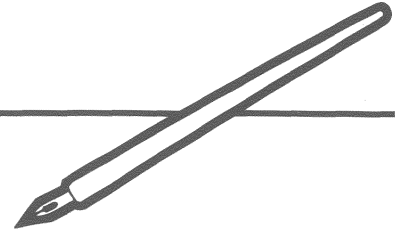




Clarion
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Walk with the LORD

To walk with the LORD is a beautiful expression for the life of a child of God with his heavenly Father. We find this phrase in God's Word, in Gen. 5:22. It says there that "Enoch walked with God." In 6:9 we read the same about Noah: "Noah walked with God." This walking with God is what the LORD wants all His people to do. In the days of the kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, the LORD said to His unfaithful people, through His prophet Micah, that He had a law-suit against them. The LORD, being prosecutor and judge, called, so to speak, His people into court. There He accused them of their unfaithfulness over against His faithful loving care. The response of God's people was: "With what shall I come before the LORD? ... Shall I come with burnt offerings" in great numbers? The answer of the LORD is: "He has shown [told] you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD seek [ask, require] of you but to do justice and to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God."

What do we do when we walk with God? The Hebrew verb means simply going, walking. Life is such a going. There is no standstill. We go from place to place, and even more, we go from the one moment to the next.

Now this going in life can be a walking in darkness. We do not see where we are going, stumbling here and falling there, bumping into many obstacles, getting hurt all the time. God's Word points out that such a life in darkness is a life in unbelief and sin, in which God's instructions are rejected. Peter, in 1 Pet. 2:9, calls the believers God's own people, a holy nation, "that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." The darkness is the former life in sin and unbelief, without God and the Gospel of Christ.

Our going in and through life can also be a walking to and fro, without a firm and set direction. We, then, live by all kinds of impulses, and by all kinds of new ideas. The direction in which we are going, according to a certain philosophy, a certain view, does not satisfy. So, when some other ideas come up, or other views are proclaimed, we follow them. Thus we go, to and fro. In fact, this is also a walking in darkness.

However, when, in our life, we walk with God, we walk in the light and go a straight path. We are assured of this, e.g. in Prov. 3:5-7, (My Son.)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
and He will make straight your paths.
Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

When you walk with God, you reckon with Him as your God in all the ways you go, in everything you do. You trust your God. You are absolutely convinced that what the LORD says is true, is totally reliable, without any doubt. And what the LORD says is not some theoretic, religious truth, some religious doctrine, that does not really effect your life. On the contrary,

what the LORD says is your guide in your daily life, your "handbook." For it is about that daily life of ours that God speaks. He tells us how we should live; how we should speak and act and think.

A few examples may help us in understanding the meaning of walking with God. A husband and wife go through life together. The two shall be one, God said. They trust each other. They rely on each other. They reckon with each other and listen to each other. They acknowledge their mutual needs and desires. They help and support each other. Together they serve the LORD and bring up their children for Him. Together they work in and for the upbuilding of the congregation of which they are members. Thus, their living together as husband and wife, both with their own role and place, can be pictured as a walking together, hand in hand, through life.

This first example is not completely fitting, because husband and wife live with each other on the same level. The example of a father or mother and a son or daughter comes a little closer. God and man are not equal and on the same level. God is God, and far above us. He is the Holy One, the heavenly Majesty, the great and Sovereign God who dwells in a, for us, sinners, unapproachable light. Nevertheless, this great and glorious God has come down and will come down to us in Christ Jesus. He adopts us as His children out of pure grace and wants to have communion with us, through Christ, and through the Holy Spirit.

Christ says (John 14:23), "If a man loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." This is such a great miracle: if the Holy Spirit works in our hearts and lives the love for Christ, through the Gospel, and if then, in that love for Christ we keep His Word in our life, the Father and the Son will dwell with us, make their home with us, as God's children. It is this promise of the Gospel which makes it possible for us to walk with God. We can walk with God, because God comes to dwell with us: a Father with his child, and a child with his Father. It means also that, as children, we walk "before God."

This is what God said to Abraham, when He confirmed His covenant with him. God said, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless, and I will make My covenant between Me and you" (Gen. 17:1, 2). This word "blameless" means being whole, not innerly divided, not double-minded. It means that your love and life is directed only toward the LORD.

Imagine a child walking with his father, or, before him. Such a child goes the way which the father points out. The father leads the way; he teaches and instructs the child. The child trusts father and listens to him, accepting what he says. This is the instructive picture which Solomon presents to us in Prov. 3: a child that is not wise in his own eyes, not arrogant, but that, walking before and with Father, trusts in Him with his whole heart, and therefore, in everything, reckons with Him, with what He says. Walking with God is walking in the light. His Word is a lamp for the feet and a light on the path of God's

child (Psalm 119:105). Walking with God is going through life with the Scriptures as your "Handbook."

Do we still understand what this means: to walk with God? To walk before Him with a whole and undivided heart? For unregenerate man this is not possible. It is included in the promise of the gift of the regenerating Holy Spirit. Walking with God: God and Christ come to dwell with us. We listen humbly to what our LORD says. As His little children, trusting Him with our whole heart, we put our little hand in the big hand of Father and let Father tell us where we have to go and

what we have to do. "Fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing for your flesh and refreshment to your bones" (Prov. 3:8). In all your ways – all of them, not just some – acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your path.

*Let us not forget this basic truth.
He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what the LORD seeks from you:
That you do justice and love loving-kindness,
And that you humbly walk with your God.*



The Glory of Going to Your Own Church

By P.G. Feenstra

Every Lord's Day, you and I go to church. Why do we do this? Article 52 of the Church Order states, "The consistory shall call the congregation together for worship twice on the Lord's Day." Does the consistory have that authority? Does the Bible tell us we *have* to come to church on Sunday and twice at that? Is it in our Christian freedom to stay away from the official gathering of believers when on holidays or during retirement? My intention is to reflect on the significance of what Hebrews 10:24,25 says about this matter: "...and let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some."

The appeal of Hebrews

Hebrews 10:24,25 is the last of three appeals which follow each other in rapid succession. The first appeal (10:22) admonishes the recipients "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." The second appeal is (10:23) "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering" and the third appeal "and let us consider how to stir up one another to love..." A pattern is established in these verses. The first appeal calls for *faith*: the second for *hope* and the third for *love*.

The background: Christ's sacrifice

The writer's petition to have faith, hope and love does not fall out of the blue. His grounds are in Christ's perfect work, i.e., in His atoning sacrifice. In previous chapters the highpriestly work of Christ is presented against the backdrop of the Old Testament day of atonement and the offering for sin which was

made on that day. The ministry of Christ, who is highpriest according to the order of Melchizedek is compared to the priesthood of Aaron.

The priests after the order of Aaron were many in number. Death prevented them from continuing in office. Christ holds his priesthood permanently. He is a priest forever. Consequently He is able for all time to save those who draw near to

God through Him (Hebrews 7). The Old Testament highpriest entered the tabernacle's most holy place once a year (on the Day of Atonement) to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat. Christ Jesus offered the sacrifice of atonement and he entered the heavenly sanctuary *once* for all.

Christ's sacrifice will never be repeated. Atonement has been made. Therefore we can draw near to God to



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sacrifice ourselves in thanksgiving to God and live in communion with Him and with one another.

The author of Hebrews writes in cf.10:22, "let us draw near..." The same formulation is used in cf.10:1 in reference to those who drew near to God under the old covenant by means of the offerings which were repeated year after year on the Day of Atonement. The sacrifice of atonement was followed by the peace offering. This too plays a role in Hebrews 10.

The role of the peace offering

The peace offering symbolized the harmony and communion God's people could enjoy once atonement was made and the broken relationship was mended. Children of the Lord did not have to worry about being turned back by God when they drew near to Him.

Thus the author of Hebrews encourages the congregation for whom Christ died to enjoy the benefits of atonement. "Don't be afraid to draw near to God. Have confidence to enter the sanctuary because the sacrifice of atonement has been made once for all" he says. "Jesus Christ opened the way for you. Draw near to God with a true heart in the full assurance of faith. Hold fast the confession and be committed to the Lord God."

Love as self-sacrifice

The peace offering, however, could never be made alone but in the communion of God's people. Faith, hope and love are to be expressed in communion; in the fellowship of the saints. In fact, the expression of love is possible only in communion. Sometimes you hear people complain that there is no love in the church. Love is equated to: warm gestures, nice words and friendly smiling faces. True (biblical) love is much broader. A person who is controlled by the love of Christ sacrifices himself for the sake of the other. Scripture uses several words for love. The one found in Hebrews 10 means self-surrender or self-sacrifice. You give yourself and deny yourself for the sake of another member.

Such service of love is not merely an option but it is a must for all members to practice it. Our love is to follow the pattern and example of Christ. He gave himself to us in infinite love. He gave His life for our life. Whoever does not let mutual love function gives evidence that he or she has not understood the significance of Christ's highpriestly work. Christ did not come into this world to save individual "souls." He came to save *His people* from their sins. Responding in faith to the promises of the gospel obliges us not only to be concerned about our own salvation and well-

being but also about that of those whom God has placed beside us.

God has shown His love to us in Christ. Therefore, members of the congregation must "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." To consider is not the same as "to give some thought to the matter." The Hebrews are called to watch one another in order that there be solidarity and

"A Christian does not have the freedom to stay away if he feels like it."

growth in love to God and to one another. As a result they will do good works. For love is the fulfilment of the law (cf. Deut. 6 and Matthew 22).

Stirring up one another to what?

The Hebrews had been taught with the Word of God concerning Christ's atoning sacrifice. They heard how Christ displayed His love for His church by His death on the cross. They must respond to that message. Committed to Jesus Christ, they must stir up each other and rouse each other to love God and one another; everyone has to be incited to get excited about doing what God wants of His people.

Christ bought His church with His precious blood. His love brings people together. For this reason we must stay together and hold on to each other on the Lord's Day and during the course of the week. We are to stir up one another to love. That task is made impossible when we do not know, talk to, or communicate with fellow members. Mutual encouragement to love and good works ought to be the goal of all our conversations and visits with one another. Our task in the local church is to motivate one another to demonstrate fruits of thankfulness by submitting ourselves completely to the Word of the Lord. Stirring one another up to love and good works implies avoiding family and social cliques, being receptive to the needs of others,

and making sure no one is left out. It doesn't leave us time to sit back and criticize everything that goes on or to speak negatively about fellow members.

Our sinful nature does not want to love or to do good but promotes and fosters hatred. Love needs to be learned in the gathering of the church. The author of the Hebrews makes this connection. He continues in verse 25, "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near." How are we to stir up one another to love and good works? By not neglecting to meet together.

Meeting together

When this letter was written congregations came together for worship on the Lord's Day. The official preaching and teaching was followed by a meal (known as the agape or love feast) and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Besides these elements the congregation would pray together, confess their faith together, and give alms for the poor. No wonder the Bible does not speak about coming twice to church? The congregation was together for hours.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord received encouragement through what they heard, saw and experienced in church since this was not a humanly designed but a God ordained institution. For this reason, no one had the right to stay away without having a *legitimate reason*. The same holds true today. Every time the congregation is called together every member is obliged to be present. A Christian does not have the freedom to stay away if he feels like it.

The Hebrew Christians were admonished not to break the ties with such meetings as was the habit of certain members. Some members stayed away because they were afraid of being persecuted by fellow Jews. So they either stayed home or they went to the Jewish synagogues. The Hebrews were given a stern warning. The author says as it were. "The gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered for our encouragement. Let's not neglect these meetings where we have communion with God and with one another." Neglecting to be in the meeting where you belong is an act of disloyalty to the great Highpriest who died for your sins.

Together in your own meetings

Literally the first part of verse 25 says, "not neglecting our own meetings." The Hebrew Christians have a responsibility to be present in the assembly where they belong; where they are members.

Our circumstances are different nowadays but the appeal of this passage of Scripture applies nonetheless. "Do not neglect to meet together where you belong as is the habit of some." Today the danger of people being away from their local gathering is not caused by fear of persecution but by luxury. We've never had it so good. In our affluent society we can do more than ever before.

Not very long ago, people did not get out of their village or town all that often. But now it's very easy to hop in the car and travel from one church to the next for birthdays, baptisms, public profession of faith, etc., and do this so often that people in our local church, where we are members, hardly see us or know us. Many among us have money to go on long trips; to head to the warm south when the cold winds of winter start blowing, for a holiday or to enjoy retirement.

It certainly is a blessing to be together with brothers and sisters in the Lord in other places: travelling thousands of miles and meeting people who have the same faith and convictions as we do. Nevertheless, our first task is in the congregation to which we belong. No stage in life is excluded. Children, young people, adults all have their own place within the communion of saints. The elderly do not retire from this task. They have more time to visit in the congregation. Older men can be examples to the younger men by being "temperate, serious, sensible, sound in faith, in love and steadfastness" (Titus 2:2). By their behaviour women can "teach what is good, and so train young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the Word of God may not be discredited" (Titus 2:4,5).

The elderly have so much wisdom and life experience to offer.

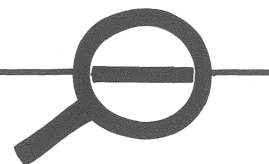
In the local congregation we are called to stand beside each other for love and for encouragement both in good days and bad. We need each other for the spiritual health of the communion of saints.

There may be times where a person has to be away from the congregation for an extended period of time without being able to hand in an attestation to a sister church. However such an individual should not try to get others to follow suit. This is an exception – we must not make it the norm. The issue is not, whether we are strong enough to "go it alone" but Jesus Christ bought a people and He has put us in the midst of that people to build it in true faith, firm hope and ardent love. This is our task and *all the more* as the day of Christ's return draws closer.



PRESS REVIEW

By C. Van Dam



Christians can watch very little television

Under this heading Andries Knevel was interviewed recently by R. Ubels (*Nederlands Dagblad*, 13 April 1991) about his new book, *The World in the Home. The Christian Family and Television (De Wereld in huis. Het Christelijk gezin en televisie)*. Because this work was published in Dutch and thus not accessible to the majority of our readers, it will be good to give some attention to the main ideas Knevel raises.

Television and secularization

Knevel contends that the chief impetus of secularization in conservative Dutch Protestant churches is the television set. According to his research the lifestyle of the average orthodox Protestant Christian has become practically identical to that of the average unchurched Dutchman. That lifestyle includes watching television far too indiscriminately and too often.

The television screen exerts an enormous and often unconscious influence

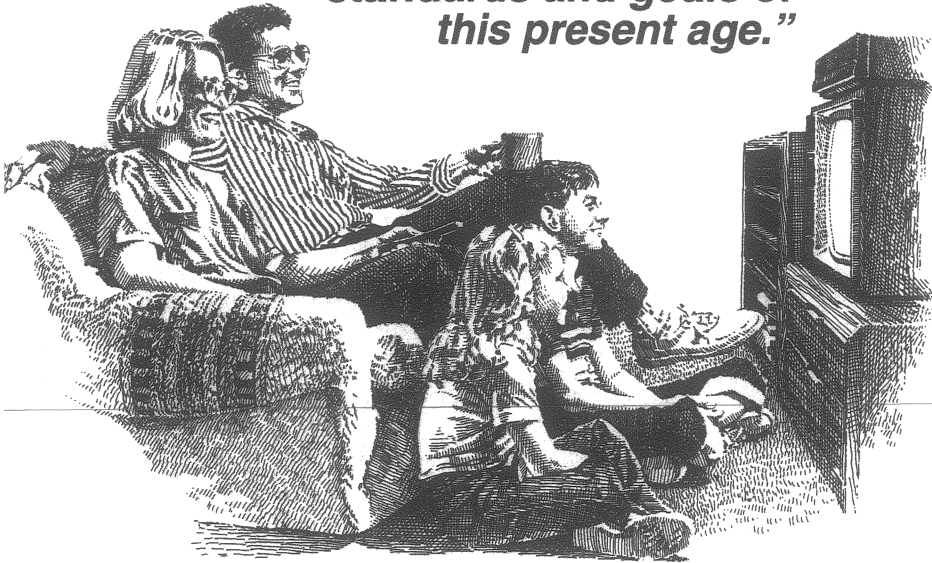
on the viewer. Research has shown that T.V. images linger incredibly long in the minds of those who watch. Because of the nature of most programming these images have a largely negative impact. Christians who watch T.V. night after night are drinking in what the world has to offer and usually unwittingly are moulded according to the standards and goals of this present age.

Programs that are often considered innocent, such as informative shows, are not so blameless for the manner of posing questions and the approach that is taken is already decisive for one's outlook. The mindset that is behind the programs investigating moral issues like euthanasia, abortion, and environmental concerns is usually purely secular without taking God and His will into consideration. Indeed there is no such thing as a purely objective and neutral program. The corroding effect of watching such shows week after week and year after year cannot be underestimated.

Knevel considers that the greatest danger lies in the so-called entertainment programs that do not pretend to be totally innocent. These "family" shows often appeal to our old nature and sinful heart. Knevel writes that television producers may perhaps know the human heart better than the average preacher. In practically all these shows a lifestyle is exhibited that is absolutely not in accordance with the Christian faith. While Scripture speaks of chastity and restraint, these programs display the opposite. The constant watching of such shows can only erode the influence of God's Word in the viewer. Slowly but surely the norms of Scripture take second place. Game programs also are not innocent. The prizes offered arouse materialistic desires that can so captivate that materialism becomes part of one's lifestyle.

The "soap operas" are also harmful. As Knevel put it: "We are by nature inclined to enjoy programs in which God's commandments are flaunted. As produc-

“Christians who watch T.V. night after night...are moulded according to the standards and goals of this present age.”



er you can best have your characters transgress all God's commandments for then the success of the series is assured." What is wrong with watching an interesting series for relaxation or entertainment even if sin is involved one may ask. You do not necessarily identify with these characters do you? Knevel responds: "If the sins that are openly committed in some of the series took place in the congregation then the consistory would be at the door! Is it then good to be entertained by that!? Of course not for that goes against what we believe." Indeed, how can a Christian be entertained by sin and apparently enjoy it? And then listen approvingly to sermons on Sunday that condemn these very evils?

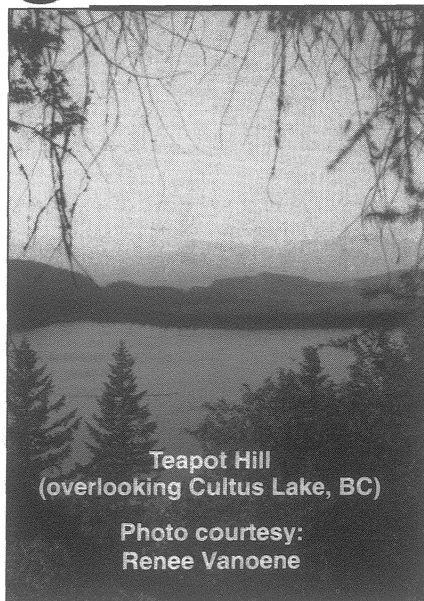
What to do?

Knevel is not against everything that T.V. offers. He does not want to forget, for example, that religious broadcasting of the Word has been instrumental in working conversion. He does, however, want to challenge the rather naive way in which many Christians use their television set. If one is responsible and selective, then one can watch very little T.V.

I do not think that anyone will want to argue that Knevel's analysis of uncritical television viewing by Christians in the Netherlands does not apply or has no relevance to the North American scene. I fear that the uncritical viewing of television has in far too many cases made a rather devastating inroad into

our families. There are, for example, probably very few teachers in our schools who have not been amazed at discovering the amount of television viewing done by their pupils. Homes where children are fed a steady diet of T.V. are not unknown. And of course where the children are, the parents are often not far behind. The history and

OUR COVER



Teapot Hill
(overlooking Cultus Lake, BC)

Photo courtesy:
Renee Vanoene

statistics of soaps, movie stars, and sports are sometimes better known than those of the church or ecclesiastical life.

Knevel tells the true story that a family after considerable deliberation finally purchased a television. The box in which it was delivered carried the message: "With this (*product*) you bring the world into your home." On reading this, the father promptly asked that the T.V. set be taken back, for he said, "I do not need to have the world in my house." That may be a drastic solution, but it should not be one that is dismissed out of hand. It may very well be that fathers and mothers should say more often, "Let's get rid of that thing. We don't need it, especially as a growing family." The television set has an undisputed place in most of our homes. Knevel's work raises a big question mark whether that place should go unchallenged. Television is certainly dispensable.

Of course curtailing the usage of television or getting rid of it altogether is only the negative part of the solution. Something positive has to take its place, namely a concerted effort to develop a distinctively Christian and Reformed lifestyle. Without a hunger for the Word and for a life of fellowship with our Lord and Saviour, no amount of criticism of television will bear any positive lasting fruit and provide long term dividends. Sometimes I get that horrible sinking feeling that the media, especially television, does more mind moulding and attitude shaping in our circles than could have been imagined thirty years ago, while the influence of the Sunday proclamation seems to be waning. A desire to be fed from the Word is needed. Recently someone, who had gone through a church struggle and joined a Canadian Reformed congregation told me that it was his custom to ask for the tapes of the sermons he heard on Sunday so that he could listen to them again during the week. He found that a most enriching practice. Drinking daily from the fountain of the Word is necessary to maintain one's life as a Christian. And it is only when there is a healthy, vigorous appetite for the Scripture which gives the Bread of Life that one's eyes can be opened for the disgusting junk food that T.V. most often offers.

It is actually worse than junk food for the mind. It is poison for it offers the shallow and deceptive glitter of life without God. May our eyes be open to this reality, for the worldly use of television is far from being an imaginary danger in our midst. May the secularization that the T.V. markets so well and persuasively be kept out of our homes for ultimately it brings death, life without God.*



REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G. Ph. van Popta

Young People: Encourage one another!

A young member of your congregation drifts away. First he quits coming to your society meetings. Then he starts skipping church.

Have you said anything to him about it?

He no longer participates in any of your activities. After awhile you never see him anymore.

Have a couple of you gone looking for him? If he has moved out of his parents' home, have you asked them, or your minister or elder, for his address and gone to see him and to call him back?

You see another member hanging out with "some real losers" downtown. You hear that she's into drugs. She comes to catechism class. You can smell that she's been smoking grass.

Have you spoken to her about her new habit?

I don't want to put a guilt trip on you. But I do want to remind you of how important it is that we, fellow members of the body of Christ, admonish and encourage one another.

That goes for the young members of the body of Christ as well.

Our tendency is to leave it all up to the minister and the elders. "That's their job!" Yes, the minister and elders must admonish and encourage the body of Christ. No doubt. But, we are *all* called to mutual admonition and mutual encouragement. The Bible is clear on that. Let me give you a few Scripture references.

In Col. 3:16 Paul tells us to "... admonish one another in all wisdom." Admonition is not judging. Often, when you point out to someone that he is not living in the right way, he will say things like, "You have no right to judge me." And he will even quote Scripture at you: "Judge not, lest you be judged!" But admonition is not judging. It is not condemning. Rather, it is a warning based upon what the Word of God says. When you admonish someone, you are reminding him of certain principles by which we all must live.

In 1 Thess. 5:11 the inspired apostle says that we are to "... encourage one another and build one another up." What does "to encourage" mean? It simply means to give someone courage or boldness. Often we lack the courage to be living Christians. We must help each other in this. If you see a member of your Young People's group starting to drift away, pull him back in. Speak to him about the promises of God. Urge him to have the courage to give his life to the Lord Jesus Christ. A couple of words from a fellow YP often has more effect than a couple of hundred words from the minister, elders, or parents.

In 1 Thess. 5:11 Paul also says that we are to build one another up. Just like a framer builds up the walls of a house, so we are to build up one another's lives. A framer uses a hammer to build a house. What is your tool in building up each other's lives? The Word of God. In Acts 20:23 Paul says that the Word of God is able to build us up. Continue studying the Word of God in your youth groups. The temptation is there to leave the Bible closed and discuss all sorts of contemporary topics. There's a time and place for discussing contemporary topics, but it should never be done at the expense of studying the Word of God together as young members of the church. And pull in that young sister who hasn't been at your meetings all year. Tell her you miss her. Help her build up her life as together you study the Word. Find out what the Word is saying. Find out what it means for the lives of young people today. In this way you will grow as Christians just as a house "grows" from its foundations as it is being built.

In Heb. 10:25 the Word of God commands us to encourage one another especially since we see the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ drawing near. The time is short. Our Lord's return is coming quickly. Because the time is short we have a double duty to encourage one another to believe the promises of the gospel and to obey the law of God.

God calls each of you young people to do your duty of admonishing, encouraging and building up one another. But this responsibility falls especially upon the shoulders of the older young people. Sadly, as young people start to hit the high teens and turn 20 or 21, often they quit going to the YP meetings. And the 16 and 17 year olds are left floundering without any leadership. I urge the older young people to stay involved. Provide leadership. Keep tuned into the lives of the younger members. In that way you will have placed yourself in the right hand of God and you will be useful to Him as He guides His young people in the Way. Then you will be available to encourage the younger members to lead a Christian life.

Back in April or May you probably saw a notice in your bulletin from a new organization called "Youth Mission Aid." They are requesting volunteers to help Rev. Marren this summer as he labours in bringing the Word to the Indian people of Northern BC. I hope that my friend and colleague, Rev. Marren, receives a flood of helpers. What a tremendous way for the youth of the churches to spend several weeks of their summer! *However, don't forget the straying members of your own congregations.* To travel 100s or 1000s of kilometres to help bring the gospel to those who do not know it is a great thing to do. But have you spoken to that guy or girl with whom you grew up who is drifting away from the gospel? Have you taken five minutes after the worship service to admonish that young brother whom you know is living a life incompatible with our religion? Have a couple of you spent an hour looking up that young sister whom you haven't seen at church for a month or two? Have you encouraged her to come back?

Or have you written them off as lost causes?

Young people: Encourage one another. Especially as you see the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ coming closer!

Our dialogue with the Christian Reformed Church of North America:

An historical perspective and some thoughts for the future*

By G.Ph. van Popta

**Originally this was a speech held at the Men's League Day, April 1991, in Ontario.*

Have you ever had someone ask you, "Say, what's the difference between the Christian Reformed and the Canadian Reformed Churches?" Most of you have, I'm sure. When someone asks you that question, you have two options. You can glance at your watch and say that you're late for an appointment, or you can tell the person who asked the question to sit down for an hour.

What is the difference between the Christian Reformed Church (hereafter CRC) and the Canadian Reformed Churches (hereafter CaRCs)? Asked a little differently: Why are we separate? Why did our parents and grandparents, upon immigrating to this country in the post-World War II years, insist upon instituting new Churches rather than join the CRC which has had congregations in Canada since before World War I? Why did we not feel that the CRC could provide an ecclesiastical home for us and our children? Were the acts of instituting CaRCs motivated by a spirit of sectarian peevishness, or ecumenical faithfulness?

As a federation of churches, we are forty years old now. In the Bible forty years represents a generation. Now that a new generation has arisen it is good for us to reflect upon our history. It is good to think about what did keep us apart from the CRC.

But we may not only look to the past. When you are driving your car, it is important that you constantly glance in your rear view mirror. You must glance back. You must see what's back there. But if you only look in your rear view mirror, you will crash your car. You must also look forward to see what's ahead. Similarly, we, members of the CaRCs, must look ahead and be prepared to be used by the Son of God as He gathers His church.

A glance back

What we have set out to do is reconstruct the dialogue between the CaRCs and the CRC. And then we mean the dialogue which took place at the level of these churches' respective synods and synodically appointed committees. We will see that the discussions officially began in 1962, climaxed in 1968, fizzled in 1969, and died in 1972.

Although the discussion began officially in 1962, it is important that we sketch out what happened previous to that. A good place to start would be Synod 1949 of the CRC.

There we find an appeal (p. 65f) of a br. J. de Haas, at that time a member of the CRC at Nobelford AB. Mr. de Haas was a Dutch immigrant who, in the Netherlands, had belonged to the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (hereafter GKN) "liberated." In 1944 about 10% of the GKN had liberated themselves from underneath extra-scriptural and extra-confessional doctrines which the synod had bound upon the consciences of the office bearers and the pulpits. About 90 % remained bound to the synod.

In his appeal Mr. de Haas pointed out that the GKN (liberated) and not the GKN (synodical) were the historical continuation of the GKN with whom the CRC had had correspondence in the years past. In 1946 the GKN (liberated) had invited representatives of the CRC to be present at their general synod to be held that year. This request was refused on the ground that the CRC did not maintain church correspondence with this church. They saw the GKN (liberated) as a new church. Without looking into the matter of the Liberation the CRC had uncritically judged that the Dutch churches which had bound themselves to the synod were the legitimate continuation of the GKN. And they carried on a sister church relationship with them.

Br. de Haas asked Synod 1949 to resume correspondence with the true historical continuation of the GKN, or, failing that, to appoint a committee to investigate which church in the Netherlands was the historical continuation.

Synod 1949 did not accede to either request. It declared that it saw no valid reason for discontinuing correspondence with the GKN (and then it meant the churches which remained bound to the synod) since, in the estimation of synod, there had been "...no change in the doctrinal position and ecclesiastical conduct of the Gereformeerde Kerken which would warrant a change in our relation" (Acts Synod CRC, 1949: 66).

About this Mr. de Haas writes:

In other words, the synodical decisions made in Holland from 1942 to 1944 had been correct, the discipline exercised over all the office bearers (elders, deacons, ministers and professors) at that time had been correct and in no way had the Dutch Synod deviated from the old, Reformed road. If such a deviation had occurred, it was of such little importance that the Christian Reformed Church saw no reason to change the present correspondence situation (De Haas, 1987: 68).

This action of synod led to the institution of the first CaRC, in Lethbridge AB, 1950. The brothers and sisters there (de Haas among them) could not with a good conscience remain members of the CRC after the CRC had chosen to recognize the synodically bound Dutch churches as their sisters rather than the liberated Dutch churches. De Haas also writes about local problems; e.g., the consistory of Nobelford did not allow Dutch sermons prepared by ministers of the liberated Dutch churches to be read (p. 66) and told de Haas not to speak about the Liberation of 1944 (p. 69).

In the Acts of 1950 (p. 235) as well as of 1953 (p. 144) one can find over-

tures requesting synod to appoint committees to investigate what happened in the Netherlands in the 1940s, to find out what the schism was all about, and to make a decision as to which of the two groups claiming to be the historical continuation of the GKN indeed was such. Both were denied. Instead, the GKN (liberated) were considered merely a product of "the Schilder-schism." They were "the Schilder group," "the Article 31 group."

Why dredge all of this up out of the Acts of CRC synods? Simply to show from the Acts of synods themselves that since 1946 the CRC had consistently maintained that the churches in the Netherlands which remained bound to the synod were the historical continuation of the GKN. That this church which, in 1942, had elevated some opinions of men to doctrinal status, even to the level of "biblical truth," and demanded that the office bearers of the churches subscribe to them; that this church which, in a beastly manner, deposed hundreds of office bearers, whole consistories (something which no synod has the authority to do); that this church was seen as the historical continuation of the GKN, the church with which the CRC should continue to correspond, while the liberated GKN were seen as a new group. The liberated churches were, supposedly, a product of "the Schilder-schism." They were the creation of a few proud, stubborn people who had caused a terrible rift in the churches in the Netherlands.

Soon after the first CaRC was instituted in Lethbridge, others were instituted, in Edmonton, Neerlandia and Georgetown. In November of 1950, these churches met in their first broader assembly, "Classis Canada." One item on the agenda was their relationship to the CRC. That classis decided that some time in the future the CaRCs should direct a serious exhortation to the CRC, calling it back from the path it had chosen to walk with the synodically bound Dutch churches.

This decision was fulfilled by the third general synod of the CaRCs, Hamilton 1962. This appeal, which was sent to Synod 1963 of the CRC (with copies going to all the consistories), had a threefold thrust:

1) It reviewed how the CRC had chosen to recognize the synodically bound churches as the historical continuation of the GKN rather than the liberated churches without having looked into the matter.

2) At this time the CRC was considering revising their Church Order. The proposed Revised Church Order would have placed the CRC under a yoke of

hierarchy. It would have made synod the ultimate authority. It would have taken away the authority which Christ, the Head of the church, gives only to the elders of His churches. Without a doubt, the CRC was following the lead of their sister churches in the Netherlands which, in the 1950s, had exchanged the Church Order of Dort (1619) for an hierarchical ("top" down) system. These Dutch churches had traded the biblical presbyterial system (the church governed by presbyters [elders]) for a synodocratic system (the church governed by synod). They did this to validate the illegitimate actions of the 1940s when the synod had deposed elders, deacons, ministers, professors, whole consistories. The Church Order of Dort simply does not allow a synod, nor a classis for that matter, to depose an office bearer. The Lord Christ has vested such disciplinary authority only in the elders of a church. The CRC, wanting to keep in step with Holland, was considering adopting a similar system. Thankfully, this hierarchical proposed Revised Church Order was not adopted.

3) The third burden of the appeal was a plea that the unity of the people of God might be restored (Acts General Synod Hamilton, 1962: 71).

This appeal bore good fruit. The result was that Synod 1964 of the CRC appointed a committee to seek contact with the CaRCs and General Synod Edmonton 1965 of the CaRCs appointed a

matching committee. Synod Edmonton also gave the committee an explicit mandate. Since this mandate served as the agenda for the discussions of the two committees which took place in the succeeding years, it is quoted here in its entirety:

To examine, together with the Contact Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, how their and our churches are to enter into and to maintain together the unity of the church in the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God on the foundation of the Apostles of the Lamb, and therefore to examine, together with the said Committee, the concrete situation, as it is also determined by the differences regarding the following points:

a. The Christian Reformed Church and our churches have adopted the same confessional forms as Forms of Unity: the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort.

b. Besides the Christian Reformed Church has adopted The Conclusions of Utrecht (1905/08) and an official interpretation of them (1962); The Three Points of Kalamazoo (1924) and an official interpretation of them (1959/1960). Our churches have not adopted any other declarations concerning the doctrine of the church beside the Three Forms of Unity.

HYMN 46:2

Watch o'er Thy Church, O Lord, in mercy;
 Save it from evil, guard it still.
 Perfect it in Thy love, unite it,
 Cleansed and conformed unto Thy will.
 As grain, once scattered on the hillsides,
 Was in the broken bread made one,
 So from all lands Thy Church be gathered
 Into Thy kingdom by Thy Son.

c. The Christian Reformed Church maintains correspondence with the "synodical" Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands. Our churches maintain correspondence with the "liberated" Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands.

d. The Christian Reformed Church has adopted a new Church Order; our churches do still abide by the Church Order of Dort/Utrecht (1619/1905). (Acts General Synod Edmonton, 1965: 64,65).

Synod 1964 of CRC had declared that it was willing to remove whatever obstacles existed between them and other Reformed groups. General Synod Edmonton 1965 of the CaRCs presented these points as (potential) obstacles.

The two committees went to work. They accepted the Edmonton mandate as their agenda. From reading the reports, one can only conclude that the discussions between the two committees were open, brotherly, and productive.

So fruitful were they that General Synod Orangeville, 1968 of the CaRCs could notice the following:

1. We have the same Three Forms of Unity. The slight difference in edition (re: Art. 36 of the Belgic Confession) is not an obstacle for the unity between both churches.

2. Synod 1968 of the CRC had declared that the "Conclusions of Utrecht" as adopted in 1908 no longer have the status of binding doctrinal deliverances in the CRC. Thus this obstacle was removed.

3. The Three Points of Kalamazoo 1924 regarding common grace no longer had binding force. This obstacle was thus, also, removed.

4. The new Church Order of the CRC adopted in 1966 is not an insurmountable obstacle to eventual unity of the CRC and the CaRCs. (The CRC did adopt a Revised Church Order, although not an hierarchical one such as had at first been proposed) (Acts General Synod Orangeville, 1968: 42).

However, one obstacle remained: the CRC's continued relationship with the synodically bound GKN. At this time (late 1960s / early 1970s) the issue remained not so much that the CRC had not investigated the whole matter of the Liberation of 1944. The concern was more the fact that the CRC maintained a sister church relationship with a church in the Netherlands which had taken a liberal view of Scripture; which saw no problem with joining the World Council of Churches; which admitted women to the special offices in the church; which was governed by a new Church Order which gave hierarchical power to synods;

which refused to discipline ecclesiastically appointed professors who openly attacked the infallibility of the Word of God. The Canadian Reformed committee expressed these concerns to the Christian Reformed committee. General Synod Orangeville, 1968 said that the CaRCs could not enter into unity with the CRC unless the relationship with the synodically bound GKN was broken. The Christian Reformed committee asked their synod of 1969 to look into the whole matter of the liberalizing trends developing in their Dutch sister churches (Acts Synod CRC, 1969: 351).

And then an amazing thing happened at Synod 1969 of the CRC. They took thankful note that most of the obstacles for unity had been removed. They acknowledged that the CRC in the decisions of 1946, 1949, and 1950 had made an implied judgment concerning the matter of the Liberation even though they had not investigated the matter. And then comes the amazing thing: They urged the CaRCs to consider establishing correspondence with the synodical GKN in light of the changed attitude of these churches towards the liberated GKN. By means of entering into such correspondence, the CaRCs would be able to verify whether the changes in the synodical GKN represented a deviation from the true Reformed faith and church polity.

The CaRCs had been saying that the CRC should break ties with the synodically bound GKN because of the anti-scriptural trends in those churches and because their sister church relationship with these churches was acting as a port of entry for those same trends into the CRC. And then synod 1969 of the CRC tells the CaRCs to establish correspondence with the synodical GKN. Astounding!

The dialogue which climaxed in 1968 fizzled in 1969. It died in 1972 when Synod 1972 of the CRC decided to discontinue the committee for Contact with the CaRCs. The CaRCs had consistently maintained that the relationship the CRC had with the synodical GKN would have to be broken before the much desired unity between the CaRCs and the CRC could be achieved. The CRC got tired of that insistence.

The Rev. W.W.J. VanOene quotes a Christian Reformed author who wrote that it was useless to listen to a record with the needle stuck in one groove, repeating itself over and over again (VanOene, 1975: 207).

General Synod Toronto, 1974 of the CaRCs decided to send a Christian appeal to the Christian Reformed community, i.e., synod, consistories, and members. This appeal was to speak of the

recent developments in the CRC. It can be found as an appendix in the Acts of General Synod Lethbridge, 1977, page 102ff. In a very brotherly way, this appeal calls the CRC back from the unreformed way in which it is moving. It calls it back from the path struck by their Dutch sister churches.

Sadly, it was not heeded. And the damage done by the CRC's continued relationship with the synodical GKN is incalculable. The leaven of Holland is winning.

Think of the view of Scripture which allows the sisters of the congregation to be ordained as office bearers and which tolerates ecclesiastically appointed professors to teach that Adam and Eve may have had parents and who try to place the first chapters of Genesis in some sort of evolutionary framework. This is a sad fruit of the CRC's continued contact with the synodically bound GKN.

We have taken a glance back. We have surveyed the relationship we have had with the CRC in the past. And we express profound sadness at the awareness that the leaven of the synodical GKN is prevailing in the CRC.

But what about the future? We must also look ahead. What is our task today with respect to the CRC? Do we have a task here?

Yes, we do.

A look forward

I don't see much reason to be optimistic about us re-entering into a fruitful dialogue with the "denomination" known as the CRC as it exists today. But we do have a task towards members of the CRC whom we recognize as Reformed believers. We have a task towards members of the CRC whom we recognize as brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ because they manifest the marks of Christians as we confess them in Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession. We have a task towards local Christian Reformed churches which manifest the marks of true churches as we confess them in Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession.

What is our task? And how do we work it out?

The Second Letter of John provides an agenda. In 2 John 4-6, the apostle says that we are to follow the truth, we are to follow the commandments of God, and we are to follow love. Farther he writes about deceivers having gone out into the world, people who preach heresies. In verse 10 he warns against false ecumenicity. He warns against receiving into the house (i.e., the church - Christians usually assembled in people's homes at this time) anyone who does not bring the true doctrine of the Son of God. Those who hold to the true doctrine must

not receive, i.e., they must separate themselves from, those who preach deceptions.

We have a duty to speak about these things with those whom we recognize as fellow Reformed believers and who are in the CRC. We must speak about the command of Christ that we be united in the faith. In John 17 the Lord Jesus Christ prayed that all those who are His might be united. If that is His prayer, then it is incumbent upon us to work towards such a unity. We show this unity by together bending our necks under the yoke of Christ.

We must speak about the need to submit together to the truth of God. Together we must follow the true doctrine which the Head of the church has delivered to His church through His apostles whom He inspired. We may not open ourselves to deception.

We must follow love. We must be charitable. Charity does not allow for any self-righteousness or haughtiness. Let us once and for all put away all self-righteousness, all haughtiness, when it comes to speaking about the CRC. Let us put away all self-congratulatory comments when it comes to speaking about the CaRCs. What we are we are by the grace of God, and nothing else.

And if Reformed believers break with their local CRC because it has become

a false church, and if they join a CaRC let us just welcome them with open arms without any pride or haughtiness. We need the blood of Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit just as much as they do.

Let us also be aware of an important movement happening among the Reformed in the CRC, namely, the Christian Reformed Alliance. It seems that a movement is developing in the CRC comparable to the Doleantie of 1886 led by Dr. Abraham Kuyper.

Let us be aware of this Reformational movement happening within the CRC. Let us be thankful for it and let us ask God to bless it. At a local level, let us encourage the Christian Reformed Churches which are members of this Alliance. May God be so good and gracious as to use the Alliance and the CaRCs to bring about real unity between the Reformed of this continent. May the Son of God, who gathers, defends and preserves His church, graciously grant that we, as fellow Reformed believers and confessors, may unite with one another under one ecclesiastical roof.

It's not a matter of them joining us. Sometimes we speak that way, don't we? "They have to join us!"

Join us? Is this our group?

It's not a matter of them joining us. It's not a matter of us joining them. It's a matter of joining together. It's a matter of

uniting with one another. If a federation of true churches emerges from the Christian Reformed Alliance then as two federations of true churches of the Lord Christ we must come together and unite. United in submission to the Word of God! United in a common confession!

And together we will follow the commandments of God. We will encourage and admonish one another to obey the Word of God. Together we will follow in the truth of the Word of God. We will teach each other and help one another mature in the truth. Together we will follow in love: love for God, and in true brotherly love for one another.

May He who gathers for himself a church graciously grant it.

Sources:

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- De Haas, J. *And Replenish the Earth*. Covenant Publishing, 1987.
- Van Oene, W.W.J. *Inheritance Preserved: The Canadian Reformed Churches in Historical Perspective*. Premier Printing, 1975.
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BOOK REVIEW

By G.Ph. van Popta

New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles, by Simon J. Kistemaker. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990. pp. 1010. \$29.95 (US)

Baker Book House has published another fine commentary in the *New Testament Commentary* series. This volume, the fourth by Simon J. Kistemaker in this series begun by the late William Hendriksen, does not disappoint; it delights.

When most Luke-Acts scholars are more concerned with how the text of *Acts* came into being than with what the text means, it is refreshing to work with this commentary. Kistemaker subscribes to the Lucan authorship of *Acts* and to an early date of composition. Against those who argue that the author of *Acts* wrote with an agenda in mind, usually one of

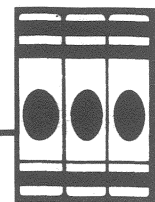
defending Paul against his detractors, Kistemaker holds that Luke gave an accurate account of the history of the early church.

After a fresh translation of a passage is provided, an extensive verse-by-verse commentary is given. Rather than intimidate those who cannot read Greek by lacing the commentary with Greek words and grammar, the discussion of the "Greek words, Phrases, and Constructions" of every several verses is kept separate from the main body of the commentary. In addition, many "Doctrinal Considerations" and "Practical Considerations" are given under separate headings where relevant. Each chapter ends with a brief summary which facilitates following the flow of *Acts*. All of this is laid out well on the page in a very readable type. Judging by the vast number of pub-

lications cited in the footnotes, it is clear that Kistemaker did his homework.

I would also commend Baker Book House for continuing to bind their books the only good way rather than in the way two other Grand Rapids publishers have decided to go. Because the binding is sewn rather than glued, this book will lie open on your desk without having to be pinned down with an array of weights. It will not snap closed. The binding will not break. I will gladly pay a higher price for a well bound book which I know I will be able to pass on to my children.

Preachers preparing sermons, teachers teaching the Bible, as well as those studying *Acts* in Bible study groups or personally, will all find this fine commentary a solid, reliable and rich source of information.



PATRIMONY PROFILE⁷⁷

By W.W.J. VanOene

The Procedure

What went wrong as far as the procedure is concerned?

The one that had to act in the first place was the Consistory of the Church at Amsterdam South. However, we understand that this consistory in large majority stood behind Dr. Geelkerken, and for this reason no action could be expected from them.

Should Classis Amsterdam then take over and do what the Consistory should have done, namely, suspend Dr. Geelkerken because of his deviating sentiments? Definitely not! It says succinctly in the Church Order that suspension of a minister shall be done by the judgment of the consistory with the deacons of that church and that of the consistory with the deacons of the neighbouring church. The old redaction of our present Art. 26 C.O. (at that time Art. 53) did say that ministers who refuse to *sign* the Three Forms of Unity shall because of that very fact be suspended by "the Consistory or the Classis," but no such provision existed for cases in which a minister deviated from the Holy Scripture or the Confession or refused to give satisfactory answers in case they had "different sentiments." Thus the Consistory of Amsterdam South was the body called upon to act. What if – as was the case here – the Consistory refused to do this? Then the proper course for Classis was to declare that Dr. Geelkerken was to be suspended and ask the Consistory of Amsterdam South to do so. Upon refusal by the Consistory to comply with this judgment Classis could do nothing else but refuse to receive the delegation from the Church at Amsterdam South as members of Classis, and, if the Consistory abided by its refusal, to declare that this church no longer belonged to the federation, meanwhile requesting the neighbouring church to extend a helping hand to the brothers and sisters who remained faithful.

It is understandable that mistakes were made in the tense and sometimes confused situations which had to be faced in the course of the whole Geelkerken history, but the worst part was that as a result of this there came a complete turnabout in the field of church polity. What before was condemned as hierarchy and impermissible interference in the affairs of the local church by "higher" ecclesiastical assemblies, was gradually being propagated as the "old" Reformed church polity. Its culmination point, or rather its deepest point was reached in 1944 and following years.

The classis of Nov. 24, 1924, should have told Mr. Marinus that with his second submission he was at the wrong address, and should have addressed the Particular Synod of North Holland, but we see that more and more the "Classis Amsterdam" took on the airs of a permanent body which continued to deal with the same matter in the course of a whole year.

The fact that Dr. Geelkerken sent an appeal to this Particular Synod did not relieve Classis of its obligation to act. If the churches in that area had decided that it would be wiser and better to wait with further action until a decision had been reached upon this appeal, we could perhaps have justified this. However, the churches in Classis Amsterdam did not decide to this, nor did they have any doubt as to the correctness of their stand in the matter proper. On the contrary, the brothers knew very well what they wanted and

where they stood. They were convinced that Dr. Geelkerken was wrong and worthy of suspension.

For this reason voices were heard which disapproved of bringing the matter to a general synod, or even of convening a general synod earlier than originally determined. We are not referring here now to the possibility that the matter proper would be brought to a general synod via an appeal by Dr. Geelkerken, but via requests of classis and particular synod.

Since in the preceding pages we have given a sufficient quantity of official decisions and documents, we now confine ourselves to describing the further course of events more summarily.

Dr. Geelkerken was "summoned to appear" at a few classes, but refused to do so. This led to a classical decision on October 13, 1925, from which decision we quote the following points.

(Classis decides)

"3. that as a consequence of the fact that Dr. Geelkerken has failed to answer properly the questions put before him, and likewise failed to appear before this assembly, when he was summoned to appear, Classis is wholly entitled, according to the Subscription Form, to declare him *ipso facto* suspended from his service, but it deems it better for the interest of the churches not to proceed to this as yet;

"5. to decide to request the Particular Synod which will be convened, the Lord willing, on October 14 next, that it have a general synod convened at the earliest convenience, in order that this general synod may decide about the Dr. Geelkerken case in its entirety."

From this Point 5 classis adduced, among others, the following reasons:

"a. the matter at issue concerns the Confession and the authority of the Holy Scripture and is therefore of great importance, as also Dr. J.G. Geelkerken acknowledges when he says that there are 'deep problems' between him and Classis; while, at the same time, this matter regards a general interest which concerns all the churches.

"c. The disturbance which the Dr. J.G. Geelkerken case has caused within the Churches in a wide circle renders it advisable that the General Synod make a pronouncement as soon as possible, something to which also the Professors advised."

The Wrong Track

Here we have to place a few critical remarks, for things are switched to the wrong track.

In the first place it was wrong to state that "Classis had the right to declare him *ipso facto* suspended from his service."

It does say in the Subscription Form that if a minister refuses not to propagate his deviating sentiments or refuses to have them examined by consistory, classis or synod, the penalty is that "by that very fact, he is suspended from his office," but the Subscription Form does *not* state that a classis or synod has the right to do so. As stated above, the old redaction of our present Art. 26 C.O. mentioned a being suspended by consistory *or* classis only in case of *refusal to sign* but did not mention any refusal to comply with the Form as a ground on which a *classis* would have the right to declare a minister suspended.

However, assuming for the sake of argument that a classis did have such a right – as was alleged in the above-quoted passage of the classical decision – was it then not the duty of this classis to do so right away so as to prevent the evil from spreading?

One editor wrote: “We gladly believe, what we are being assured of from various quarters, that the Geelkerken-case is not as much alive in our country as the Netelenbos-case was. Wild rumours such as that thirteen ministers are alleged to have pledged their allegiance to Rev. Netelebos one did not hear in the present case. And yet people are mistaken when they think that the disturbance is restricted to Amsterdam and some parts of North Holland. It definitely is spreading.

“It would not be justified to apply the method of ‘let it fester.’ The General Synod is the proper assembly to take a decision regarding the Confession, to cast the full light upon this whole matter, to publish everything in the Acts, and in this manner to clear the air.”

It sounds very convincing, but was totally wrong. Both Classis Amsterdam and the Particular Synod of North Holland were convinced that Dr. Geelkerken deviated from what the Church confesses. The Confession was not at stake at all and there was no need for any general synod “to take a decision regarding the Confession.” The point was that there was a minister who disagreed with what we confess, that a classis declared that he was worthy of suspension and actually should have been suspended, *but no one did the proper thing!* The consistory supported its minister, and its delegates were still received at classis as legitimate delegates and members. That’s where things went wrong.

Dr. Geelkerken appears to have enjoyed a fair amount of support. This was not so in each and every case because his views were shared, but because various ministers were afraid that the freedom of exegesis was being denied and that it was not so much a question of receiving the whole revelation, also in Gen. 3, as history, as actually having taken place in the manner in which the Lord describes it, but more a question of “how are the various particulars to be explained?” They were afraid that via ecclesiastical decisions one particular exegesis would be imposed upon all church members. Gradually it became clearer that this was not the case but that the whole affair was a question of simple acceptance of God’s revelation as He gave it. No theory of “form” and “contents” as being two distinct concepts was to be tolerated.

On the one hand we understand the caution of the brothers in Classis Amsterdam. No one will ever be able to prove whether and, if so, in how far they let themselves be guided by fear for the consequences of any action to be taken. “The Classis was not at its wit’s end, as has been alleged. The Classis had not worked itself into a dead-end street, as has been asserted. The Classis was not afraid of the powerful resistance by which such a decision to suspend undoubtedly would have been met with the Consistory and the Congregation of Amsterdam South. *Formally* it could have pronounced the suspension by a decision to that effect” wrote one of the brothers who had all the documents at his disposal. “However, in that event *the case as a case* would not have been *concluded*.”

We ask: “Why not?” The Confession was not at stake, there was only Dr. Geelkerken’s deviation from it. Of this, the brothers in Classis Amsterdam were convinced. Suspension and, in case of persistence, deposition were the proper course to follow. If – as could be expected – the consistory of Amsterdam South refused to suspend their minister, this church was to be excluded from the federation.

Thus the case would have been concluded, but it was definitely not the proper attitude to “let it fester” until a general synod would have made a pronouncement.

A second remark regards the term “the general synod” as used by the above-quoted editor. If he had written “a general synod is the proper assembly to take a decision regarding the confession,” we still would have maintained that no “decision regarding the Confession” was needed, but at least the sentence as such would have met with our approval: the broadest assembly is indeed the assembly where decisions of this nature are to be made. Within the framework of the whole development, however, we are to point out that the term “the general synod” is wrong. There is no such body in existence with the truly Reformed Churches.

Some churches tried to steer the wagon back onto the right track.

“The Consistory of the Reformed Church at Leeuwarden, having taken note of the Acts of the last-held Particular Synod of North Holland with the appendices, considering that the Dr. Geelkerken case with all this in any case is not brought to General Synod in accordance with the Church Order, since at least at this stage it does not yet belong to the matters which according to Art. 30 C.O. could not be finished at the minor assemblies, decides: (1) to seriously recommend to General Synod, on the ground of Art. 30 C.O., to declare this matter not yet admissible, and to refer it back to the Classis Amsterdam.”

We read the following comment on this proposal: “Here the correct course is pointed out. If this line is followed, there will be a return to the Church Order which contains the rules for the policy of our Churches according to which things are to be done; the sense of justice which was offended with many will find satisfaction and the legal security will be confirmed by it.”

Another comment may follow. “In Art. 30 of our Church Order it is stated that in broader assemblies ‘what could not be finished in the minor assemblies’ shall be dealt with. What is meant by this? According to Rev. Jansen such matters are meant here which could not be finished either from impotence or from neglect, or those in cases of appeal. Here we find therefore the right which a minor assembly has to call in the help of a major assembly in case a matter is considered too difficult for it.

“The question is now whether the Classis Amsterdam found itself in that situation. According to its own statement of October 11, 1925, sub 3, this is doubtful. It did have the right to suspend Dr. Geelkerken. It did not do so solely because of the interest and importance of the matter, not because of the difficulty but because of the interest of the matter. Actually, it could no longer speak of a *difficulty*, for it was clear to it what its right was. And then it is somewhat puzzling that right has to give way to some interest. Here is some kind of neglect of doing justice, but when this is omitted for the sake of interest, it is also possible that for the sake of interest the right is maintained. Interest has to give way to justice. Or was there possibly some uncertainty and hesitation with the Classis?”

It is not surprising that the above proposal came from the Church at Leeuwarden. It was there that Dr. W.A. van Es was a minister and in him we find one of the very few defendants of the truly Reformed church polity regarding the suspension and deposition of office-bearers.

– To be continued