

 **Clarion**
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Glorious Ministry

By G. Van Dooren

The present dearth of ministers and school teachers leads the concerned regularly to meet young men with the challenge, "Why do you not prepare yourselves for these primary vocations in the Kingdom?"

Then you discover that also among these young men, or some of them, has grown a kind of guilt feeling about that dearth. Some wonder and hesitantly ask themselves and others about possibilities in training for the ministry and for Christian education.

Often, however, the stumbling block on the way to the classroom and especially to the pulpit seems to be that "being a minister is far too difficult for me." Although several boys have in their early years been attracted to the idea of becoming a "dominee," in growing up they changed their minds and now rather go into landscaping or business; they chose law or science or medicine. Obviously several negative impressions about the ministry that were launched at them, played the greater part in their change of mind. Now one may hear them say, "Oh, no! That is not for me! Too difficult ...!"

Why this change? Why this "general" idea that becoming and being a minister is so difficult and only fit for a very few who form a very special group among the general growing and studying generation?

Finances cannot be the reason. Material, financial problems belong to the past. A minister does not become a millionaire like, for example, an entrepreneur. But the time is gone that being a minister was identical to being poor. He could travel for half price and got substantial reductions in many stores. That is no longer the case.

The training for the ministry may be long; four postgraduate years for the M.Div. degree, but that does not compare unfavourably with training for other vocations on a comparable academic level.

In addition, in the Church Order the churches have agreed to not only endeavour that there be students of theology, but also to extend financial aid to those who are in need of it, Art. 20.

Other students have grumbled about the fact that theological students are spoiled, while they have to do without such easy access to financial support.

Once called and ordained, the minister — if he behaves well — gets a life-long financial security for himself and his family, which is hardly found anywhere else. Even high-level executives may face sudden dismissal without such security. A minister gets, on top of his salary, free living, car allowance, study allowance, book allowance, and all that tax free.

Thus there must be other "negative aspects" to the calling of "pastor and teacher" in the minds of many, scaring away promising adolescents from the Theological College.

It may be risky to dig for the source or sources of such unfavourable impressions and to try to point to those who are most guilty here.

The general idea seems to be that the work of a minister is indeed very difficult and not fit for a normal person. It is much harder than being a doctor, a lawyer or a scientist, let alone a contractor, landscaper or bank manager.

Being a minister means — so is the popular opinion among the young — to live in a house built of glass. Everyone knows everything about you. Everyone owns you. Apart from the enormous burden of preparing two weekly sermons, fifty weeks a year, you have to deal with, and to have patience with people, all kinds of people, also troublesome and unruly people. They own you and try to look over your shoulder and to breathe in your neck. You have to satisfy everyone and every whim. You are always on call. You have to listen to people, healthy and sick people, clear-minded and warped-minded. They all think themselves very important, and your time very unimportant. You must always listen and you must know all the answers.

Etcetera, etcetera ... you know it all.

It is just too much.

No wonder that even those young men who have seriously considered to train, or rather be trained, for the ministry, have become discouraged and deterred, and come to the conclusion that they must go in a different direction.

I am not going to contradict all this. Much of it may be true, and much more of the same may be true.

The communist said to the minister during a political debate: "You and your church, it is a mess." The minister said to the communist: "What do you know? I am inside the church and the mess is much bigger than you think! But what about the mess in your own party?" And the communist fell silent.

I rather paint the true picture of the glorious service in and with and for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What other vocation in the world is equal to the mandate of preaching the Word? There is none. Why complain about the length and the demands of College-training and the load of languages, Latin, Greek and even Hebrew where the first page is in the back?

Is it not a privilege, granted to only few, to get the opportunity to learn to read and understand the languages in which the Holy Spirit spoke to the men of old, and still speaks today? It is an exceptional favour from God to be able to penetrate into the treasure-house of the Spirit, the gold mine of divine revelation. No translation does ever full justice to the "original" languages. You may pass through and by the more than one hundred different translations of Scripture, and delve and dig for unexpected, unsuspected surprises. You may learn to touch, to smell and to

taste a Hebrew verb in its many forms, to analyze a Greek expression and the remarkable construction of a sentence — and then you may build your sermon upon the results of your research, in order to show and share what you have found of God's mysteries with God's people who called you as their minister exactly for that purpose.

With your Latin you will be able to open the door to the Early Church and many other doors to enrich your Biblical studies, not to mention all other subjects.

As a V.D.M., a *Verbi Divini Minister* you may stand in that most important spot in the world: the pulpit.

The Holy Spirit is willing and ready to use you as His instrument to reach the hearts of sinners. He gives you the keys that you may open the kingdom for them.

You may tell the righteous that it shall be well with them; and woe to the wicked: it shall be ill with him, Isaiah 3:10, 11.

You may teach the young with the enthusiasm of your own believing heart. You may mould their minds with the complete doctrine of salvation. You may watch with amazement how those immature members of the Body grow to maturity and want to be admitted, permitted by you too, to the public profession of their faith. You were one of those who brought them to the Good Shepherd and put no stumbling blocks in their way.

Then you visit the sick, the sorrowing, the shut-ins, the elderly and those troubled by life's problems. You may go to them, not with your own wisdom and inventions, but with the only comfort

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for all believers from eight to eighty and beyond. You may whisper words from Psalm 23, 1 Corinthians 5 and thousands more golden nuggets from the gold mine into their ears when they enter the valley of the shadow of death, and your voice, your pastoral voice may be the last one they recognize and react to before they hear the Good Shepherd Himself. Not so strange because your mouth and voice have been His vehicle —

— and then you go back to your study to be re-charged, and to your pulpit to keep on preaching to the living in the time of grace, as long as you have a voice.

Your life will be dotted with prayers and you will know yourself carried on the wings of the prayers of God's people.

Thus you may do your part in the church-gathering work of Christ Jesus. You will all the time share in the sufferings of Christ and in the attention and protection of Him who calls you “the apple of His eye,” Zechariah 2:8.

On the great day of Christ's return He will recognize and reward you in the publicity of Judgment Day.

Are there no problems, then?

Sure there are, many of them, and they are man-made, home-made, self-made. They cannot undo the beauty of the glorious ministry as it is in the eyes of God and should be in the eyes of man.

Who wants to become a minister?

There is no greater calling.

C



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IN THIS ISSUE

Glorious Ministry — G. Van Dooren	274
Regeneration — Meaning and Necessity — G. Wieske.....	276
Blossomtime — Israel Kolmodin	277
Remember Your Creator — Don't be a Crayfish — G.Ph. van Popta	278
Press Release — Synod Armadale 1990 — C. Bouwman	279
The Sixteenth Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia ₂ — An Interview with Rev. J. Sawyer — Rene Vermeulen	280
Church News	282
News Medley — W.W.J. VanOene	283
Letters to the Editor	285
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty	287

Regeneration - Meaning and Necessity

By G. Wieske

In this short article I should like to ask the attention of the readers for the meaning and necessity of regeneration. This matter needs discussion. We do not all have the same view on this point. What I write is partly in reaction to something the Rev. VanOene wrote in his "Patrimony Profile" no. 70 published in the Clarion of November 24, 1989.

In the context of warning against the teaching of Dr. A. Kuyper and others that believing parents have their children baptized on the ground of their presumptive regeneration, Rev. VanOene goes into some details about the meaning of the word regeneration or the term "to be born again."

He then writes that when one understands regeneration or being born again as "a momentary happening" or "a one-time event," one is wrong. But is this true? Is that how Scripture and our confessions speak?

Our highly esteemed colleague refers to Lord's Day 33 where repentance or conversion is confessed as being a life-long process. We wholeheartedly agree! But we do not agree with the Rev. Van Oene when he mentions in the same sentence that the terms "regeneration" or "conversion" mean the same. Or to say it more precisely, they do not always and necessarily mean the same.

The reason is that the word "regeneration" is used in a two-fold way. Both in my English and Dutch dictionaries these two meanings are given: 1. to bring to life; to be born again or anew and 2. to renew, to reform, to grow again. This two-fold meaning also becomes apparent in our Reformed Confessions.

In article 24 of the Belgic Confession, e.g., the second meaning of the word regeneration is obvious. There we read that a true faith regenerates the believer and makes him a new man. "It makes him live a new life and frees him from the slavery of sin." There you have the meaning of the word "regeneration" as Lord's Day 33 confesses it under the term repentance or con-

version. Man's activity is involved. That becomes very clear when the Belgic Confession speaks of man's sanctification in article 24 and of man's thankfulness in Lord's Day 32ff.

But the first meaning is articulated in the Canons of Dort, chapter III/IV, par. 11 and 12. There the church confesses that regeneration is God's work alone, which He accomplishes in the elect *without our cooperation* (my emphasis, G.W.). This is not meant in the manner in which Abraham

"For also covenant people are by nature dead in sin and need to be brought to life before they can take up the struggle of which Lord's Day 33 speaks."

Kuyper taught it: namely, immediately, i.e., without the means (medium) of the Word of God. No, God works it in our hearts through the Holy Spirit via the preaching of the gospel.

This difference between article 24, B.C. and the Canons of Dort III/IV, 11 and 12 becomes also apparent when the former speaks of faith before while the latter confesses that we actually believe after regeneration. This may seem to be contradictory but it is not so as long as we understand the dual meaning of the term regeneration. In art. 24, B.C. it means daily repentance, while the Canons of Dort speak of God's work in making dead sinners alive.

It is sad when the phrase "to be born again" is so terribly abused today. Thousands of people are limiting this term to a special experience, preferably dated to the hour. While the new life of obedience which must follow it hardly gets a mention.

But let us be careful that we do not go overboard on the other side by identifying this regenerative work of our God with our daily struggle to live God-pleasing lives.

The latter can only be found where the former has taken place. We are only born once though we may live for 70 or 80 years. The same applies to our spiritual life. Unless the Lord makes us alive, unless His Spirit regenerates us, we simply cannot die unto sin and live unto God.

That's why the Bible never mentions that we are "being regenerated," as in a life-long process. In John 3, James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:3, 23 and 1 John 2:29, 3:9, 5:4, 18 it refers to a fact which has happened. In all but two of these Scripture places, the Greek text uses a verb form which stresses the completion of this fact, while at the same time emphasizing its permanent and blessed results.

Is the above just theological hairsplitting? I do not think so! It has much practical value and far-reaching implications for our preaching, praying and mutual admonishing, because when we are aware of this two-fold meaning, we see all the more the need that the Lord must work this rebirth in the hearts of His elect. Then we understand all the better that salvation is by grace alone. Then we realize that even within the covenant God works out His election from eternity. Just as the Forms for Baptism have it: We cannot enter the kingdom of God unless we are born again. Note that they do not say: unless we are being born again. A birth whether physically or spiritually is by its very nature always a momentary happening or a one-time event.

This is not the place to go into detail. But I like to mention a few things. Have you never heard church people say of a disobedient covenant child: "Oh, he's just sowing his wild oats. He'll grow out of it, no doubt!" But that's simply not true. Nobody grows out of his sinful lifestyle. Nobody just straightens himself out. For this to happen a miracle needs to take place. A new heart must be implanted. A new

birth is necessary, which God alone can work through His Spirit and Word.

Another example: It happened to me more than once, on places where a consistory has the custom to pray together before the church service, that I heard the words: "Strengthen our faith through the preaching of the gospel." That's fine! But that's not enough. We should also pray to God that He will regenerate or bring to faith (for that's the same) those who do not yet believe. For also covenant people are by nature dead in sin and need to be brought to life before they can take up the struggle of which Lord's Day 33 speaks.

Dr. A Kuyper did not misinterpret the word regeneration when he stressed that it was a one-time event. But he went wrong when he taught that the Holy Spirit works this regeneration immediately, that means: without the Word. For by doing so he exchanged the clear teachings of Scripture and of the confessions for human speculations. His ideas, in turn, led to all the troubles which eventually resulted in the Liberation of 1944.

But let his wrong application of this term not cause us to deny what Scripture and our Confessions clearly teach. We don't have to feel embarrassed or uneasy when someone asks: Are you born again? For if we love the Lord and fight the struggle of Lord's Day 33 we may answer: Yes, I am! Thanks to God's grace, thanks to His sovereign good pleasure. He fulfilled His promise to me that He made me alive. For otherwise I could never believe.

The precise moment as to when the Lord accomplished this new birth is not important. You don't ask a person whether he was born when you actually see him live. That's why Reformed Christians are far more concerned with a life of faith and obedience. For therein we prove that we are truly born again.

But when this life of faith is missing, when it does not show, when church members just go through the motions but never reveal a true love and commitment to the Lord, when they have everybody guessing as to whether there is a true faith, then the question is in place: Brother, sister, are you regenerated? Are you born again? Do you really possess a true faith? For then we are reminded that Scripture also says: Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel! (cf. Romans 9:6b).

Therefore, the call and the prayer that the Lord may work regeneration is certainly in place. We are sometimes accused of preaching too objectively, and of proclaiming a gospel which teaches that all covenant children will be saved, that all church members will go to heaven. Of course, this is a false accusation. We proclaim the promises of God's covenant but also stress the demand that they must be be-

lieved. However, let us also leave some room in our preaching and teaching for the covenantal call of Christ's apostle: examine yourself whether you be in the faith", 2 Cor. 13:5 (K.J.V.). After all, a tree is known by its fruit.

Editor's Comment:

I solicit a reaction and suggest that the

readers carefully compare art. 24 of the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort on this point. It is good that we study the doctrine of the church on this point of regeneration and understand what "being/having been born again" means in Scripture and confession.

J.G.



Blossomtime

(BY: ISRAEL KOLMODIN)*

New blossomtime advances here;
Both joy and beauty send their call.
The soothing summer has drawn near,
While herbs and grass are growing tall.
The glowing sun woos on this earth
What once seemed passed away,
Now tripping close she watches birth
And surveys fields in fresh array.

The summer meadows flower-flecked,
And fields stretch out with noble grain.
Unfurling ferns in leas bedecked
With glossy leafy trees again.
All of these should now remind us
How mercies kind unveil God's treasure.
We shall now praise our Lord so gracious,
Who gave His growing grace full measure.

We hear the birds with rapture sing
With ceaseless, countless strains;
So let us now our songs take wing
And praises to our Lord sustain.
Sing laud, my sould, to God so near,
With joyful songs and hymns of praise
To Him Who daily sends us cheer.
Our Father blessed us with His grace.

Anno Domini 1695

*Translated May 1990, from Swedish by: Rien Koat.
Source: Svenska Turistföreningen, *Svensk Natur*, (Stockholm, 1944), p. 49.

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

Don't be a Crayfish!

About 20 years ago, when I was a lad of twelve years, my friend Ed introduced me to the fine art of crayfishing (also called "crawfishen").

Do you know what a crayfish is? A crayfish is a freshwater crustacean closely related to but smaller than the lobster. Crayfish love to sit on the bottom of lakes and wait for tasty meals to come their way.

The best way to catch a crayfish is by tricking it with a bullhead (the rather ugly catfish-type creature that looks like an oversized tadpole). First you must catch a bullhead in the conventional way, i.e., with a fishing rod and a worm. Once you have caught your bullhead, you kill it - perhaps by striking it upon the head several times with the edge of a tin can. From there you hook the bullhead back onto your hook, preferably by its tail. Then you can proceed to catch a crayfish.

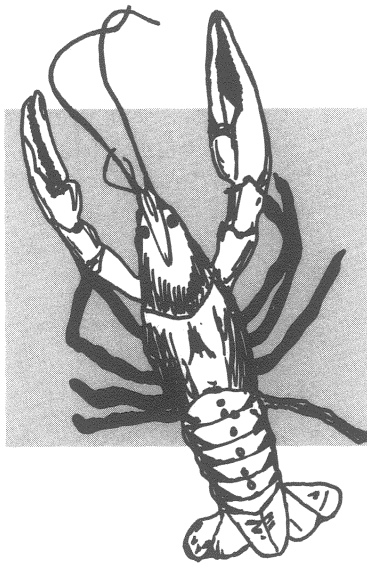
You must unreel your line and so allow the dead bullhead to descend to the bottom of the lake at that place where crayfish love to congregate. Understandably, our crayfish cannot believe its good fortune when this beautiful bullhead slowly descends from above and settles right in front of it. The crayfish seizes it with its pincers and begins to eat.

Now, crayfish will not go down in history for being the most brilliant creatures in the animal world. In fact, they are rather dense. The next step involved proves this. You wait until you are confident that you have enticed one with your bait. Then, very slowly and steadily, you begin to reel in your line. The crayfish, so absorbed by its delicious meal, fails to notice that it is gradually being drawn up towards the surface of the lake. As soon as you have it at the surface, you can scoop it out of the water with a net and drop it in a pail of water. Once you have enough crayfish, you can then boil them (alive, of course) and enjoy the tiny amount of meat each one offers.

You ask, "What's the point?" The point is that we often act like crayfish. The apostle James speaks about this in James 1:14. He says there that we are lured or dragged away by our own desires. The Greek word translated into English as

"lured" (RSV) or "dragged away" (NIV) is a term which James took from the art of fishing. The point is that just like a crayfish is dragged away because of its desire for the bullhead, so we are dragged away by our own desires. And, as James says, desire often leads to sin, and sin leads to death.

Desire as such is not necessarily sinful. When I am hungry, I desire food. That's



normal. It's not sinful. A young man and a young woman who have been seeing each other for awhile might desire to marry. Included in this wanting to marry one another is the aspect of sexual desire. Again, as such this is not sinful. It would be unhealthy if that were not present. Or someone might desire to go to a certain university. Or he might desire to visit his friends who live far away. We could give many more examples in order to show that desire is not necessarily sinful. God has given us the ability to desire things so that we can live a normal, balanced life. Without any desires, we would all become very lazy people wasting away our lives doing nothing. *That is sin!*

However, if we place no checks and balances upon our desires, then they get

out of hand and bring forth sin. My normal desire for food can lead to gluttony, which is sin. The healthy desire for one another which grows between a young man and a young woman quickly leads to the sin of premarital sex if checks and balances are discarded. If you isolate your desire to go to a certain university or to visit friends from your responsibility towards you family, your work, or your church, it can swiftly lead to sin.

And sin brings forth death, says James. Sin often leads to *physical* death. How many people die each year because they give way to their desire for nicotine, drugs, alcohol, or illicit sex? Their desire leads to the sin of enslavement to these potential killers, and the sin leads to death. It leads to cancer, brain damage, ruined livers, and a host of sexually transmitted diseases.

Sin also leads to *spiritual* death. As Paul says, "The wages of sin is death." And then he means spiritual, eternal death. Sin is what separates us from God. When we allow our desires to carry us away — if we don't put the brakes on — then we allow ourselves to be led away from God. And there is only death apart from the living God.

The crayfish which was reeled in because of its desire for the bullhead ended up in a pan of boiling water on a Coleman stove. It wasn't even aware that it was being hauled up from the bottom of the lake. That's how preoccupied it was with the object of its desire.

It's the same with people. People who have allowed their unchecked desires to lead them into a life of conscious and unrepented sin usually think that everything is wonderful. They brag about how free they are. They can do what they want. No more restrictions. They've never had it so good. They don't realize that their desires are slowly and steadily reeling them in towards death. They are as dense as the crayfish.

Don't be a crayfish. Don't be hooked by your own desires. Don't be dragged away into death from a life with the living LORD.

C



Synod Armadale 1990

Synod 1990 was awaited in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia with a measure of suspense, even tension. On the agenda of this Synod were a number of difficult, even sensitive issues. Especially the contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, the Free Church of Scotland, and the International Conference of Reformed Churches, were expected to generate much discussion, even conflict. This was all the more so because Deputies had submitted to this Synod a split report on the ICRC, with some deputies advocating withdrawal from the Conference, while others pleaded for continued membership. What kind of Synod would this be?

The church at Armadale, appointed by the previous Synod as convening church for the 1990 Synod, called the brothers together on May 1. The convening church thought it proper that there be a prayer service prior to Synod, and accordingly organized one on the evening of April 30. Rev. A. Veldman, chairman of the previous Synod, opened God's Word with the assembled at Psalm 133: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" He then led the assembled in prayer, imploring the Lord God to grant unity among the brothers who were charged with the work given them by the churches.

The following day Synod itself began. The chairman of the consistory of the convening church, Rev. W. Huizinga, requested the assembled delegates to join in singing Psalm 24:4, 5, and led in prayer of supplication for God's blessing and nearness. He then read Colossians 1 and spoke to the brothers of the preeminence of Christ our Head: "may He as the Head direct our thoughts and actions in synod." Following these words, he declared the sixteenth Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia opened.

Credentials were checked by the brothers from Bedfordale and found to be in good order, with all the churches represented by their primi delegates. Elections for officers resulted in the hammer being given to Rev. W. Huizinga, the pen to Rev. C. Bosch, the mailbox to br. A. Slobe, while Rev. C. Bouwman was charged to assist the other officers where needed. The new chairman requested all the delegates to show their hearty agree-

ment with the Three Forms of Unity by rising from their seats. Though the response was predictable, it nevertheless gave reason for gratitude to note that all the brothers rose with one accord.

Once these customary yet crucial procedures had transpired, Synod got on with the work assigned to it by the churches. The agenda items were divided such that four committees received relatively equitable work loads. Each committee was expected to study the material given and prepare proposals to Synod for discussion (possible alteration), and eventual adoption.

After some initial jerks and jolts, the machinery of Synod purred in high gear. Committees produced proposal after proposal, giving other Synod members ample material to peruse in their free(?) time as they prepared for discussing the presented material in full session. It quickly became apparent too that no charged atmosphere existed at Synod; it was granted in God's grace that the brothers were allowed to work together in harmony, demonstrating respect for each other and a ready willingness to listen to the concerns of the other. Here was visible evidence that the Lord answered the prayers sent to the throne of mercy both before and during Synod.

To Him be thanks!

So it was that numerous decisions could be taken with relative unanimity. This Synod was far from being "hung," with proposals adopted on 8-6 decisions. A moving moment it was when a proposal concerning the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia could be adopted — in front of a large audience — on a 14-0 vote. Given the fears and the polarization talked about in the churches before Synod convened, that moment of unanimous decision made one small before God.

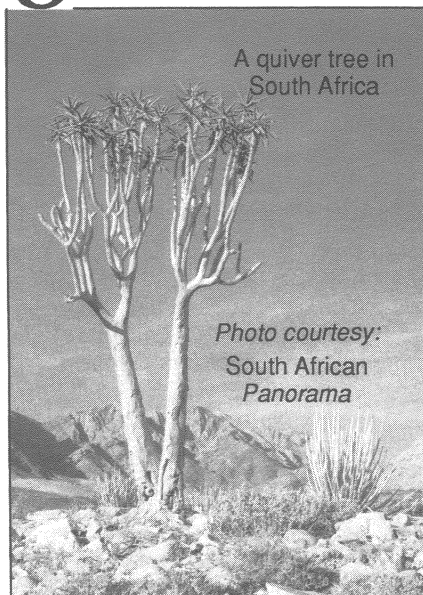
That brings us to the realm of decisions taken. Trend setting for this Synod was the decision concerning the PCEA; the decisions made here found echoes in decisions concerning the Free Church of Scotland, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and the International Conference of Reformed Churches. Deputies for contact with the PCEA received this mandate: "to work towards a mutual recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ; and in light of this goal:

- a. to continue to study and discuss further with the PCEA the remaining areas of concern specified by Synod 1987, viz, the supervision of the Lord's table, the practice of pulpit exchanges and the position of children in the covenant. In this discussion about the areas of concern the confession of the doctrine of the church should be addressed when applicable. Due attention must be given to our concern about possible unscriptural concepts regarding the 'pluriformity of the church.' All this should be done in the light of God's Word giving heed to the complete doctrine of salvation;
- b. to exchange visitors at deputy and synodical level;
- c. to use the current rules for sister churches in the discussions leading towards mutual recognition as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Concerning the Free Church of Scotland also, deputies were instructed, while moving "in the direction of becoming sister churches with the FCS," to discuss areas of concern, paying adequate attention to the doctrine of the church.

With respect to the ICRC, too, Synod took a very cautious approach. Synod not-

OUR COVER



A quiver tree in South Africa

Photo courtesy: South African Panorama

ed that on the one hand the ICRC has a lofty pupose — “to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ” — while on the other hand this lofty purpose does not find an adequate echo in practice. For there are distinct differences between member churches, particularly in the doctrine of the church. This tension is further evident in the varying understandings of what the ICRC actually is; is it a conference or an ecclesiastical assembly? All of this together prompted Synod to give to deputies the mandate:

- a. to study the concerns signaled...;
- b. to consult with the sister churches re-

- c. regarding these concerns;
- d. to publish the results of their study for the interest of the churches;
- d. to serve the following Synod with a report and recommendations.”

A further decision on the matter was this:

”Synod expresses that our concerns may affect our continuing membership in the ICRC.”

Another decision that tended to set the tone for later decisions was the answer Synod gave to the request of a number of churches to limit our contacts somewhat with overseas churches. Synod decided (in part):

”to limit present contacts and relations with churches which are geographically close to our sister churches abroad and with churches which we have recognized as true and faithful to the minimum level necessary for us to remain acquainted with their situation and to fulfill our obligations made to them; ”to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to us and for whom we have a greater responsibility; ”to phase out contact with churches with whom we appear to be making no progress.”

Accordingly, contact with Uganda and

The Sixteenth Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia²

An Interview with Rev. J. Sawyer

By Rene Vermeulen

The synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, held in Armadale, Western Australia, welcomed Rev. J. Sawyer, minister of the Reformed Church at Hastings, New Zealand. Rev. Sawyer, who was present in a private capacity, was given the right to address synod to pass on greetings and tell synod something about his churches. Your correspondent decided to use the opportunity to interview Rev. Sawyer.

Rev. Sawyer, would you mind telling the readers something about yourself?

I was born in the south-eastern part of the United States, in the state of Alabama, in 1951. My father was a Roman Catholic and my mother a Baptist, and I was raised an Anglican to try and keep the family together. In my first year at university I was converted but that also not in a Reformed setting, and gradually through study and through being challenged by friends I came to embrace the Reformed faith. I taught school, Christian schools, for two-and-a-half years and then was encouraged by the elders of the Presbyterian church to which I belonged to then, to seek the ministry. I did my training at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. It was there, that I came into contact with more continental Dutch thinking through men such as Prof. C. Van Til and one of my professors, Dr. N. Shepherd, who taught me the Heidelberg Catechism. I was also privileged to receive

instruction from Prof. J. Faber, who was visiting one term at Westminster from the Theological College at Hamilton. He made a very good impression on me; later I visited at his home in Hamilton and met with the faculty of the college there. I served as an elder in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Blue Bell, which is now a member of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. I was involved in a bit of the struggle they were involved in with the Presbytery of Philadelphia. At that time I received a call to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, which were sister churches of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. I was advised by the people there to take the call and I felt I should, so I ended up in New Zealand. In the meantime the folks in Blue Bell wound up in the Canadian Reformed Churches. I must say I envy them.

Humanly speaking, one would say that you made your move too early?

Well, I did feel it was the Lord's call and also the people at Blue Bell felt I should take the call, and so I am here. Hopefully that is for the good also, because of the contacts I have made in Canada and Grand Rapids. I met Rev. Huizinga (now minister at Armadale) and Tony van der Ven (Principal of the Covenant Teacher's College at Hamilton), people who have had or even still have contacts with Australia. And now, with Rev. Huizinga in Armadale, it has helped establish commu-

nication with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

What you are saying is: we sometimes think we make the wrong move, but God in His wisdom knows what is best for us.

Yes, so it seems.

Can you tell us something about the New Zealand churches?

Well, they came into being in 1953. One of our founding ministers was a student of Dr. K. Schilder, and, although he did not follow the Liberation, he was deeply influenced by him. That was Rev. Deenick. He was called to New Zealand by a number of our immigrants who were struggling to know what to do as far as church affiliation was concerned. He came to help them to evaluate the New Zealand scene and helped them to see that there was simply no option to join churches which upheld the confessions of the Reformation. So the decision was made in 1953 to form a federation of Reformed churches.

How large is the federation in New Zealand?

At present about 3000 souls and the number of congregations is about 18. These are scattered all over New Zealand.

Your congregations can't be all that big then?

No, on average they are in the low 100's, although we have a couple of churches with over 300 members.

Japan have ceased. Because an earlier Synod had declared the Church in Taiwan to be true and faithful, it was felt necessary to continue efforts to come into worthwhile contact with this church. Yet deputies are not to go to Taiwan; the Dutch are already planning to visit the churches of this island, and our deputies are instructed to make use of their findings. Further, no new contacts have been initiated, with the exception of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland and this at a low level (this church was earlier visited by deputies and reported on in *Una Sancta*, Vol. 35, No. 13, 14).

On the other hand, deputies have re-

ceived mandates to investigate more closely the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore and the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Church on Timor. Efforts are to be made too, to be of greater assistance to the sister churches of Sumba-Savu-Timor.

Another item of interest in the area of Churches Abroad involves the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. A representative from these churches requested the privilege of attending Synod. Because the FRCA have no official relations with the RCNZ, and because we did not wish to give the impression that we had relatively warm relations, Synod ultimately decided

to permit Rev. J. Sawyer to attend as a guest, allowing him the privilege of the floor once in order to relate some data about his churches. His visit turned out to be encouraging for him and instructive for us; he came (be it on personal title) with a plea for help. Accordingly, Synod decided to permit deputies to travel to New Zealand in order to speak about the particular concerns we have about the RCNZ, concerns shared by Rev. Sawyer and others of his mold.

A request was received from the Reformed Church of Australia to strike a dialogue committee. After considerable discussion, this request was received with

What is the situation there financially? Small congregations must make a big demand on the members, what with ministers and even Christian schools to support. It must be somewhat of a struggle.

Well, it is indeed a struggle. But in a sense it is also a challenge. No one can hide. The members have to be active, and it is very obvious when they are not. So it calls for a lot of sacrifice. Especially with starting Christian schools, for the government's policy is quite oppressive in regard to private schools. We are taxed by the government on tuition through New Zealand's value added tax which is 12%. We do get a subsidy but this amount of subsidy is less than we pay in taxes on tuition. So, in effect we are penalized by the government for having Christian schools.

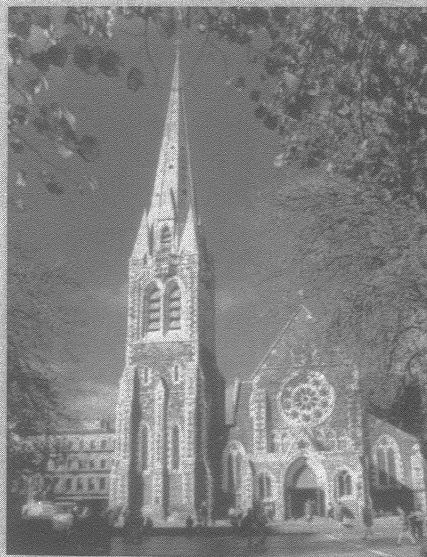
You must be almost green with envy when you see the Australian situation? (Most Australian Christian schools are subsidized to almost or even more than half of their recurrent expenditure, RV.)

It is beautiful, really beautiful.

I would imagine that you would have members from all sorts of church backgrounds? How does that affect church life?

That is a good question. It does affect our unity. Our churches are not as homogeneous as the Free Reformed churches in Australia. Because of our background we have people from GKN background, Gereformeerde bonders, Christelijk Gereformeerde, Gereformeerde Gemeenten, Hervormden, and also people from the Liberated churches. They have stayed for almost forty years together in New Zealand. But it is a struggle, for they bring their background with them. But God has been good in that and I think we are making an identity, we are working toward an identity of what it means to be Reformed Churches in New Zealand. At our last synod it was very interesting as you surveyed the ministers and where they came from. I told you

my background, a gentile as far as being Reformed is concerned. Another of our ministers was converted from being a member of the Plymouth Brethren. Another, an elder, was a Baptist and some of the people came from the Navigators. And so all of us have struggled, and through God's grace we have come to Reformed convictions.



A magnificent church building in New Zealand

When you are mixed up like that it takes a lot to get the mix together. And sometimes it is like oil and vinegar; they tend to separate. And then you have to shake them really hard to get the oil and vinegar in the salad dressing to stay mixed. It's been a struggle, but God has been good and forty years have almost gone by and I think the churches are becoming more united than they have ever been. And that is where we need help, though. We are isolated and need meaningful contacts with churches abroad, people that are willing to get to know us, and to be patient with us and help us work through these

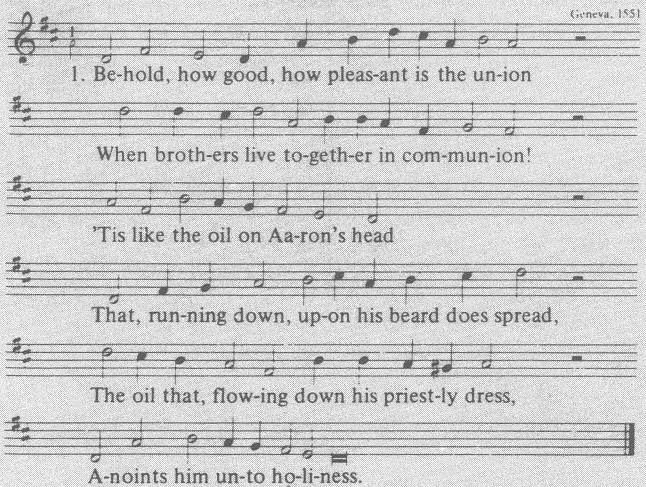
thorny issues. This is where the churches in Australia can be a big help to us, to talk with us and share with us some of their experiences, the wisdom and the heritage which they have. They should see it as a heritage: what happened to you in the Secession of 1834, the union of 1892, and what happened in 1944, and also what happened in the Netherlands in the late 60s. All of those things are new to us and I would hope the brothers here would see this not as something to be jealously guarded but as a matter of a beautiful stewardship to be shared. I hope that makes sense. I am not asking for compromise but that you be willing to talk to us with an open Bible, challenge us and tell us where we are wrong, and I think many of us are quite willing to listen.

I then asked Rev. Sawyer how his reception has been at the Synod of Armadale. This was an important question, for synod had taken a long time to decide to allow Rev. Sawyer to be a visitor at synod; in fact, in the evening after this interview Rev. Sawyer addressed synod from the position normally reserved for the president of synod, and he opened his speech with this humorous remark: "You took a long time to make up your mind what to do with me and now you have made me chairman."

The Australian churches are often regarded as somewhat hardlined and not very flexible; therefore the following comments of Rev. Sawyer are of significance:

Very kind, I am very privileged to address synod and I have already talked to many people privately. People are eager to know about us, so I could not ask for more on a first visit. It is a bit like courtship; you start with an acquaintance and then you build on that as you sense a common faith; common convictions grow, and after many discussions, God willing, in the end you get married.

PSALM 133 Geneva, 1551



1. Be-hold, how good, how pleas-ant is the un-ion
 When broth-ers live to-geth-er in com-mun-ion!
 'Tis like the oil on Aa-ron's head
 That, run-ning down, up-on his beard does spread,
 The oil that, flow-ing down his priest-ly dress,
 A-noints him un-to ho-li-ness.

favour, deputies being instructed to speak specifically about the impediments that historically have kept the two churches apart. It should be noted, too, that the minister of the Reformed Church of Gosnells attended many sessions of Synod as a visitor.

On the table of Synod was also a request from the Reformed Church of Papua New Guinea for sister relations with the FRCA. Synod did not see fit to establish such sister relations, since it was felt that sister relations would place on the young PNG church a greater responsibility than it could bear. Instead, Synod decided to send to these brothers and sisters a letter of encouragement.

Further, it gave reason for gratitude to the brothers at Synod to conclude that the sister churches (in Canada, Korea, the Netherlands, South Africa and Sumba-Savu-Timor) remained faithful to the Lord and His Word (though reservation was expressed about the degree of real contact existing with the Presbyterian Church of Korea). This conclusion is all the more gratifying in light of the apostasy pervasive throughout the world.

Although the matter of Relations with other Churches (be they local or overseas) took up much of Synod's time, there were also numerous other items that pertained directly to the church life in the local congregations. These matters, too, received ample attention. All the hymns in the *Book of Praise*, provisionally adopted by Synod 1987, were approved for use in the churches. The Confessions and Forms printed in the *Book of Praise* will be perused in light of the fact that the Canadian sister churches have made some linguistic alterations to these documents. The Australian Church Order will receive a new face in that Synod instructed deputies to adapt the Canadian text of the Church Or-

"It quickly became apparent too that no charged atmosphere existed at Synod; it was granted in God's grace that the brothers were allowed to work together in harmony..."

der to suit the specific circumstances of the Australian churches. Ecclesiastical Certificates for installed, departing and retiring officebearers were finalized. The Training for the Ministry had the attention of Synod, with Synod continuing the practice set by

the previous Synod of sending support to the Theological College of our Canadian sister churches. In Synod the churches agreed to send \$35 (Australian) per communicant member per year. In an effort to maintain interest in the option of an eventual Australian Theological College, a study is to be made of the possibilities of beginning a library for such an eventual Seminary in Australia. An appeal to "re-insert" the word "Christian" in the Apostles' Creed was denied by Synod. Synod finances, the archives of the churches, the possibility of forming classes, and various other house-keeping matters passed under Synod's review.

Of major importance to the local churches was the matter of Bible Translation. Because Synod could signal specific weaknesses in the RSV, Synod thought it best to "declare at this time already that the NASB, NKJV and NIV are deemed better translations than the RSV." Meanwhile, Synod did not yet feel ready to recommend any other translation in place of the RSV. So, while this version continues to be recommended for use in the churches, deputies are instructed to supplement the recent study of previous deputies with more study on the NASB, the NKJV and the NIV, as well as on the matter of translation methods (i.e., Formal Equivalence/Dynamic Equivalence). Notable in this context is the further instruction given to deputies "to explore, in consultation with (in the first instance) the sister churches, the feasibility of the churches themselves undertaking the task of translating the Bible."

As a last item of great importance, Synod listened to the various church visitation reports prepared by church visitors after their visits to the congregations in the last three years. With gratitude it could be noted that, though each congregation is caught up in the fight against sin and Satan, it yet pleases the Lord God to preserve His congregations in faithfulness to His Word.

Synod 1990 was not expected to be an easy Synod. That expectation was based not only on the difficult material known to be on the agenda, but also on the atmosphere expected to prevail. In His infinite grace the Lord God granted a brotherly spirit where decisions could be made soberly and carefully. It is the hope and prayer of the brothers who attended Synod 1990 that the spirit of brotherly acceptance present at Synod will also pervade the churches in the coming months and years. May it please the Head of the Church to use the labours of the past weeks for the coming of His kingdom, both in Australia and over all the world.

On behalf of Synod,
 C. Bouwman, assessor e.t.

CHURCH NEWS



CALLED TO:

Port Kells, BC: Rev. K.A. Kok
 of Blue Bell, PA,
 USA

APPOINTED

as Secretary of the Office-bearers
 Conference:

Rev. Paul Aasman
 P.O. Box 225
 Grand Valley, ON L0N 1G0
 (519) 928-5365

YEARBOOK CORRECTION

Page 97:
 Prof. J. Geertsema's telephone
 number is (416) 648-0087



By W.W.J. VanOene

Almost in every congregation growth can be reported. There are exceptions to this, and we were sad to read in the Grand Valley bulletin that at a classis of Ontario North the brothers from Lower Sackville "indicated their deep concern about their situation since their number has dropped to less than twenty members. The delegates at Classis comforted and encouraged the Church at Sackville to persevere in providing a Reformed witness to the Gospel in Eastern Canada." It must be encouraging for the brothers to attend a classis once in a while, whereby they are assured that they are not alone in their struggle to present this Scriptural witness.

Since we started with quoting from the Grand Valley bulletin, we may as well tell you that the activity in that congregation is great. The brothers and sisters are enthusiastically cooperating in the building of a parsonage and church building. The project manager issued a "proclamation" in which he expressed his gratitude for the cooperation received. "The house is framed, shingles on, and windows installed. It is especially gratifying to note that 80% of the families in Grand Valley were represented on Friday and/or Saturday. (Good Friday and the Saturday thereafter, VO) May we thank our heavenly Father that there were no serious accidents, save for a few cuts and bruises. Personally I would like to thank the ladies for their fine service and every one who came out to make it possible to erect the manse in two days." I presume that these two days do not include the finishing!

The bulletin also mentioned the arrival of the Yearbooks. "Unfortunately, some of the data in it about Grand Valley is ("are," the word "data" is plural, just like the word "media"! VO) not current, yet it is very useful and should be in everyone's home."

If we wanted to be up-to-date all the time, we would have to issue a yearbook every week, and even then facts would have overtaken figures. Our congregations even have to make changes in their own church directory almost every week. Fortunately, having a computer makes things a little easier in this respect, too.

In nearby Orangeville the consistory discussed a possible change of the time for the afternoon service, but it was decided to leave it at 2:30. At the consistory meeting a "discussion was held about the church's 40th anniversary on Aug. 13, 1990, the Lord willing. A committee will be set up."

In nearby Fergus the same complaint is heard that we found in other bulletins: it is a complaint which concerns the tapes of the services. "There seems to be a problem with the cassette tapes, and brother A. will be instructed to keep better track of the tapes by simply not giving out a tape to anyone unless a) you have returned the one from last week or b) are willing to replace a lost one, for often it happens that a good tape is replaced with a cheap one. The purchasing of tapes will be done by brother A. It is too bad to become so strict with this, but we have lost about 20 tapes in the last year. This should not happen."

"There seems to be another problem with our church, and that is that there are several poor members who cannot afford to purchase a Book of Praise, and therefore take one from the ones reserved for visitors; to the extent that we are down to 8 or 9 and at times do not have enough to go around to give our visitors."

I quoted the two above complaints, not to give the impression that things are so bad in Fergus, but because I have read these same points in other bulletins, too. In most instances it will be

sloppiness when members forget to bring the cassettes back or laziness when they do not take their own Book of Praise to church. Often I see members using one of the books that were purchased for use by visitors, and the problem is that they know too well where these books are stored. Actually, the custodian should keep these books under lock and key so that no one can get at them. If one is needed for a visitor, he can get one, but members should bring their own.

It is not my intention to make this medley into sort of a dirge, but something else caused me concern as well. It is what I read in the bulletin of Burlington South. This consistory, too, received a letter from the School Society of Burlington "informing the consistory of a general decline in levels of support and a growing level of arrears among the membership of our congregation. The consistory decides that the matter will be raised at home visits throughout the year."

This is a very sad experience indeed. Has the love for our schools abated that much that these complaints have to be uttered and even have to be communicated to our consistories? The consistories shall ensure that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God as the church has summarized it in her confessions. That is what the Churches have stated in our Church Order. It is not, of course, because this provision has been made in the Church Order that the parents are under obligation to do so. The churches have only drawn the correct consequences from what the Lord teaches us in His Word concerning the task of the parents towards their children and their upbringing.

A generation has grown up that did receive the benefits of Reformed education and may we not expect that they show their thankfulness for the sacrifices made by their parents and, especially in those early years, their teachers in giving support whereby this work can be continued? Is it proof of gratitude when someone says: "I have paid enough during the years, now let someone else do it!"? I cannot understand it.

Burlington East is next. "Efforts aimed at obtaining a building permit are ongoing. Based on recent communications with city hall, we think a permit may be forthcoming by mid-June. But...no guarantee. If we can begin construction by the end of June, we are still optimistic about completion by the end of the year." We wish you all the best and much success. Sometimes negotiations with "city hall" cause a lot of frustration, sometimes one is surprised at the speed with which the cooperation is shown. May the brotherhood in Burlington East experience the latter.

A quote from the Rev. Mulder follows. "Sometimes it happens that members of the congregation ask me just before the start of the morning service to remember certain events or a relative who is ill in the congregational prayer of that morning. I realize that this is not always possible, but as a rule may I request that you do this on Saturday? You understand that this will give the minister conducting the service better opportunity to pre-meditate and prepare this important part of the worship service."

When a minister conducts a service in the congregation whose minister he is, it will be easier to comply with such a request made on Sunday morning just before the service than when he conducts one in another congregation. In a "strange" congregation it is even more difficult to insert such intercession in the prayer, because in general a minister is not acquainted



with the circumstances or the family or the member, and even when he is told various particulars, it is difficult to "digest" these sufficiently in the few minutes before the service to enable him to make the prayer relevant and concrete. A minister is no "prayer machine" that you can set into motion by just pushing a button. Speaking to the Most High God on behalf of the congregation is not something one should do "off the cuff." Our congregations should take this into account.

In Ottawa the "lease on the minister's house expires at the end of September." Still time to help Ottawa achieve its goal of collecting sufficient funds for the purchase of their own parsonage. May the house prices be dropping there, as they are doing here !

Concerning Lincoln we mention that the committee for institution of another church "approached the consistory of the Netherlands Reformed Congregation in St Catharines with a request of possibly renting the auditorium of the Netherlands Reformed school on 15th street in Jordan, for the purpose of worship services. Both the consistory and the school board have given us a verbal O.K."

Carman's number of elders will be increased by one due to the increase in membership. And "the organ committee is still exploring various options concerning the eventual purchase of an organ."

Neerlandia, too, will add an elder as well as a deacon to the number of office-bearers. The bulletin of the Neerlandia Church now has a name: *The Sower*. The cover design contains elements in connection with this name, which elements were explained by the Rev. Wieske in the bulletin.

I have a question, and I think that it should be pondered seriously. The cover also shows a "dove, which symbolizes the Holy Spirit." I know that a dove is often seen as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. But I have great reservations about the permissibility of using this symbol. I am afraid that this use of a "symbol" brings us very close to transgressing the second commandment: that we shall in no way make ANY image of God. I also have reservations about the drawings which are supposed to show the Lord Jesus Christ, although He took on our flesh and blood. He is also a true Man, and if there had been cameras in those days, it would have been perfectly allowed to take a picture of the Lord. But no one has ever seen the Father, nor has anyone ever seen the Holy Spirit. And then we are supposed to be allowed to represent these divine Persons by means of symbols? In old psalm-

books we often can find a triangle with an eye in it. The triangle is supposed to represent the Holy Trinity, and the eye the all-seeing eye of God. I think that these things come very close to transgressing the second commandment, if they are not transgressions indeed. Think about it, but let's be careful in the meantime.

Rev. VanDelden and his family have received their visa ("visa" is plural indeed!) for Australia and the farewell sermon has been scheduled for June 24th. After this the family will take a couple of weeks of holidays and depart for the southern continent on the 12th of July. Their departure is from Edmonton. Also from this place we wish them a safe journey and arrival. You can be sure that you will be received with joy. This will make it somewhat easier to leave us all behind. The bond remains.

The last point we shall pay attention to in this medley is something I found in the report of the Abbotsford consistory. I know that the same question has been asked by others, too, and also for this reason I pay attention to it in our medley. First a few quotations from the consistory reports.

"The request of a brother not to ratify Art.161 of the Acts General Synod Winnipeg 1989 is discussed at length. It is decided to grant his request on the ground that Synod Smithville 1980 was not allowed to change the wording of the forms of Profession of Faith and Baptism, according to Art. 30 C.O." "In answer to a letter received from a brother of the congregation regarding the council's decision with respect to Art. 161 Gen. Synod 1989, council declares that it has no difficulty with the wording used in the present forms for Baptism and Confession ("Profession," VO) of Faith but does not agree with the way the particular change has come about on General Synod 1980."

There are a few things in these decisions which made me scratch my head. Did I really read what I thought I read? Yes, indeed. Because I know that approximately the same opinions are harboured by others as well, it appeared beneficial to pay some attention to them.

In the first place : what does it mean when a consistory decides "not to ratify" a synodical decision? I still do not know what this entails. It is a big word, a word that came into vogue after the Liberation, a word that is being used by many but the exact meaning of it seems not to be grasped. Perhaps someone can explain to me what it means that a consistory "does not ratify" a general-synodical decision.

Secondly, I took my Book of Praise to read Art. 30 C.O. again. In this article I read that a broader assembly shall not deal with anything that is not an ecclesiastical matter. I do not think that anyone will deny that the Liturgical Forms are an ecclesiastical matter. We can safely discard this part as basis for "not ratifying." Synod Smithville 1980 dealt with an ecclesiastical matter when dealing with the forms for the profession of faith and baptism.

Art. 30 C.O. also contains the provision that a broader assembly shall deal only with those things that could not be finished in the minor assembly or that belong to the churches of that broader assembly in common. It cannot be denied that the liturgical forms belong to the churches in common and that for this reason Synod Smithville 1980 did not commit an illegitimate act when dealing with the liturgical forms. This provision, too, falls by the wayside as a ground for "not ratifying" a general-synodical decision.

Three down, one to go. The final provision in Art. 30 states that a new matter that has not been previously been presented to that major assembly may be put on the agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.

Mind you, this provision was adopted and inserted in the Church Order by the Synod of Cloverdale 1983. It was not in the Church Order in 1980, when Synod Smithville was held. It would, therefore, be improper to condemn a general synod held in 1980 on the basis of a provision which was inserted in 1983.

Even if, however, this provision had been in the Church Order in 1980, would Synod Smithville 1980 have violated it by dealing with the liturgical forms? Let us examine this question.

I consulted the Acts of the Synod of Coaldale 1977. There I read in Art. 60, among other things, that synod decided "to appoint a committee to revise the Liturgical Forms and to update the language, especially the Form for the Holy Supper and the Form for the Solemnization of Marriage." This same synod also decided that the committee should have their complete and definite report ready by Jan. 1, 1980, so that copies of these reports could be in the possession of the churches nine months before synod 1980 was to be opened.

Would you please keep in mind that this committee was charged to revise the forms?

Now we turn to the Acts of Smithville 1980, Art. 8. Under Agenda VIII, B., 8, we read: "Report of the Committee on Translation and Revision of the Confessional and Liturgical Forms, June 1979, June 1980." Point 9 mentions "Additional Report from the Committee (with corrections)."

Was the matter legitimately on Synod Smithville's table? Is there anyone who can deny this? Is there any irregularity here that could invalidate any decision of this synod regarding this matter on the ground of Art. 30 C.O.? Efforts to come to a better translation and to a revision of the forms had been made for many years, and these matters were dealt with at previous general synods. Now the end was in sight, and Smithville had to judge the work of the committee, taking into account the submissions received from the churches.

What is a general synod entitled to do with reports, proposals, overtures, submissions? Does it not have any other right than saying "Yes" or "No" to committee proposals or overtures from the churches? But who would go for this nonsense?

A general synod, as any other broader assembly, has to weigh the proposals from committees as well as from churches, to see what is the best answer to these proposals, and to decide accordingly. If, during the discussion, it appears that none of the formulations or proposals put before synod is satisfactory in the form in which they were submitted, who could justly deny a synod the right to come with a formulation of "its own"? A general synod is bound to deal only with ecclesiastical matters and this in an ecclesiastical manner, confining itself to matters which could not be dealt with in the minor assembly or which belong

to all the churches in common. But when dealing with such matters, the brothers at synod have to seek the best for the churches and are perfectly entitled to come with a formulation which differs from all those submitted to them.

Synod Smithville 1980 received reports about revision and translation of the confessional and liturgical forms. This was by the mandate of the previous synod. The matter was, therefore, legitimately on Synod Smithville's table. Thus Synod Smithville 1980 did nothing illegitimate when changing the wording of various forms. This includes the Forms for the Profession of Faith and of Baptism.

Even if the last provision found in Art. 30 had been in force in 1980, Synod Smithville 1980 still would not have violated it, for the matter as such (which is different from the precise formulation) was on its table while having been dealt with by the minor assemblies.

What is left of a right "not to ratify" a decision of Synod 1989 on the ground that Synod Smithville 1980 acted contrary to Art. 30 C.O.?

One may, of course, be of the opinion that Synod Smithville 1980 did a wrong thing when changing the wording in a specific point or question and should have left the old wording intact. That is everyone's right. Personally I deplore it very much and am convinced that Synod Smithville did a wrong thing when it threw out the beautiful melody for Hymn 64, "Hanover", a melody that is far more in accordance with the "Genevan Tunes" than the melody this synod replaced it with, "Lyons," which I consider too much "Oompah" and will never ask the congregation to sing. When, during a concert in a Mennonite or other church building, I glance through the hymnbook, I repeatedly discover that they, too, have the "Hanover" for the words of our Hymn 64.

But disagreeing with a decision of a general synod and deriving from this the right "not to ratify" it (whatever that may mean) are still two completely different things. One thing is certain: Article 30 C.O. cannot be used to declare the decision of Synod Smithville 1980 meant in the above-quoted consistory decisions illegitimate.

Having given you sufficient material to keep you occupied for a while, I sign off.

Most cordially,
VO
C

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Some of us have been wondering for some time about what could be done to help in the present shortage of ministers in the Canadian/American Reformed Churches. Would it be possible, and would it be good to make an intensive search for such men as could prepare themselves to serve as ministers of the Word according to Article 8 of our Church Order; such men who possess special gifts for leading and serving the flock?

It was not so long ago that we did have a minister via Article 8. The late Rev. H. Scholten was (one of) the last such ministers we had.

I am not aware of any decision in our churches that Article 8, C.O. was to be abandoned. So I think that the possibility still exists.

When I look at the list of vacant churches, and also notice that two of our present ministers are already sixty-three years of age, plus the fact that the institution of more congregations is being contemplated, then I would like to suggest that special needs call for special measures.

We come close to it that one third of the congregations will be vacant.

In *Nederlands Dagblad* I read that in the Netherlands there is a denomination,

called "Gereformeerde Gemeenten," in which it happens that "teaching elders" are called to become ministers by a congregation that is vacant. (These churches are not sister churches of ours.) I wonder what Canadian Reformed people think about such a system.

Preaching and teaching the Word does not seem to be a very popular thing with the young men to go into; parents should strongly try to improve on promoting that.

We may all pray that the Lord will send more workers into His vineyard, but we ourselves must also search for ways and

means. The Lord can still work wonders; His arm is not shortened. The need for pastors is large and growing.

We may in thankfulness recognize that professors of the Theological College and retired ministers try faithfully to help fill the gap.

Let church people think about these things and develop a discussion on it.

W.H. DeVries,
Fergus, ON

Re: Letter of Br. J. Scholtens — May 25th, Clarion

Brother Scholtens' attempt to summarize the plight of our Canadian Reformed Schools and teachers and the organizations that attempt to assist them and see to their welfare, yes their welfare, disturbs me. To suggest that the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies have suppressed consistently the wages of our teachers in what he describes as a united effort is utterly ridiculous. As Canadian Reformed School Societies we are beginning to realize more and more how we must proceed in these matters but to make these same societies the cause of the many vacancies that presently exist is absurd. In my involvement in the various boards, committees and League, I most certainly have not noticed what would seem to br. Scholtens a concerted effort to suppress wages and transfer the real financial responsibility of the societies to the backs of our staffs.

We see from the various studies that have been commissioned by the League that not all is rosy and have tried to define and understand the problem areas. These studies have shown our inadequacies and in part determined our agenda as school societies. They have also been used to move ahead not only in salary matters but also in our dealings with the government, particularly in Ontario. They have not been swept under the carpet as br. Scholtens would suggest. Does he not make it somewhat too simplistic when he states, and I paraphrase, "You either can or cannot afford to run a school?" The cost of educating our children is a high cost. It is a cost we all share and is a matter that is as important to staff members as it is to parents with children in school and member supporters. It is a cost that will increase without a broader support base or sources of alternate funds. Yet why do we fight for our right to exist?

A reason may be that we cherish this right and regardless of cost will bear this cost. Does that mean that we do not attempt to convince the Minister of Education that we too have a legitimate claim to

some of the financial tax revenues available for education? I think we do and I think collectively as school societies we have attempted to prioritize our objectives in this respect. The right to exist and financial support may in the eyes of our government be the same (and in br. Scholtens' viewpoint), yet I hope we also see here what our primary objective is. I ask br. Scholtens the following. What would happen if the Ministry of Education deemed our system of instruction too restrictive in the over-all development of a child, a system which places God as supreme in the centre, the God of the Bible? Would they feel this properly prepares the children of this nation for their role in a society where everything goes and tolerance is the password?

I pray that we continue to receive the right to educate our children in our elementary and high schools in the fear of His Name. I can appreciate br. Scholtens' concerns, I would have wished he would have delivered the message in a more informed and constructive manner.

Lammert Jagt
Waterdown, ON

As a founding member of the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies [League] September 11, 1965, a delegate from May 1974 until May 1980, and the Administrator for the League from January 1980 until March 1989, I do take issue with the Letter to the Editor from J. Scholtens, Burlington; Clarion, Volume 39, No. 11, May 25, 1990.

One; The League

He talks about the League as if it is some kind of group of people, discussing certain school matters and making certain decisions; or NOT doing that!!!

This is absolutely wrong. When the League meets, it consists of persons which



are delegated by LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS who do discuss matters which are brought on the table by LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS.

If decisions are made, they are accepted by the delegates of LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS. They are, also, of an advisory nature and never binding. For all intent and purpose, the League cannot do anything unless the LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS are involved.

So if the writer has reason to complain, he should do so at the LOCAL BOARD level which can bring it to the League's attention.

The writer, being a member of a LOCAL BOARD must be well aware of these things.

By writing as he does he gives the public an absolutely wrong impression of the League and could even be accused of sinning against the ninth commandment.

Two; Government support

Minutes, Nov. 29, 1974: "Government Taxes; Several schools have received an invitation to join a loosely knit organization re: re-assignment of our taxes to our own schools."

"It was decided that the secretary approach this organization and offer its support, PROVIDING IT DOES NOT INFRINGE ON OUR PRINCIPLES." November, 1984, the League presented a submission, as a response to the "Shapiro Report."

The Shapiro report was commissioned by the Minister of Education, the Honourable Sean Conway, July 26, 1984. This was a follow-up of a promise by the former premier of Ontario, the Honourable W. Davis.

The submission by the League was a well-presented defense of the place of our Reformed schools within our society in Ontario and for that matter in Canada, and as such it can never be classified as rhetoric.

Three; The lack of Teaching Staff

Completely overlooked is the fact that, today, 39 former students of our Teachers' College, are actively involved in teaching in our schools; from east to west.

We do know the impact of this if we realize that the total number of teachers in Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta is 112.

As far as remuneration is concerned, I believe, a member of the Salary Committee can better deal with that aspect.

I only want to say, before one starts writing, one should first go to his LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD and find out if his allegations are, indeed, true and well-founded.

Jan Gelderman
Burlington, ON

C

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty

Dear Busy Beavers,
 Summer holidays are here!
 Just think! Weeks and weeks and weeks of it!
 What a lot of time to do all the things you like to do!
 So what is it you would like to do this summer?
 Are you planning to get a swimming badge?
 Are you MAKING something special?
 Do you have a GOAL this summer?
 Maybe you are one of those Busy Beavers whose Dad or Mom

said,

"This summer you can do"

or

"This summer you should try to learn to"

It will be fun and different doing things at home instead of going to school, right?

Does your family have a favourite vacation spot?

Some families love day trips.

Some families love camping.

How will your family spend vacation time?

Do you need a lot of time to get ready?

It's fun to help, right?

And think of all the time you'll have to play with your friends!

Are some of your brothers and sisters your friends?

Can you think of someone who would like to spend time and play with you?

Grandparents usually like to see their grandchildren or get a picture or letter from them.

Lovely summer time!

Time for you, time for your family and friends.

Surely no time to be bored!

Have a HAPPY and SAFE holiday, Busy Beavers!

There's a long, long list of Busy Beavers who celebrate their birthday in July.

Here's hoping you all have a happy and thankful day celebrating with family and friends!

Many happy returns! Best wishes!

May the Lord guide and keep you all in the year ahead.

JULY

Brenda Oosterveld	3	Jessica Linde	18
Katrina De Jong	4	Eric Brown	19
Natalie Veenman	5	Angela Dykstra	19
Linda Verhey	5	Denise Hoeksema	20
Richard Schouten	6	Karen Terpstra	20
Sara Plantinga	7	Margaret Nyenhuis	21
Donald Van Leeuwen	7	Cecilia Barendregt	25
Wendy Beijes	9	Trina Jelsma	26
Rosalin Swaving	9	Charmaine Swaving	26
Andrea Van Vliet		Colin Meerstra	27
Janine Swaving	12	Julie Van Sydenborgh	27
Jeremy Koopmans	14	Chad Pieterman	29
Henrietta Breukelman	15	Nicole Roodzant	30
Andrea Feenstra	17	Michelle Peters	31
Elaine Bosscher	18	Evelynn Bos	31

FOR YOU TO DO Canada Day

July 1 is our country's birthday.
 We are thankful for this big beautiful land the Lord gives us as our home.

But how old will Canada be this July 1?

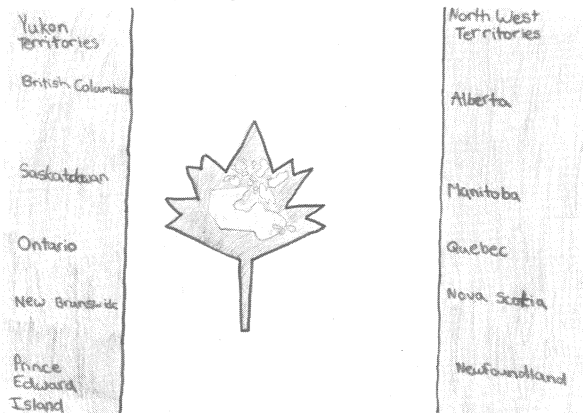
What was the start of the new country called Canada?

For your reward send your answers to

Aunt Betty
 c/o Premier Printing Ltd.
 1 Beghin Avenue
 Winnipeg, Manitoba R2J 3X5

"Canada Day"

by Busy Beaver *Laura Aasman*.



FROM THE MAILBOX

Looks like a busy summer for you, *Laura Aasman*. Just think of the big part of Canada you will get to see! Thank you for the pictures and the poem, too, *Laura*. Write again soon.

Thank you for the interesting puzzles, *Anna DeVries*. You're right to be proud of your beautiful black and white painting! Keep up the good work.

Hello, *Lee-Ann Beintema*. It was good to hear from you again. How did your jump rope for the Heart and Stroke Foundation work, *Lee-Ann*?

Where will you go camping, *Will VanOene*? Sounds to me as if you're looking forward to it. How did you like the play *Charlotte's Web*? Did they tell the story the way it's in the book, *Will*? Bye for now.

RIDDLES FOR YOU

1. What is shaped like a box, has no feet, and runs up and down?
2. What do you call a hot and noisy duck?
3. What do you lose every time you stand up?
4. What do you call a sleeping bull?
5. What do pigs write with?

(Answers below)

QUIZ TIME

Fathers in the Bible

Who was the father of each of these?
Can you name them all?

1. Ham _____
2. David _____
3. Abel _____
4. Joshua _____
5. James, John _____
6. Rachel _____
7. Samuel _____
8. Abner _____
9. Benjamin _____
10. Elisha _____
11. Samson _____
12. Jehu _____
13. Saul _____
14. Esau _____
15. Absalom _____
16. Isaac _____
17. Isaiah _____
18. Gideon _____
19. Methuselah _____
20. Jemima, Kezia and Keren-happuch _____

(answers below)

Things on a Farm

by Busy Beaver *Albert De Boer*

Look for:

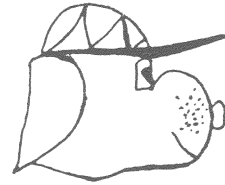
barn pig goat cow horse ewes tractor



Picture Puzzle

by Busy Beaver *Amanda Bartels*

Can you see a number in this?



Number Word Search

by Busy Beaver *Margaret Nyenhuis*

1 9 9 0 5 8 1 1 2 3	Find	
9 4 8 1 3 4 6 7 3 5	1990	5123
7 6 9 8 7 1 8 8 8 9	1856	1246
2 1 7 5 4 6 1 1 6 5	1754	1781
5 2 1 1 6 8 9 4 6 9	1681	2134
3 4 1 4 4 3 1 2 2 4	1881	5611
4 6 0 9 3 2 6 5 2 3	1941	

Magic Squares

by Busy Beaver *Anna DeVries*

	1	2	3	
1				1. a small lump of bread
2				2. abbreviation: the United States of America
3				3. a short sleeping period.

1. metal in rock
2. an individual line of sunlight
3. what you see with

	1	2	3
1			
2			
3			

	1	2	3	
1				1. the metal placed in a horse's mouth for control
2				2. frozen water
3				3. 10

Answers

Picture Puzzle: 25

Fathers in the Bible: 20. Job; 19. Enoch; 18. Joah; 17. Amoz; 16. Abra-
ham; 15. Isaac; 14. Kish; 13. Nimshi; 12. Manoah; 11. Zebedee;
10. Shaphat; 9. Jacob; 8. Ner; 7. Elkanah; 6. Laban; 5. Noah;
4. Adam; 3. Jesse; 2. Jesse; 1. Noah;

Riddles: 1. an elevator; 2. a fire quacker; 3. your lap; 4. a bull dozer; 5. pig pen.

How did you do?

You enjoyed the quiz and the puzzles?

Great!

Bye for now, Busy Beavers.

I'm looking forward to lots of letters telling me how old Canada is!

Till next time!

Love from your
Aunt Betty