific.

These documents are found to be in good order. The examination may commence.

In the course of the examination, br. Moes delivers a sermon on Joshua 5:1-12. Rev. C. VanSpronsen examines him on I Samuel 8; Rev. G.H. Visscher examines him on Philippians 3 and the Rev. M. VanderWel examines him in the area of doctrine and creeds, with particular emphasis on the doctrine of Holy Scripture, and the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After the exam, Classis deliberates in closed session. The result is that Classis Pacific decides to declare br. Drs. D. Moes eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Canadian Reformed Churches. This is communicated to the brother. He also gives a positive verbal response to the classical Form of Subscription. Candidate Moes and his wife are congratulated.

**Release of the Rev. E. Kampen:** The appropriate documents are read and discussed. It is decided to release the Rev. E. Kampen in order that he might serve the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church at Edmonton. This release will become effective as of May 22, 1988 at 12:00 a.m. PDST. The certificate of release is signed.

### Reports:

a) The report of the Treasurer is received, scrutinized and found to be in good order. The Treasurer, br. A.H. Lubbers, is thanked.

b) The report on the Inspection of the Archives delivered by the church at Houston is received. They are in good order. The documents from a recent Classis contracta have yet to be submitted.

c) The reports of the Church Visitation to the following congregations are read and accepted: Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Cloverdale, Langley, and Surrey.

**Question Period ad Art. 44 C.O.:** The churches at Cloverdale and Houston ask advice in certain matters of discipline. The church at Vernon asks advice on the procedure for admitting new members.



### Appointments:

a) For the next Classis Pacific the following decisions are made: convening church — church at Vernon; time — Tuesday, June 28 or Tuesday, Sept. 27, 1988 at 9:00 a.m.; place — Langley, BC; suggested officers — chairman — Rev. J. Visscher; vice-chairman — Rev. C. VanSpronsen; clerk — Rev. J. Moesker.

b) Committee for Examinations: The Revs. M. VanderWel and J. Visscher; Knowledge of Scripture and Ethics — Rev. J. Moesker.

c) Church Visitors: Rev. M. VanderWel (convener), Rev. B.J. Berends, Rev. C. VanSpronsen, Rev. G.H. Visscher, Rev. J. Visscher. Alternates: Rev. J. Moesker and Rev. A. VanDelden.

d) Church for the Archives: The church at Smithers.

e) Church for the Inspection of the Archives: The church at Houston.

f) Treasurer: br. A.H. Lubbers.

g) Church to Inspect the Books of the Treasurer: The church at Smithers.

h) Committee for Needy Students: br. K.F. Huttema, Rev. A. VanDelden, Rev. M. VanderWel (convener).

i) Committee for Needy Churches: br. H.A. Berends (convener), br. G. Boeve, br. E.C. Baartman.

j) Deputies for Preaching Arrangements: the Revs. M. VanderWel and J. Visscher. In this connection the church at Chilliwack is granted preaching supply for two services a month.

k) Counselors: Rev. B.J. Berends is appointed for the church at Houston and the Rev. M. VanderWel is re-appointed for the church at Chilliwack.

l) Delegates to Regional Synod: Ministers: Rev. J. Moesker; Rev. A. VanDelden; Rev. C. VanSpronsen; Rev. M. VanderWel. Alternates: Rev. J. Visscher; Rev. B.J. Berends; Rev. G.H. Visscher (in that order).

Elders: J.F. DeLeeuw; R. Fennema; H.H. Moes; J. VanderStoep. Alternates: G. Hofsink; P. Jansen; R. Faber; P. DeBoer (in that order).

**Personal Question Period:** The Rev. E. Kampen speaks some words of farewell. The chairman thanks him for his labours in Classis Pacific.

**Censure ad Art. 44 C.C.:** This is deemed unnecessary.

**Acts and Press Release:** These are both read and adopted.

**Closing:** The vice-chairman, the Rev. J. Visscher leads in prayer. Classis is closed.

For the Classis,  
J. VISSCHER

**Classis Contracta Alberta/Manitoba  
of May 6, 1988 in the Providence  
Church at Edmonton**

1. On behalf of the convening church, the Providence Church at Edmonton, Rev. M. van Beveren opened the meeting in the usual manner.
2. Two delegates were sent by each of the following churches: Barrhead, Immanuel Church at Edmonton, Providence Church at Edmonton and Neerlandia.
3. Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar was appointed

chairman; Rev. M. van Beveren was appointed clerk.

4. The request of the Immanuel Church to approve the call extended to Rev. E. Kampen of Houston, BC, was granted after all necessary documents were found to be in good order.

A letter of the church at Coaldale regarding the approval of the call was taken note of. A copy of that letter will be attached to the Acts.

Rev. M. van Beveren was appointed to represent Classis at the installation of Rev. E. Kampen, which will take place,

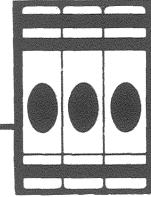
the Lord willing, on May 22nd in the morning service.

5. The request of the Providence Church to approve the decision to grant Rev. M. van Beveren honourable retirement as per September 1, 1988, was granted after a letter was read from the Deputies ad Article 48 C.O. stating that they had no objections.

6. The Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar, after well-chosen parting words, declared Classis closed.

For Classis,  
M. van Beveren, clerk e.t.

## BOOK REVIEW



## Sing about it

“Quis bene cantat bis orat” — he who sings well, prays twice. This is a well-known saying of the Church Father Augustine. Taking into account that Augustine highly esteemed prayer, we can see that he loved singing very much as well.

We cannot start early enough with singing. It is, therefore, very important that our little children learn to sing Psalms, and also, for instance, Biblical songs.

Recently a volume of Biblical songs was published, containing 21 songs based on texts of the Old and New Testament. The words are simple and the melodies are not difficult. One song is based on a traditional hymn in the first stanza and worked out in the following stanzas in a Biblical way. In the other songs, Bible passages form the background (e.g. Jonah's Prayer, Elijah's Voice, The Sower, The Samaritan, etc.).

The letters are clearly printed and the nicely-coloured cover is not a hindrance to turning over the pages easily. I also like the suggestions given at the end of the book regarding rhythmic accompaniment of drums, triangles, tambourines and woodblocks, so that more children can be involved in playing music. Besides, there is a separate notation for voice and keyboard. It is nice to sing and play these songs in school and at home with the children. Several songs remind me of the songs of Hanna Lam and Anka Brands, which were composed in the sixties and the seventies in the Netherlands.

I have two critical remarks. In the first place, comparing these songs of br. VanderPloeg with those of e.g. Anka Brands, it strikes me that she always refers to the

Biblical text, sometimes adding her comments. I missed this in the present volume. Secondly — and that is more important — more than once I missed the framework of God's covenant, with its promises and obligations. Also with its curse! When it says in the last stanza of “Yes, Abel, Yes”: “Yes, Cain, yes, you still belong to me . . . , you are my property,” I have my doubts about the correctness of these words. What do they mean? They suggest that with Cain everything will be all right in the end as well. However, Scripture teaches us differently: Luke 11:51, I John 3:12, Jude: 11. And

when in song 8 and 9 respectively is sung “Who loves us all?” and “God loves us all,” without further explanation, this is in my opinion too general, and it can easily be explained in an Arminian way.

These songs are announced as “Volume One.” We hope that the next volume will show improvement on these points.

This booklet with 21 Biblical songs by S. VanderPloeg is available from:

Inheritance Publications  
Box 154  
Neerlandia, AB, Canada T0G 1R0  
U.S. \$6.95/Canada \$7.95.

K. DEDDENS

**HYMN 19**

*Sine Nomine*      *Philippians 2: 6 - 11*      *Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906*

1. Let us of Christ our Lord and Sav-iour sing,  
For, though God's e-qual, though e-ter-nal King,  
He did not to His right-ful glo - ry cling.  
Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah!



## Dear Busy Beavers,

Thank you for all your letters!

I was happy to hear from so many of you. And proud of all the "goodies" you sent to share with the other Busy Beavers!

I have a poem for you today.

Do you know what *kind* of poem it is?

There was a young farmer of Leeds,  
Who swallowed six packets of seeds.

It soon came to pass

He was covered with grass,

And he couldn't sit down for the weeds.

Yes, that's a *limerick*, a funny poem by funny old Mr. Edward Lear.

He lived about 100 years ago in England, but boys and girls are still laughing about his funny poems.

Busy Beaver *Anne Van Laar* wrote to us about *limericks*. Here is Anne's limerick.

There was a young boy called Fred	(about 8 syllables)
Who one day slid on his sled.	(about 8 syllables)
His long, pointy nose	(about 5 syllables)
Just plainly did froze!	(about 5 syllables)
Of course, he then went to bed.	(about 8 syllables)

You see Anne wrote the number of syllables you need (about) for each of the 5 lines. Listen to the rhythm, too.

Anne wrote, too, that the three long lines rhyme with each other and the two short lines must rhyme, too.

Just look at Anne's limerick and also Mr. Lear's.

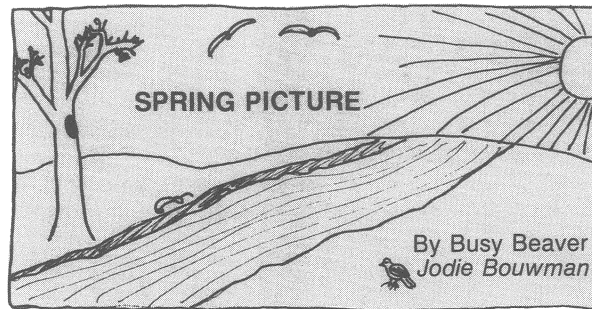
Maybe you have a book of poems with more limericks in it. Or you could try your library.

Some of you good Busy Beaver poets could write some, I think!

"Happy Birthday" and "Many Happy Returns of the Day" to all these Busy Beavers celebrating a June birthday. We wish you all the Lord's blessing and guidance in the year ahead. Have a very happy and *thankful* day with your family and friends, Busy Beavers!

## JUNE

Leona Dehaas	2	Amy Hofsink	14
Valerie Gelderman	4	Jeanette Jansen	16
Tanya Hansma	5	Hanneke Nap	16
Lisa Dehaas	6	Pearl Vanderburgt	18
Esther Hordyk	7	Marnie Stam	20
Michelle Roodzant	7	Jamie Harsevoort	21
Paula Grit	10	Esther Leyenhorst	21
Alice Plug	10	Gwenda Penninga	21
Mark Alkema	11	Gary Penninga	25
Esther Bergsma	11	Billy Dekker	29
Melanie Krabbendam	11	Kristen Jagt	29
Maria Stel	11	Marc Schouten	30
Joni Buikema	12		



*The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the and those who dwell therein; for He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers.*



## From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Nicole Aasman*. We are happy to have you join us! I hope you have a very special day on your birthday, Nicole. Will you write and tell us about it?

How was your trip to Holland, *Margaret de Witt*? What did you enjoy most? We would love to hear that from you. Keep up the good work, Margaret!

I'm glad you had such a good holiday, *Janice Berends*. I do hope you get a pen pal, too. Will you write and let us know, Janice? Bye for now.

Hello, *Brenda Oosterveld*. It was nice to hear from you again. Thank you for your letter and the poem and jokes. Keep up the good work, Brenda!

I see you've been very busy, *Anna DeVries*. Thank you for the poems and the puzzle. I think you want to keep the other Busy Beavers busy, as well, right? Are you looking forward to summer, Anna?

How did your Easter programme go, *Mary-Anne Moes*? And are you still playing your recorder? Thanks for your *Fun Page*, Mary-Anne. Keep up the good work!

I'm glad you had such a good birthday, *Amanda Bartels*. And I see you're a good puzzler, too. How did your parents enjoy their trip, Amanda? Did they take lots of pictures?

Hello, *Shanna Bartels*. It was nice to hear from you again. Thank you for the puzzle. I see you're a good puzzler, in more ways than one! Bye for now, Shanna. Write again soon.

How did you enjoy your birthday, *Karen Bartels*? Did you do something special with your friends? Thanks for the puzzle, Karen. Write again soon!

What an interesting puzzle you sent for the Busy Beavers to do, *Geraldine Feenstra*. I'm sure the Busy Beavers will enjoy doing it. Are you looking forward to summer time, Geraldine?

I'm glad you have a pen pal, *Rachel Vanderpol*. If you send her neat letters like the one you sent me, she'll have no trouble reading it! Sounds to me as if you had one fun Spring Break! Bye for now, Rachel.

Busy Beavers we need a pen pal for *Janice Berends* (age 10). Here is her address: Janice Berends  
14572 60th Ave. Surrey, BC  
V3S 1R3