

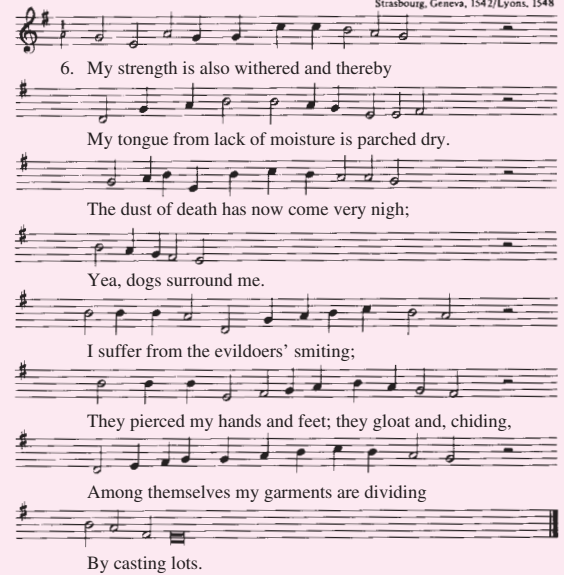


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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PSALM 22

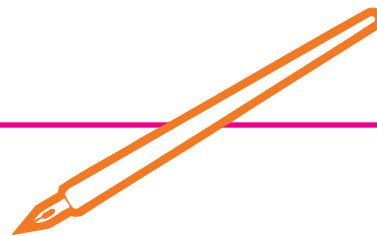
Strasbourg, Geneva, 1542/Lyons, 1548



6. My strength is also withered and thereby
My tongue from lack of moisture is parched dry.
The dust of death has now come very nigh;
Yea, dogs surround me.
I suffer from the evildoers' smiting;
They pierced my hands and feet; they gloat and, chiding,
Among themselves my garments are dividing
By casting lots.

Singing Psalms about Christ

By J. Geertsema



Singing Psalms about Christ

Some time ago, in October, the Burlington Study Centre organized three study evenings about liturgy. The third dealt with the timely topic of singing in the worship services. There was a question about adding a well-loved biblical hymn to our *Book of Praise*. No objection here. But this brings us to another point that sometimes comes up in our discussions. Psalms can be experienced as Old Testament songs, while with the hymns one sings obviously about Christ and salvation through Him. What follows deals with this false dilemma. Psalms speak about Christ and his salvation.

On the evening of the resurrection, the Lord said to his disciples (Luke 24:44): "These are my words which I spoke while I was still with you, 'All the things written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms about me must be fulfilled'." We have this same teaching in John 5:39 where Christ says that the Old Testament Scriptures testify to Him.

In all the New Testament books we see how the Lord lived by this truth. Time and again He applied Old Testament words to himself. We see how the apostles and evangelists did the very same thing. Here follow examples from Psalm 22.

At the cross, at the end of the three hours of darkness, our Lord cried out, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" These words are found in the first verse of this psalm. In his suffering, the Lord took these words of David in his mouth and applied them to himself. In this way He fulfilled these words, living by what was written in obedience to the Father. For they were written about Him under the guidance of "the Spirit of Christ", as Peter says (1 Pet 1:11). We read here that when the prophets spoke their words, they were "trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow."

But there is more in Psalm 22. When Matthew describes the sufferings of Christ, he tells us also that the chief priests "mocked" the Lord (27:41). They did so with, among others, these words, "He trusts in God! Let God then rescue Him now if He wants Him, for He said 'I am the Son of God'" (v

43). What they mockingly meant was: The very fact that God does not rescue Him is the best proof that this man at the cross is a liar. He cannot be God's Son. For if He really was, God would have certainly rescued Him. God obviously did not do so.

The remarkable thing about these words of the mocking chief priest is that they are from Psalm 22:7-8. Surrounded by enemies, David says there, "All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: 'He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let Him deliver him, since He delights in him.'" In other words, Matthew tells us how the chief priests, whether consciously or not, fulfilled the words of David in Psalm 22:7-8 in their hostile relation with the Lord Jesus.

But this still is not all. In the second part of the Psalm, in verse 22, we read, "I will proclaim thy name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee." The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts these words in the mouth of the exalted Lord Jesus as words which express his still on-going obedient fulfilment of what is written about Him. The author does with the words of Psalm 22:22 the very same thing that Christ himself did with the words of verse 1.

We can draw here at least these two conclusions. First, Christ himself and the evangelist Matthew (with Mark and Luke), as well as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, read the Old Testament in the light of its fulfilment in Him, the Christ.

The second conclusion is that these three quotations from Psalm 22 in different places in the New Testament indicate that, in fact, the entire Psalm can be read as prophecy about Christ. Reading the whole Psalm confirms this. Without any trouble one can apply it in its entirety to our Lord. The entire Psalm, first spoken

by David, is prophecy about and so applicable to Christ and is fulfilled by Him.


In the three quotations of Psalm 22 in the New Testament we have a lesson of the Holy Spirit. He teaches us that this psalm of David and about David is entirely also a psalm of and about Christ Jesus with his obedient service to God and for his people in both his suffering and his glory. The consequence of this instruction of the Spirit of Christ is that

"These are my words which I spoke while I was still with you, 'All the things written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms about me must be fulfilled'."
Luke 24:44

we learn to sing Psalm 22 as a psalm of David and, at the same time, a psalm of Christ. It is a word of David about his life and experience and it is a word of our Saviour about his suffering on earth and his on-going church-gathering work in glory.

Now one could ask: but what about us and our salvation? Well, when we so sing Psalm 22, we do sing about ourselves and our salvation. When we sing about Christ who was forsaken, we believe that this implies that He was forsaken for us in our place. This punishment for our sins was borne by Him, to obtain forgiveness and justification for us. And when we sing about Christ that He wanted to sing God's praise with a great congregation, then we, believing members of this congregation in worship of God, rejoice that this church gathering work of Christ includes us too.

Reading and singing psalms in the light of their fulfilment in Christ can be done without much difficulty with many other psalms as well. I would like to suggest that you, reader, try to read and sing the entire Psalm 31 in the same way. At the cross, Christ made the words of Psalm 31:5 his own too. David says there to God ". . . into thy hands I commit my spirit." So Christ says to his Father, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." We sing of Christ again. And we believe that by his obedient fulfilling of what is written, He covers our sinful disobedience and grants us that for his sake we, too, may take these words of trust in the heavenly Father in our mouth: "Father, now we too place our spirit, our life, into thy hands where we are totally safe."

Let us learn to read and sing all the Psalms in this manner. Then, singing Psalms becomes so much richer and fuller. Sure, this needs brain labour. The believer has to study here. He has to think, while reading and singing. We do not sing only with our souls. We are also to sing with our thinking minds. For God wants us to love Him with our heart and soul, but also with our mind. 

What's inside?

Undoubtedly, you will have received as a gift from your consistory the *Acts of General Synod Fergus, 1998*. Have you begun reading it yet? If you are an elder, most likely the chairman of your consistory is assigning a number of articles to be discussed at your meetings. Although previous issues of *Clarion* have already touched on various decisions, with this issue we begin a systematic overview. Dr. J. Visscher presents us with the first installment of a three-part series on the *Acts*.

Fifty years ago, Prof. Dr. Seakle Greijdanus (1871-1948) went to be with the Lord. Dr. Greijdanus taught New Testament in Kampen for thirty years – from 1917-1943 at the Theological School on the Oudestraat, while after the Liberation he came back from retirement to teach yet for four years at the Theological School on the Broederweg. He gave his last lecture within a month of his death at the age of 77. He has left us a heritage in the form of many New Testament commentaries. Under Press Review, Dr. J. De Jong pays attention to this faithful servant of God.

Other than these main items, you will find other articles as well.

GvP



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By Rev. J. van Vliet

Look! A Rainbow!

A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. Revelation 4:3b

The dark, sullen storm clouds rolled in with little advance warning, as storm clouds are wont to do around Salmon Arm, BC. The only advance warning they gave was that sudden, but strange, calm which is often the silent overture introducing a storm. Charcoal-coloured and saturated with precipitation, the clouds soon covered the sky and proceeded to soak everything with refreshing rain. It did not last for long, though. As quickly as the clouds rolled in, they started to roll out again. At one point, the firmament was equally divided: half was blue and shining, the other half was black and raining.

Suddenly a family member said, "Look! A rainbow!" There it was. A spectrum-bow of colours arched through the sky, standing out brilliantly against the black background of the storm clouds. Then someone else said, "Look! Another rainbow!" Indeed, there were two of them. The first shone more brightly than the second. However, both were clearly visible. In unison the parallel arches were joyfully declaring the glory of God and proclaiming the work of his hands (Ps 19:1). We were a spellbound audience listening to their song. That double rainbow we saw was a unique rainbow which we will not soon forget.

Yet there is a rainbow that is even more unique than the one we saw close to Salmon Arm. To read a description of this rainbow you must turn to Revelation 4. The apostle John receives a vision of the most holy throne of God Himself. Look! A door is standing open in heaven, as he describes in v. 1. Look! In heaven there is Someone sitting on a throne (v. 2). He is the holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty (v 8). And look! "A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne."

Two things make this rainbow unique. First, it was *green* like an emerald, whereas we are used to seeing rainbows display a spectrum of colours. Second, this rainbow *encircles* the throne, meaning that it circled a full 360 degrees around the throne. The rain-

bows which we usually see form an arc of 180 degrees, not 360.

What is the LORD revealing to us with this unique rainbow in John's vision? The best place to begin is with the rainbow the LORD displayed to Noah. The Flood receded. The ark rested on the mountains of Ararat. Then the LORD made a covenant promise. "Never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen 9:11). The God who made this promise also set his rainbow in the clouds as a reminder sign. The LORD declared, "Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant" (9:14,15). So, when you see a rainbow, you know *for sure* that the LORD will never destroy the whole earth with flood waters again.

However, the LORD has revealed more than this. For although the apostle Peter does not speak specifically about the rainbow, he does speak about the LORD's covenant promise not to destroy the world by flood waters again. Peter goes on to explain that on the day of Christ's return "the elements will be destroyed by fire" – not water – and "in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heavens and new earth, the home of the righteous" (2 Pet 3:10,13).

Let's pull these Scriptural threads together. The LORD made a covenant promise that He would not destroy the earth by water again. The LORD reassures us of this promise whenever He sets a rainbow in the sky. In addition, from 2 Peter 3 we learn that although this world will not be destroyed by water, it will be "laid bare" by fire. Moreover, the LORD will bring us the new heavens and the new earth. Of this, too, we can be reassured when we see a rainbow.

Taking this knowledge along with us, we see a unique rainbow in Revelation 4. This rainbow, like the Genesis 9 rainbow, reminds us that God will most certainly remember his covenant promise to bring the new heavens and new earth on the day of Christ's return.

In fact, this covenant promise *circumscribes* God's government of the entire universe from his heavenly throne. God sends out his commands in all directions – north, south, east and west – to all his creatures. Yet in whatever direction his command goes out, it always goes *through* the covenant rainbow which encircles the throne a full 360 degrees.

Some of God's decrees in Revelation can unsettle our souls. Famines, earthquakes, plagues of disease, and disasters in economics. From his throne in heaven the Lord decrees them all. On earth we weak saints may shudder. But remember: Where did the decree come from? It came from God's throne and *through* God's rainbow. Therefore, be assured of one thing. Everything the Lord decrees is designed to advance the fulfillment of his rainbow promise, the new heavens and new earth.

Some of God's decrees for your life will baffle you. Why this sickness? Why this loneliness? Why this sorrow? Remember this: The decree came from God's throne. However, before it arrived in your life, it was filtered *through* the emerald mist of God's covenant promises. He uses everything to bring you closer, step-by-step, to the new creation.

The unique, double, spectrum rainbow near Salmon Arm faded after a little while. Just like the storm clouds, it appeared, but it also disappeared. *This* earth and *this* life are full of things that fade, flux and fail.

The unique, encircling, emerald rainbow of Revelation 4 is not fading, neither will it ever fade. Things in God's heavenly throne room are not prone to decay. The emerald rainbow will shine securely forever. In a world of flux, it is good to know that the LORD of all creation is faithful to his promises . . . forever.

Do you still have doubts once and a while? Look! There is a rainbow encircling your Lord's throne!

Rev. Jason van Vliet is the minister of the Canadian Reformed Church of Lincoln, Ontario.



The Acts of General Synod 1998 – An Overview

By J. Visscher

It's here! The Acts of General Synod Fergus 1998 have arrived. From various sources (Internet, Press Release, articles, word of mouth) church members have been made aware of some, if not all, of the decisions of Synod 1998, but with the publication of the Acts each and everyone of us have these decisions officially in front of us. We are now able to weigh, measure, debate and discuss accurately.

And that is something everyone of you who is a church member should do. A healthy church life is characterized by the fact that the decisions made by major assemblies are of interest to all the members. They are not simply left up to the leaders or the special office bearers. After all, these decisions have a bearing on the health and direction of the church of which many of you readers are members. So read them and work through them.

To assist you in this task, let me serve you with the following overview:

Appeals

If you took all the time that a synod spends to deal with the various appeals on its agenda and added it all up, you would discover that they still occupy most of a synod's time. The same applied to Synod Fergus. Numerous appeals were received on a wide variety of different subjects. Some of the answers to these appeals can be found in the Acts; some were placed in the Closed Acts because they dealt with persons.

I will refrain from particular comment on these appeals; however, having been a member of a number of synods, I cannot help but express a certain sympathy with the brothers at synod when they had to deal with appeals on matters that keep coming back synod after synod. Why is it that some churches and persons go back time and time again after any number of synods have ruled against them on a cer-

tain matter? This Synod, as we shall see, was fond of using Article 30 of the Church Order; whereas, it, along with future ones, might do better to use Article 33 C.O. more often. It reminds us that no synod should consider an appeal for a second time unless it can be shown that there are "new grounds" for doing so.

Bible Translations (Articles 121, 122)

Synod 98 decided to continue to recommend the NIV for use in the churches, as well as mandated its Committee on Bible Translations to receive comments from the churches and to pass along valid concerns to the NIV Translation Center.

This Committee is to be commended for sending a very detailed report to Synod 98 in which it evaluated in detail all of the criticisms against the NIV sent to Synod 95. The full report is not appended to the Acts 98 but it can be obtained from your local consistory.

Book of Praise (Article 140)

Synod 98 decided to make the Book of Praise available in an electronic format. In this way those who make use of the internet can access its contents. It also decided that there should be an official web page for the Canadian Reformed Churches. The quest for yet another melody for Hymn 1A (the Apostles' Creed) was put to rest. It was decided that the next edition of the Book of Praise should have overleaf musical notation. The Nicene Creed (version recommended by the Committee) was adopted.

Synod was also faced with several requests to update the language of the Book of Praise. In response, it took a cautious approach and instructed the Committee to revise the prose section (Confessions, Forms and Prayers), but

not to proceed with changes to the Psalms and Hymns.

I sense a growing restlessness, especially among the young in our churches, when it comes to the Book of Praise. There are those who are of the opinion that more than just a language update is needed and that the tunes to certain psalms need to be replaced with easier ones, or supplemented with alternative ones. Some of the hymns too, they say, should be replaced and others added (popular favourites appear to be: How Great Thou Art, Great is Thy Faithfulness, Abide With Me, Amazing Grace, as well as a number of more contemporary ones).

To those who are of the opinion that Synod should have mandated the Committee to do a more far-reaching revision, it should be pointed out that only a couple of churches made this request. On such a basis it is very difficult for any synod to give orders for a major overhaul. If there is widespread disenchantment with the current Book of Praise, let the members speak out and let the churches overture the next synod. Indeed, here is one of those issues that should be discussed and debated more on the pages of this magazine.

Churches Abroad (Articles 34, 40, 72, 119, 120,)

Every Synod receives a report from the Committee on Relations With Churches Abroad (CRCA), and Synod 98 was no different. As a result of this report, Synod decided to continue to maintain the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS), the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA), the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA), the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK), and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN).

In its decisions on these relationships the Acts contain few surprises; however, there is one, and it has to do

with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. With respect to this federation, Synod instructed the Committee to discuss a considerable list of concerns. In itself such a mandate is not new; however, what Synod 98 did in this regard is to decide on a definite departure from past practice. In the past the point has been made repeatedly that as churches we deal with each other on the basis of official decisions made by major assemblies. Synod committees do not read church newspapers, neither do they react to them. They evaluate official decisions.

If Synod 98 has its way, that will no longer be the case. From now on the Committee will have to investigate every complaint that one of our churches sends to it about what happens in a sister church because some member(s) or consistory has read some contentious article in the foreign church press. In such a situation the Committee may as well begin subscribing to all of the pertinent magazines published in the sister churches in Australia, Korea, the Netherlands, Scotland and South Africa and be prepared to investigate any number of complaints because somewhere some church or member in our federation disagrees with what a particular author writes. Did Synod really think this one through? Poor committee! What an impossible mandate!

Free Reformed Churches (Article 98)

Synod Fergus not only made decisions with respect to distant churches, but also made an important decision with regard to a church federation next door. It decided to mandate the Committee on Ecclesiastical Unity to take up contact with the Free Reformed Churches on North America with a view to establishing federative unity.

No doubt a decision such as this will not bear immediate fruit, also not in light of the recent decision of the Free Reformed to start their own theological training; however, it does reflect an ongoing desire on Synod's part to take seriously the words of our Saviour "that they all may be one."

International Conference of Reformed Churches (Article 52)

With respect to our membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches, Synod decided that we would continue to participate. It also charged the Churches Abroad

Committee to send two of its members to the next meeting of the ICRC to be held, the Lord willing, in the year 2001 in the USA.

In addition, the Committee was charged to inform the next meeting of the ICRC that the Canadian Reformed Churches disapprove of the change made in the Constitution, Article IV, 1a, and that it be changed to take into account the concerns of our churches.

What are those concerns? Synod is of the opinion that the Conference made a "significant move" when it revised the Constitution and faults the Committee for not highlighting and evaluating this change. It then quotes a paragraph out of the Report of the Constitutional Committee of the ICRC and proceeds to comment, "The new reading of the Constitution makes an unnecessary distinction between the Reformed Faith and the confessional standards contained in the Basis. It leaves open the question 'What is the Reformed Faith?' The concept of 'the Reformed faith' could be perceived as the lowest common denominator in confessional unity and takes away the need for a confessional basis. It has the potential of opening membership in the ICRC to churches whose confessions, upon examination, are found wanting" (Acts 1998, Art. 52, Cons. D.)

How is one to evaluate this concern of Synod? I can only conclude that this is an example of confused reasoning. First, Synod considers the distinction between "the Reformed Faith" and "the confessional standards" to be unnecessary. Why? Is the same distinction not used in our very own Church Order? In Article 26 it refers to "the confessions" and in Article 61 it uses the expression "the Reformed faith" and says that only those who profess this faith should be admitted to the Lord's supper. Is this too an "unnecessary distinction?"

Furthermore, Synod proceeds to put a negative spin on this distinction by telling us that all kinds of bad things "could" or have the "potential" to come from this. In short, Synod seems determined to place this constitutional change in the worst possible light.

But is this justified? I fail to see that this change opens the door to all kinds of dangers. Consider the new wording in its entirety: "Those Churches shall be admitted as members: a. which faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis, and whose confes-

sional standards agree with the said Reformed Faith." Obviously, all applicants for membership will be evaluated on whether or not they adhere to the Reformed Faith. And what is "the Reformed Faith" all about? It is very clearly defined by the six Reformed confessions mentioned in the Basis.

Yet that is not the end of the matter. For there are churches in Africa and Asia that consider themselves totally committed to the Reformed Faith but who have not adopted all of the confessions mentioned in the Basis. There are even some that have made their own confessions. Does this disqualify them? No, not so long as their confessions agree with the Reformed Faith as defined by the six confessions mentioned in the Basis.

I am thus left with the question, "what is really so problematic with this constitutional change?"

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (Article 130)

By far the longest Article in the Acts is Article 129, and as you may guess, it has to do with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. For more than 30 years our churches have been discussing, debating, deliberating and disagreeing about what to do with the OPC. Synod 98 once again went on record as maintaining the decision of Synod 1977 to have ecclesiastical contact with this church, and rejected all appeals against this decision. Synod also went a step further and adopted a proposed agreement on the two issues that separate us, namely, fencing of the Lord's table and confessional membership. This agreement had earlier been worked out by the committees of the CanRC and OPC. Finally, Synod invited the OPC to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC on the basis of the proposed agreement.

All in all, this represents a momentous step forward; however, the step may well falter and fail because of the fact that Synod 98 saw fit to amend the original agreement. It added the words "This means that a general verbal warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith and confirmation of a godly life is required." In this way Synod informed the OPC that it has to do more than fence the table by means of a verbal warning. It somehow has to ascertain that those who partake both profess the Reformed faith and live a godly life. How it does so is

not specified, although reference is made to the eldership.

Will this decision find favour with the OPC? Will it lead at last to the goal of Ecclesiastical Fellowship? The decision is now up to them. In the meantime, the wisdom of adding these additional words has already been questioned in the pages of *Clarion*. (For additional comment: see my forthcoming contribution entitled "Access to the Table.")

The Reformed Churches of Quebec and the Reformed Church in the United States (Articles 51, 97)

Synod received recommendations from two different committees to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with two other reformed churches in North America, namely with the Reformed Churches in Quebec (ERQ) and the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS). In both cases it decided to decline the invitation at this time and to instruct its respective committees to do more work on a number of areas.

In the case of the RCUS more discussion has to take place on issues relating to the Lord's Supper, Sunday observance, the doctrine of the church, erasure and its connection to NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council). With respect to the Reformed Churches in Quebec clarification will be sought on the subjects of deacons and deaconesses, liturgical forms, order of worship, supervision of the pulpit, Lord's Day observance, the Lord's Supper, confessional binding for members and office bearers.

Reading such a long list of subjects still to be discussed can only make the ordinary church member wonder whether or not the respective committees did their homework. Yet the remarkable thing is that both reports touch on almost everyone of these subjects and explain them, even evaluate them. Obviously Synod was not satisfied with the explanations given by the respective Committees. You as church members will have to judge whether or not these Committees did their work satisfactorily or not. For myself, I can only say that I am deeply disappointed at the way in which Synod 98 has seen fit to deal with the ERQ and RCUS, as well as with other aspects of our interchurch relations. (For further comment see my forthcoming "Inter-church Relations: Where Are We Headed?")

The Theological College (Articles 87, 107)

A considerable amount of time was also spent by Synod on matters relating to the Theological College. First, attention was paid to regular items found in the report of the Board of Governors about its activities in connection with the professors, students, courses, finances and appointments. Next, Synod weighed a very detailed expansion proposal which called for a new library and the renovation of the existing one, and passed it unanimously. Thereafter, the proposed pastoral proficiency program was discussed, altered somewhat and passed back to the Board for implementation.

Further details about these decisions can be gleaned from the Acts. Suffice it to say, that Synod took some far-reaching decisions with respect to our College. The new Library will give the College the added space it needs as it enters a new millennium and the proficiency program will give the students the hands-on training that they and the churches have requested.

Women Voting (Articles 109 - 112)

Synod had to deal with overtures by two churches, as well as one member, to appoint a committee to study anew the matter of women voting for office bearers. Synod turned down these overtures and cited Article 30 C.O. to the effect that these overtures should have come to the Synod by way of classis and regional synod.

Aside from the issue itself, the question may be asked whether or not Synod acted properly when it declared these overtures inadmissible. In the case of one church Synod turned it down because "it was a new matter" (see Art. 112, 2). Yet in considering an appeal about the same matter from another church, Synod stated that in a certain sense it "is not a new matter" (Article 110, 4, 1). So what is it? Why were these overtures dismissed?

It would seem to me that women's voting is not a new matter and that what churches and members who want to see this matter re-opened need to do is to appeal the decision of Synod 1983 (Acts, Article 160). The only other avenue is for a local church to go the route of classis, regional synod, general synod.

That there seems to be some synodical confusion about the understanding and interpretation of Article 30 C.O. is also evident in the Acts, article 74, dealing with the Independent Presbyterian

Church of Mexico. Synod declared an overture from the Church at Toronto about this foreign church inadmissible because it had not gone the route of classis, regional synod, general synod. But did it need to? Is one thing for a local church to go to classis seeking endorsement of its overture about unity with a neighbouring church federation in the same country, it is quite another thing for a local church to feel compelled to do that in the case of a foreign church. In such a case the local church can address itself directly to a general synod and ask it to take up contact. The criterion in that case is whether or not the local church has supplied synod with sufficient documentation to support its request.

In conclusion, I would urge you to read and evaluate Acts 1998 for yourselves. For my part, I am happy with a number of decisions, confused about some and distressed about others. Of particular concern to me is the way in which Synod has dealt with the area of inter-church relations. Hopefully, the future will see extensive discussion on these matters and, along with that, a greater degree of clarity and unity.

Dr. J. Visscher is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in Langley, BC. 

CORRECTING AN ERROR OF WAYNE PLEITER

In "Raising the bar too high?" (*Clarion* 47:22, p. 530) Mr. Pleiter wrote that I had stated that Synod made a practical matter – the matter of how the Lord's table is supervised – a confessional matter.

This is incorrect. I realize that supervision of the Lord's table is a confessional matter. In Q&As 82 & 85 of the Heidelberg Catechism we confess that the elders are to bar from the Lord's table those who by their confession and life show that they are unbelieving and ungodly. Without a doubt, supervision of the Lord's table is a confessional matter.

What I stated was that the matter of how a church through its elders admits guests to the Lord's table is not a confessional but a church order (practical) matter. Our confessions do not address this matter while Article 61 of the Church Order does. – *GvP*

By J. De Jong



Remembering Greijdanus

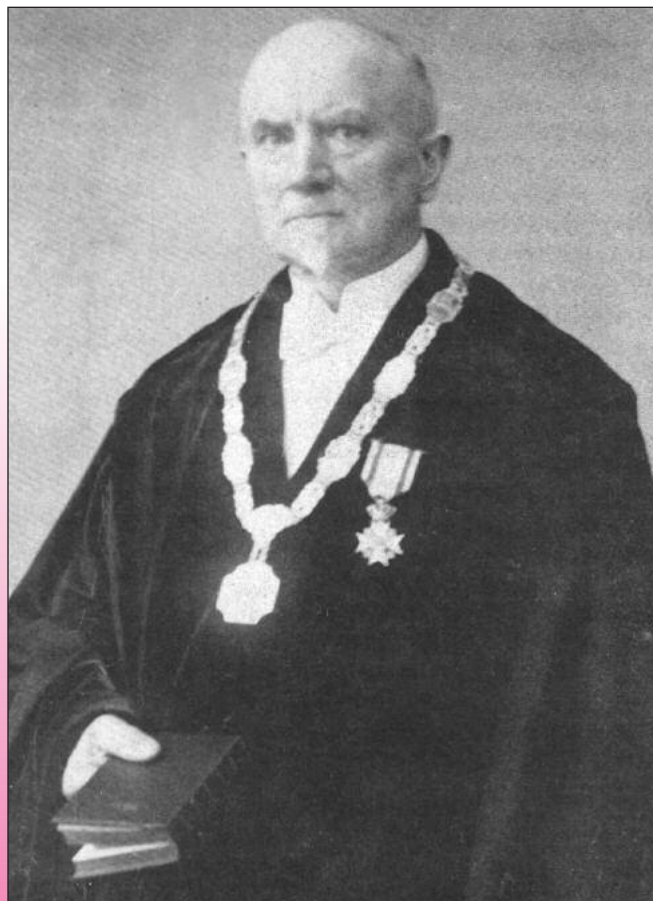
This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Prof. Dr. Seakle Greijdanus, (1871-1948) professor of New Testament at the Theological College in Kampen, and one of the leaders in the Liberation of 1944. Greijdanus taught at Kampen from 1917 to 1943, when H.N. Ridderbos, appointed by Synod 1942, replaced him. However, all this took place in the heat of the struggle, and the appointment itself was subject to criticism from various sides. Greijdanus himself did not approve of it, not because of the person, but because it involved the self-continuation of the synod. After the Liberation he felt called, at the age of 73 (!), to come back from retirement, and he kept teaching in Kampen until his death in 1948. His last lecture was given less than a month before he died.

Greijdanus was never one to solicit anyone's favours. His was a direct and forthright style, man to man, as the English say. This is evident from all his writings, and especially his polemical works in church government and the interpretation of the Scriptures on the issues of the day. It's no surprise then, that at the well known August 11 meeting in 1944, he was not looking for any self-pity. "Old age has its privileges; being alone has its privileges, too" he is reported to have said. By which he meant: "You do not need to worry about me, but you need to get on with the work of the Lord."

The fiftieth anniversary of his death became the occasion for publishing a series of studies on the work of S. Greijdanus, a publication which includes contributions from an international range of scholars of various disciplines.¹ One of the more interesting selections is a short personal reflection by Prof. H.N. Ridderbos, the synodical successor to Greijdanus, an eminent scholar who also had many of his publications translated into English and became a well known figure, especially in the circles of the CRC.

Ridderbos' comments are enlightening from the standpoint of church history. Recently *Nederlands Dagblad*

Prof. Dr. Seakle Greijdanus



(Sept. 22, 1998) ran a section of his piece in the book, parts of which follow here below. Speaking of Greijdanus's role as professor of New Testament Ridderbos says:

His greatest asset in this area can be found in the initiative to publish a new commentary on the New Testament, the so called *Botenburger* commentary, in close and unbroken cooperation with Dr. F.W. Grosheide, his nearest colleague at the Free University. This project, which they not only began, but in their own strength almost completed, meant, along with similar studies in the Old Testament, in a certain sense a breakthrough, or in any case, a welcome and necessary complement to the

way in which, under the leadership of Kuyper and Bavinck, theology was done up to that time among the Reformed.

In the older approach, the explanation of the Scriptures obviously also played an important role. But that was then very selective, and mostly a matter of deriving proof texts to show that what was confessed and taught actually was based on Scripture. The great contribution of Greijdanus and Grosheide was that they taught us as students to once again follow the proper order, that is, not from the dogma to the Scriptures, but the other way around, and hence brought us back to the text, and indeed, ever anew to the text. Respect for the Scriptures was

for them essentially respect for the text, and that in the most literal sense of the word.

This was especially true of Greijdanus. His method of exegesis was strongly analytic. He so to speak cut the text to the bone, laying out all the parts. Before this, where this was possible and necessary, he gave an extensive text critical examination concerning the exact transmission of the text. After that he followed the line of the text word for word and verse for verse. Nothing escaped him – not one verb form, not one usage or deletion of the definite article, not one nuance in the meaning of the words – in order to derive from all this the meaning of the writer. So he as it were built his explanation from the ground up, brick by brick, and in this way the meaning of the passage took shape for him.

Greijdanus was not for me the 'end of all exegesis'. But if you ask me what aspect of his teaching has stayed with me the longest and still, like an example, functions as a conscience that you never end up losing, then that is his demand for a thorough analysis of the text. This must precede all theological interpretation if one wants to avoid coming to premature statements, as also with regard to Scripture happens all too often.

To be sure, the one who consults Greijdanus's commentaries must have some patience and perseverance. You cannot just quickly consult him in passing. Rather, you get a shovel placed in your hand, and you are invited to toil along with the writer in order to cut right through all the mess and rubble to find your way up and through to the right perspective on the text, there to enjoy the attained view.

The Lectures

As far as the lectures were concerned, there are a large number of unforgettable things to mention. And that 'unforgettable' I mean in more than one sense. If you approach these lectures from the point of view of didactics, and the way of imparting thoughts, then there is hardly a good word to say about them. His teaching was strictly dictating. With somewhat of a cutting and cracking voice he read for us (and apparently invited us to write down) the literal text of his forthcoming, soon to be published, commentary. All without

pause, elucidation, or even stopping to take a breath. Every once in a while you saw a student who could not keep up throw down his pen in despair. Once in a while a student took a chance on trying to break his stride and to ask: "Professor, could you read a little slower?" With a nod he took some notice of the remark, but it did not really help much. People thought that someone here had forgotten to factor in the discovery of the printing press, not to mention other more modern forms of communication.

But still! Still the lectures of Greijdanus belonged to the most attended at the College. If you wanted to have a good spot on Mondays at 2:15, when he gave his hour in exegesis, you really needed to be on time. I will never be able to understand this completely, but it had to do with the way the personality of Greijdanus came over on us students. We had a unique relationship with him, most of all, a relation of respect. Of himself, he was not out to gain the favour of his students. He was friendly and obliging if you approached him. But one did not easily become familiar with him, – I think not even his colleagues did. So there was always some distance. But if you saw him and heard him in the activity which was for him his life, one could learn something of his true nature. It was the energy that drove him in everything that he did – in all that he promoted and defended and no less in what he rejected. Also in his – from the formal point of view – very inadequate way of teaching, one saw something of the passion that drove him on, and that he passed on to his disciples as something essential to the discipline. That is why it could never go any slower or any calmer, but they needed to go along in the current in which he brought his difficult language and old fashioned sentence structure to life.

Fascinating Aspects

Once in awhile it seemed sparks were flying as, for example when, while he was reading from his manuscript, he entered into a discussion with his opponents who according to him did not do justice to those things which for him could not be given up. In all this he knew the literature, and quoted the authors left and right. I must add, he did so without really giving us any

insight into the place and meaning of all these great and small names in the history of New Testament research. Only later, when 'I started on my own', did I begin to understand more of those varying backgrounds against which the battle that he fought took shape.

One can, from a purely academic standpoint, have his reservations about the personal expressiveness with which he chose his positions. But that also forms the secret of his existential involvement that for years marked his work as professor and that finally came to an end when, just before his death, the doctor had to make clear to him that now he definitely had to put down his pen. And it was that exertion, always coupled with a vast range of knowledge, that fascinated his students and gave him his own special authority and authenticity in our eyes.

Critique

Looking back, that is, after a period of fifty or sixty years of continued development of New Testament studies in general and his part in them in particular, one will stand in a more critical way over against Greijdanus's method of exegesis than was possible among the third and fourth year students of that day. Today one would especially bring in against this strongly analytical method of exegesis that the more synthetic standpoint of the history of revelation (or 'biblical theology' as it is called today) is lacking too much; and hence the historical development of the biblical message both in its fundamental unity as well as in its rich diversity is shortchanged. It was therefore no accident that the discipline called history of revelation never appeared on his roster.

Personal Anecdotes

Ridderbos goes on to relate some personal anecdotes about Greijdanus's teaching through the years, some of which, he admits may have acquired a less than accurate form over the years. But they all point to the good relations that existed between the students and the professors in the earlier period of Kampen's development. Ridderbos concludes:

All this tells us in all simplicity, something of the good years in the old Kampen, when the sun of harmony and mutual trust shone and we stood together for one cause. In this our teachers were an example

to us, each in his own way, and Greijdanus also in his way, but no less than any other. Later other years followed, years of the fading of the sun, and of the waning of trust. Also in this I retain inefaceable memories, also of Greijdanus, whose successor I happen to be. But I was not – and this to my joy – asked to bring up all those memories again. Unsolicited I will say a little about it. There are people of whom you retain precious memories, but whom, in the choice they made at a certain point, one is no longer able to understand and hence not able to follow, but from whom one in the deepest sense of the word nevertheless will never become estranged. Such a person is for me my teacher, Seakle Greijdanus.

We can appreciate Ridderbos' reserved and cautious tone, who despite all differences speaks primarily of the respect he retains for his teacher. Still he does not hold back from expressing his sentiments not only about the division that arose between the two men, but also about the effects this division had in subsequent years. There was, at least in terms of method, a growing estrangement between the teacher and his student.

So truth demands of us to reiterate that the choice was made, and the deep breach still exists today. Ridderbos himself has broken with what he sees as an overly analytical and rationalistic form

of exegesis. And although he held to a more conservative position in some of his work, he essentially followed the spirit of the time, adopting a freer approach to the text, and to the way it needed to be explained.

One can even question whether the assessment of Greijdanus is not coloured too much in one direction. For while it is true that Greijdanus insisted on going back to the text, and following the order from text to dogma, it is also true that he kept the dogma in mind as he worked with the text. Schilder says somewhere that Greijdanus kept the dogmatical issues in mind and took them into account as he developed his exegesis. Not that the dogma itself would determine his exegesis; but rather, it seems to me, that the dogma would assist in cross-checking his exegesis, and so help in keeping it on the right track.

Therefore in Ridderbos' reflections we are left with only a partial picture of the real truth concerning the events that took place. For Ridderbos identifies himself as the successor to Greijdanus. But after the Liberation, and after Greijdanus's continued term as professor, another successor appeared at the new school in Kampen, the 'Broederweg' school, namely, Prof. H.J. Jager. If we ask where Greijdanus himself would have seen his line continued, and whom he really would have acknowledged as his successor, then we must look to the line followed by the Liberated churches, which was simply the

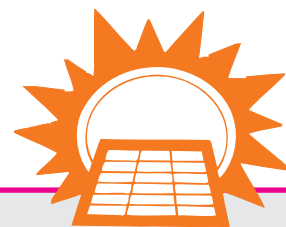
line of faithfulness to the creeds and the adopted order. That was for Greijdanus not a choice at one point in his life, but a principle which dominated the whole of his life.

Ironically Ridderbos's words were published on the same day that it was announced that the synodical school in Kampen is facing a forced closure. According to the 'Together on the Way' churches, there are too many training centres, and Kampen was one of the schools upon which the axe had to fall. It gave Ridderbos's already melancholy tone an added twist of irony and fate. The closure will mean the end of a long history, and – in terms of theological training – the final curtain on the drama that resulted in the Liberation of 1944, and the birth of two separate schools. Like the end of the two Germanys on the grander scale, so the end of two 'Kampens' marks the birth of an era which irrevocably says farewell to the past.

However, Ridderbos may still learn once again from his former teacher. The old Greijdanus had no time for nostalgia. Even when he stood alone, one never hears the melancholy tone of the solitary conservative as you sense it above in Ridderbos. One motto drove him on: Let's be doing the work of the Lord! And that, at bottom, remains his lasting legacy.

¹G. Harinck, (ed) *Leven en werk van prof. dr. S. Greijdanus (1871-1948)*, (Barnveld: De Vuurbaak, 1998)





By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

“... for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:11

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is the time of the year again that we hope to celebrate Christmas. This is not something new; we have done it many times before.

In our personal lives we have celebrations as well: birthdays, anniversaries, and sometimes we think of other things to celebrate. But none of those festivities are surrounded by as much excitement and pomp as Christmas.

Actually, Christmas is one of the things we celebrate in the church. The church, that is the gathering of the saints, the people of God. God has taken care of his church all through the ages. In the time of the Old Testament, the Israelites were the church. The Lord had given them also many occasions to celebrate. All those celebrations were directed towards the temple service. There the Israelites would come together to celebrate the many feasts that the Lord had given them. Then they worshipped, and brought their sacrifices; they ate and drank, and sang their praises to the Lord. For the Lord wanted his people to show their thankfulness and their love for Him. That gives reason for happiness, and therefore they could celebrate.

Now we live in the time of the New Testament. The Old Testament period came to an end because Jesus Christ was born on earth. He lived on earth until He died on the cross. He was sacrificed for the sins of all the people. Because He was the Lamb that was sacrificed for all people, his death ended the temple service, and all the celebrations that came with it.

But Jesus Christ gave us new things to remember and to celebrate. All the Old Testament celebrations only pointed towards the real thing: Christ's death on the cross, his resurrection, his ascension into heaven, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And those are the things which the church of the New Testament now celebrates. They are all related to each other. We could not celebrate Christmas if there had not been a Good Friday. Good Friday would not be a happy occasion if there were no Easter. And Easter is not complete without an Ascension Day and a Pentecost.

Therefore Christmas is only one of the feasts that the Lord has given to his church to celebrate. But the only real way to celebrate it is when we do not just remember the birth of Jesus Christ, but also the continuation of Christ's story. For He became our Saviour when He took upon himself, and died for all the sins of mankind. That is what we remember at Christmas! Not a sweet little baby born to Mary and Joseph in a stable, surrounded by some shepherds and some animals. No, this was the Son of God, who humiliated himself and came down to heaven as a helpless Child, just so He could fulfill the task that God, the Father, had assigned to Him.

When we look around us at Christmas time we see all the hustle and bustle of the people. They spend their money on expensive gifts and rich foods and Christmas

decorations. Maybe we can try to show them that all their excitement is in vain as long as they do not want to believe the real message of Christmas.

In order to really celebrate, we first have to confess our sins and misery and the fact that we were totally lost to sin. But the Lord, in his love for us and out of grace, sent us his only begotten Son. He prepared for us the way to the Lord. Through Him, and Him alone we can live again and look forward to our future with Him, where there will be no sin, no sickness no loneliness, no poverty; only perfect happiness. That is how God's church celebrates Christmas 1998. We do not need gifts and decorations for that. For the splendour and the beauty of these celebrations live in our hearts. Not only for a few weeks of the year, but always.

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas!

*For unto us a Child is born,
To us a Son is given,
And on His shoulders He shall bear
All power in earth and heaven.
The Wonderful, the Counsellor,
The Mighty God is He;
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace
His holy Name shall be.* Hymn 15:3

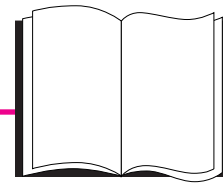
Birthdays in January:

- 2: Liz Koning**
9905 152nd Street, Edmonton, AB T5P 1X4
- 7: Christine Breukelman**
2225 -19 St, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4
- 17: Henry Driegen**
#19-31450 Spur Ave., Abbotsford, BC V2T 5M3
- 17: Grace Homan**
“ANCHOR HOME,” 361 30Rd, RR#2
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0
- 19: Janine Smid**
RR #1, Arkona, ON N0M 1B0
- 27: Hank Orsel**
705 Surrey Lane, Apt 1201, Burlington, ON
L7T 3Z4
- 30: Tyler Hoeksema**
6755 Lorne Dr., Sardis, BC V2R 2G3

Liz will be 38, Christine 27, Henry and Grace 43, Janine 29, Hank 68, and Tyler 10.

Congratulations to all seven (!!!) of you! Until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen
7462 Reg. Road 20, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
e-mail: rwravens@netcom.ca



Why is the OPC Treated Differently?

By John Werkman

Our contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) started with General Synod Edmonton 1965. Note that this synod gave our deputies the instruction to ask the OPC whether they could accept us as a true Church (Article 141, 1V C1; also see *Acts Orangeville 1968*, Art 154, p. 51). The reason I mention this is that I often hear that we got tricked by the OPC when they asked us years later whether the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) recognize the OPC as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some of us seem to think that we got pressured into recognizing them as a true church, but that is not the case at all. Their question was quite appropriate and we had asked it of them in 1965.

In 1977 our Synod decided "with thankfulness to recognize the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ as confessed in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession." Among its considerations, Synod noted that our Dutch sister churches accepted the Westminster Confession as a fully Reformed confession, that the good fight of faith is fought in the OPC and that the OPC adheres to their confession (*Acts General Synod Coaldale 1977*, Art. 91, pp. 40-41). Clearly Synod Coaldale did not "did not deem the so-called divergencies to be an impediment for recognizing the OPC as a true church" (*Acts General Synod Cloverdale 1983*, p. 306).

This decision built on and was in line with the earlier decision of General Synod New Westminster 1971 which concluded that the OPC was a confessional church committed to the Scriptures (*Acts General Synod New Westminster 1971*, Art. 92).

It was reported to General Synod Winnipeg 1989 that the OPC had left the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) in 1988 due to the tolerance within that body of unbiblical doctrine and practices. "This withdrawal resulted in the termination of almost forty years of OPC membership in the RES. The OPC departed with a sincere plea that the RES recognize 'the enormity of what has

done and is doing to churches seeking to be faithful to the Word of God'" (*Acts General Synod Winnipeg 1989*, p. 173).

General Synod Abbotsford 1995 acknowledged the commitment of the OPC to be faithful to the Scriptures and to defend the Reformed heritage as well as its continued warnings against the unscriptural course taken by the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) (*Acts General Synod Abbotsford 1995*, Art. 106, page 74). Yet, we refuse to enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC, even though they adhere to the same Confession and Form of Government as the Presbyterian Church of Korea and the Free Church of Scotland with whom we do have Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

Are we as CanRC dealing fairly and evenhandedly with the OPC? Are we not applying a double standard? Why is the OPC held to more rigorous and more exacting requirements for a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship than other Presbyterian Churches are?

Since 1965 when the Canadian Reformed Churches took up contact with the OPC, major barriers had to be removed and have been removed. The OPC terminated their relationship with the (Synodical) Reformed Church (GKN) in the Netherlands. They withdrew from the RES. And they terminated their longstanding relationship with the CRC. Through these actions, the OPC has proved again to be a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

General Synod Fergus 1998 did something very unusual. They came with a new condition now that all major barriers had been removed. That really floored me. I will be very brief on this point, because you could have read the article of Rev. J. Mulder in the *Clarion* of July 10, 1998. I am in full agreement with his article. Allow me to repeat the new condition. Synod Fergus decided that the Canadian Reformed Churches invite the OPC to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CanRC on the condition that the General Assembly of the OPC declares that in admitting guests to the Lord's Table "a general

verbal warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith and confirmation of a godly life is required."

When this unanimous decision was taken, the delegates and most visitors applauded this decision. It is my firm belief that such a demonstration is unfitting in our Reformed circles, especially when you overturn the previous Synod decision without any grounds. General Synod Abbotsford turned down as unacceptable a suggestion to have a committee investigate local practices in the OPC. "We judge each other not on the basis of local practices, but on the basis of our confessions and official documents. This is not a practical request, and there is danger of judging the 'body' by its weakest members." (See *Acts General Synod Abbotsford 1995*, top of page 72.)

Why is it that a Synod does not have to come with good grounds to overturn a decision, yet we as members of the church must come with proof and good grounds or our appeals will be rejected? Again a double standard. In my opinion Synod 1998 has failed us and our brothers and sisters in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The decision of General Synod Coaldale 1977 still stands, please don't ignore it.

I urge the members of the Canadian Reformed Churches to appeal the decision of General Synod Fergus 1998. Let your council know of your disapproval. Another three years wasted. We as Christians better learn to stand united. We have a common enemy, Satan, and he is reason enough to make us forget our differences. And he likes nothing better than to see us fighting with one another rather than against him.

We have a common enemy
As followers of the King,
And we will gain the victory
As to the cross we cling.

Satan divides and conquers – Christians unite and conquer.

John Werkman is a member of the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta.



News from the Women's Savings Action

College Evening presentation

When we make our annual presentation at the College Evening, we are always very much aware that without your faithful contributions and the dedicated efforts of the representatives and their helpers there would be no Women's Savings Action item on the program! Thanks to all of you we were once again able to present the principal with a pledge for \$25,000 on the College Evening. This amount will be used for the regular purchase of books and periodicals.

Contributions received

During this past year a total of \$28,030.55 was collected. Before that total appears at the bottom of the list of contributions a lot of team work has been done across the country and even beyond! Our heartfelt appreciation to the representatives and their helpers who gladly give of their time and energy! And of course, also our sincere thanks to all of you who give for this very worthwhile cause. A special thank you once again to the Theological Library Fund Committee in Western Australia from which we received \$1,871.18 as well as the Selles family for royalties from books written by the late Prof. L. Selles for ILPB which amounted to \$432.84.

Expansion

The date for the beginning of construction came closer when General Synod Fergus approved the plans which were presented. A special fund-raising drive was announced on the College evening. It is wonderful that during the past number of years besides our regular contribution for the purchase of books and periodicals we were also able to transfer \$45,176.48 into the expansion fund. At the present time we have an investment of \$35,000 which is designated for expansion. The Lord has greatly blessed our work as Women's Savings Action enabling us to continue to provide funds to keep the library up to date! And as we see this growing library expand beyond its current facilities, we rejoice that it is possible to assist in providing a new home for the library.

A noble tradition

More than 50 years ago, soon after the ecclesiastical Liberation, a women's savings action for the library of the Theological College was established in the Netherlands. About 20 years later a similar organization was set up here in Canada. During those years many thousands of guilders and thousands of dollars have been collected for our respective libraries! What wonderful labours of love! During all those years the Women's Savings Action has worked and worked well to raise the needed funds. What a privilege to be part of a very noble tradition – women of the church raising money for the library of the Theological College!

Theological College Women's Savings Action

Contributions July 1, 1997 to June 30, 1998

ABBOTSFORD	\$ 620.00
ALDERGROVE	560.00
ANCASTER	637.85
ATTERCLIFFE	758.50
BARRHEAD	775.00
BRAMPTON	153.60
BURLINGTON EAST	1,419.30
BURLINGTON SOUTH	635.69
BURLINGTON WEST	1,200.00
CALGARY	957.25
CARMAN	343.75
CHATHAM	520.00
CHILLIWACK	
CLOVERDALE	1,075.00
COALDALE	444.50
EDMONTON, IMM.	796.98
EDMONTON, PROV.	2,064.62
ELORA	51.35
FERGUS	814.95
GRAND RAPIDS	154.99
GRAND VALLEY	96.95
GUELPH	1,068.50
HAMILTON	1,232.96
HOUSTON	
LANGLEY	1,915.90
LANGLEY/WILL.HTS.	865.00
LINCOLN	325.40
LONDON	
LYNDEN, WASH.	581.37
NEERLANDIA	
ORANGEVILLE	162.50
OTTAWA	170.00
OWEN SOUND	110.00
ROCKWAY	
SMITHERS	1,105.69
SMITHVILLE	1,037.37
SURREY	1,019.00
TABER	583.00
TORONTO	76.40
VERNON	363.50
WATFORD	
WINNIPEG (GRACE)	550.00
WINNIPEG (REDEEMER)	479.66
YARROW	
AUSTRALIA	1,871.18
Royalties (Selles)	432.84
Total collected	\$28,030.55

Please note: Our fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. Any contributions which came in after June 30 will appear on the financial statement next year.

Sincere appreciation

And the College community is very appreciative of all our efforts! Our work as Women's Savings Action is never simply taken for granted. Congregation size varies, contributions vary, the method used by each representative varies – but love for our common goal unites us all! Once again, our special thanks to all the representatives and their helpers for those hours spent on the work of the Women's Savings Action. And to all of you – young and old – who continue to give generously for

the library of the Theological College. From seven congregations no amount was received; we would love to see an amount beside the name of your congregation next year! We do not give because we have to; we give because it is our way of showing thankfulness to God for his gift of the Theological College where future preachers and teachers of the Word may be trained. We pray for a blessing upon our labours that everything we do may be to the praise and glory of his holy Name and for the furtherance of his kingdom!

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Secretary – Joanne Van Dam
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Burlington, ON L7N 2Y1
(905) 634-0593

Treasurer – Carla Zietsma
54 Como Place
Hamilton, ON L9B 1Y4
(905) 389-8314



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length. Please include address and phone number.

Appreciative

We would like to express our appreciation for the wonderful articles lately in the *Clarion*, and especially for the ones in the 19 September 98 edition.

We are all in need of such guidance. The younger generation do not always realize the dangers that come into the Church, family life, and school. *"The problem of our age lies in the fact that people want to be big and are content to let God be small,"* is such a true statement. We see and taste that all around us.

Keep it up.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hofsink Sr.
Smithers, BC

Not so appreciative

K. Schilder's article *Walking with God* (Sept. 18) did not feature the name of the translator. Since we have learned that "the worker is worth his keep" (Matt 10:10), would it not be appropriate to give a translator due recognition for the demanding task he or she has performed? This recognition is even more valid in view of coming to grips with Schilder's richly textured and individual style and trying to present it in readable, idiomatic English.

Yet, notwithstanding my appreciation for the valiant attempt to translate *Wandelen met God*, I wonder how many readers were able to make sense of the first paragraph, and were then turned off because it was incomprehensible? The convoluted sentence labours, bogs down, and becomes un-English and unintelligible. True, the original sentence sets up sev-

eral pitfalls for the translator, who stumbled into them. For instance, the first word 'Indeed' presupposes some kind of antecedent which Schilder refers to. But he doesn't. The Dutch version starts out with "Ja," which in this context could be rendered as "We have to admit that . . ." or some equivalent expression.

The article then progresses through moments of lucidity and rambles through dark thickets of misinterpretation and unidiomatic English to the footnotes which have: "the man who rung . . . the bells" (= "who rang the bells"). Here we are informed as well that the article had been previously published in *The Canadian Reformed Magazine*, April, 1972. It can be expected that, during the intervening 26 years, your readers have become more discerning with reference to literary English. With this in mind, would it not have been wise to make sure that an article of this caliber is thoroughly edited before presenting it to your readers? Certainly, both Schilder and your readers deserved better treatment than this defective reprint.

Rienk Koat
Langley, BC

Unity, the fruit of truth

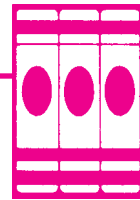
Please allow me to make a few remarks on Dr. Van Dam's article in *Clarion* October 16, 1998 "Is peace, with church divisions, really better?"

Dr. Van Dam has apparently met people who do not see the necessity of church union. For such people, peace is more important. I agree with Dr. Van Dam that

this is a wrong attitude. Dr. Van Dam quotes Prof. K. Schilder: "We have to be ready to struggle earnestly for years for such unity, also within one church federation, so that ultimately the unity of the congregation of Christ can be realized." But Prof. Schilder has said more about unity: "Independence" is something different than, standing alone." All the local churches are independent; they are complete and form a body (corpus) of Christ." But no single church may keep to itself. "Even in its independence, each church must seek federation with other churches and must hate, standing alone" (Schilder's *Struggle for the Unity of the Church* p. 385). We can say that seeking unity is reformation. About that K.S. says: Reformation is return to the confessions." (same work p.150) Writing about John 17, K.S. says: "Church reformers are not people who fight for unity but people who fight for truth. The unity that follows is the fruit of their struggle." (same work p.404). From this, it is clear that K.S. would not seek unity for the sake of "unity" but first fight for the truth. In *Clarion* Sept. 6, '96, Rev. J. Visscher argues for an "umbrella organization." He called it ARCH. In *Clarion* March 6, '98, Rev. C. Van Spronsen has a similar approach. In *Clarion* May 1, '98, Rev. Van Oene reacts to the last article. He says: "Giving time is fine but we should however, not accept a pattern that will only perpetuate the separate existence."

Therefore, let us fight for the truth of Art. 28 BC, and so come to unity and Peace as fruit of it.

W. DeHaan
Wardsville, ON



Same Message Whatever the Medium

Werner Gitt. *In the Beginning was Information*. Christliche Literatur-Verbreitung. Bielefeld 1997. 256 pages, paperback, \$7.00. (Available from: Answers in Genesis, P.O. Box 6330, Florence, Kentucky 41022 or 1 800 350 3232)

Every Christian must surely agree that God's communications with us are of paramount importance. The folly of ignoring these messages is nowhere better illustrated than in Genesis 3 where the serpent says to Eve "Has God said . . . ?" The very act of asking this question implied that God's command could be ignored and indeed Eve was persuaded to do exactly that. The disastrous consequences of those events are with us to this day. Later the devil tried to tempt Christ by twisting the word of God (Luke 4). Christ however refused to be tempted. It is apparent that a proper appreciation of God's word is very important. We know, however, that God reveals Himself in the creation (Psalm 19:1) as well as through the written word. But, during the past one hundred fifty years some people have used dubious conclusions drawn from the study of nature to re-interpret the clear message of Scripture. In striking contrast to the approach which puts science first, a relatively new book from Germany lays claim to our attention. The author looks at God's revelation to us as a single unified entity with primacy accorded to Scripture. The title of Werner Gitt's book *In the Beginning was Information* is borrowed from John 1:1.

Prof. Dr. Gitt was born in East Germany, graduated with his doctorate from the Technical University of Aachen and is currently director and professor at the German Federal Institute of Physics and Technology (Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt Braunschweig). His expertise includes information science, numerical mathematics and control engineering. Some

people may wonder what possible interest the works of such a specialist can have for the general public. Every field is interesting however as long as it is appropriately explained. Gitt writes in German but some of his publications have been translated into a total of twelve European languages not including Dutch. This book was translated into English by Prof. Dr. Jaap Kies of South Africa.

Each tiny cell stores the equivalent of a library. Moreover, like all information, it requires a sender exercising his own volition.

Information and codes

The author sets out to establish first of all what he means by information. "Information" he tells us, is something separate from matter or energy. It is, in other words, not an actual object but a communication concerning an object. In more formal terms one could say it is an abstract representation of a material reality. Information therefore is not a property of matter but always an idea. Moreover, in order to communicate any idea one needs a code or language. But how does one recognize a new or unfamiliar code? It could take the form of pulses of light, hieroglyphics, smoke signals, sounds etc. The author next obligingly tells us how we can recognize true codes.

A code, it transpires, must use a uniquely defined set of symbols. The sequence or order in which the symbols are presented must be irregular but not random (originating by chance) nor can it be explained as the result of a

chemical or physical process. Most importantly a code is recognized when it can be read. The essential character of a code then is that it is a must for the communication of information. Physical matter, however, is unable to generate any codes. Our entire experience indicates that a thinking being is required for a code which yields information. Any such thinking being that voluntarily uses his or her mind and creativity undertakes to communicate information to another party.

The reader may at this stage be yawning broadly. Are you asking yourself "So what do we care about information and codes anyway?"

Information in cells

In my opinion the answer is well worth your patience in wading through this preliminary discussion. The point is that information controls all processes in living cells and living creatures. But where did this information come from? One thing is certain, information never originates by chance but is always purposefully conceived. At this point Gitt turns his attention to DNA or the genetic code found in all living cells. This code controls the entire operation of each and every cell. The author points out that there are about 50,000 different proteins in the human body. Each has a very particular function. In order for a cell to manufacture any given protein, the chemical formula must be communicated to the cell as well as the method by which it is to be produced. The cell therefore needs a coding system to identify the precise order in which the amino acids [protein building blocks of which 20 are used] are to be attached together. The cell also needs to know when and where to produce any given protein.

Even a preliminary study of the information stored within each human cell reveals the remarkable properties of the DNA code. For example, during division



ACCEPTED to Fergus, ON
and DECLINED to
Winnipeg-Redeemer, MB

Rev. J. Louwerse
of Houston, BC

ACCEPTED to Ottawa, ON
Candidate M. Jagt
of Burlington, ON

of a cell which may be smaller than a speck of dust, the contained information is completely copied. This process is the equivalent of correctly copying within twenty to eighty minutes the contents of 1000 different books each of which contains 500 pages. That is quite a duplicating machine!! Biochemical research has revealed that the genetic code takes the form of four symbols which are combined in various arrangements of three to represent the twenty different amino acids. The author examines various alphabets [from the binary code of computers to our own alphabet to the thousands of characters in Chinese script]. He then considers how many characters or symbols are most suitable to represent each amino acid. He shows that the system we see in DNA is, from an engineering perspective, the best one possible! It is the most efficient in terms of minimum storage requirements and ease of copying correctly. The author has already established that DNA or the genetic code is an abstract representation of material realities. Of DNA he remarks: "... this is a true coding system. Three chemical letters comprise the code for a certain amino acid, but the acid itself is not present, neither spatially nor temporally ... ; it is not even present elsewhere. The actual acid is only synthesized at a latter stage according to the code which substitutes for it" (p. 85).

As far as our study of living things goes, we conclude that biological information is unique in its high storage density. Each tiny cell stores the equivalent of a library. Moreover, like all in-

formation, it requires a sender exercising his own volition. Gitt maintains that this fact immediately excludes any model for origins which is based solely on chemical or physical processes. The work of a supernatural creator is clearly evident. The function of DNA is only a small and recently discovered part of the works of God so apparent in nature. Nevertheless the information contained and revealed to us in the natural world is only a small part of what God shows to man of his greatness.

The most important source of information is of course the Bible. Gitt now turns his attention to this body of information. In it, God's thoughts, encoded in human language, are made available to us. In Gitt's opinion, the Bible shares some characteristics with the DNA code. For a start, the storage density of information in the Bible is also extremely high. Concerning the semantic density of information in the Bible, the author informs us: "This can be described as the plenitude of ideas or the weight of meanings per sentence or per paragraph ... it is noteworthy [for example] that the Bible describes man's origin completely in one single verse: 'and the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.' (Gen 2:7). These few words comprise a remarkable information content, since they provide answers to many questions. ... " (p. 155). Numerous ideas of evolutionary origin of mankind are all refuted by this one sentence Gitt maintains. Although Gitt is right as far as he goes, the argument as such, that the storage density of information in the Bible is high, is not compelling since it could be argued that myths have a similar dense semantic structure.


Gitt then delves into who the sender of the Bible's message is and what is the purpose of this communication. He quotes Isaiah 55: 10-11 that God's word will accomplish his purpose.

New insights into God's care

So what is the significance of Gitt's book? Few discussions so thoroughly dovetail a discussion of nature and of the Bible. In addition his nationality is of interest. Sometimes we hear the suggestion that only North Americans accept the first eleven chapters of Genesis literally. This author is of East German origin yet he

argues for a literal understanding of Genesis. The target audience for this work is people with an interest in science, particularly those with an interest in information theory or linguistics. Admittedly some sections of this book are less interesting than others. The general reader may want to skip Part I "The Laws of Nature" and go directly to Part II "Information." Later the reader may well dip back into Part I once its relevance is more apparent. Part III is concerned with "Application of the Concept of Information to the Bible." Lastly there are extensive appendices. While the approach is very logical, the author goes to considerable trouble to provide lighthearted anecdotes, cartoons and relevant diagrams and other illustrations.

This book is obviously not for everybody. Nevertheless for those who enjoy a somewhat technical discussion, this book provides delightful new insights into God's providential care of mankind and of all creation.

Dr. Margaret Helder is a member of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta. She is a botanist who writes and lectures on issues in science of interest to Christians. 

THANK YOU

Although it would not be impossible to answer each one personally and to thank every one who in any way let us know that they rejoiced with us at the occasion of our 55th wedding anniversary and of 55 years of service in the ministry, we have chosen this manner of extending a profound "Thank You" to all our brothers and sisters for their kindness, love, and encouragement. The LORD has been gracious and merciful to us in allowing us to live and work within the community of His Church. It is all of grace.

Allow us to make two exceptions to not naming anyone in particular. We single out the whole Denver congregation and a sister in Australia who referred to herself as one "who was present at your ordination." Thank you Mary!

With deep gratitude to the LORD and to you all:

Rev. and Mrs.
W.W.J. VanOene



Press Release of Classis Alberta-Manitoba of October 20, 1998.

On behalf of the convening church at Calgary, Rev. Eikelboom called the meeting to order at 9.00 a.m. We sang Psalm 123:1,2, read Ephesians 5:1-21, and joined in opening prayer. The delegates were welcomed. In the memorabilia the following items were mentioned: Rev. and Mrs. Tiggelaar celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary; the churches at Carman and Coaldale are represented for the first time by Revs. Moesker and J. van Popta respectively; the church at Denver extended calls to Rev. van de Velde of Yarrow and Rev. Slaa of Elora, and both these calls were declined, but candidate van de Burgt accepted the call they extended to him; the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church at Winnipeg extended calls to Rev. Feenstra of Owen Sound and Rev. van Woudenberg at Watford and both these calls were declined, and they are presently waiting for Rev. Louwense of Houston to respond to the call that they extended to him.

After the credentials were checked, classis was constituted and the office bearers suggested by the previous classis took their place: Rev. Tiggelaar was chairman, Rev. Eikelboom was vice-chairman, and Rev. Slomp was clerk. Immediately afterward the Revs. Moesker and J. van Popta signed the subscription form.

In closed session the report of the Committee for Aid to Students for the Ministry (CO article 20) was dealt with. This report proposed that the churches be requested to pay \$3.00 per communicant member so that the committee can carry out its mandate. Classis decided to do this.

The church at Denver requested financial support for the calendar year 1999. Classis decided to forward this request to the committee for needy churches, and to request this committee to forward a proposal to the churches so that it may be dealt with by the De-

member classis. The church at Denver also informed classis that they would like candidate Vandeburgt to be examined with a view to his ordination.

A letter was received from the Presbytery of the Dakotas in response to our apology for the manner in which M. Pollock was received into our federation. The POD agreed to close the matter and even decided to send a delegate to a future meeting of classis. Although there was no delegate present at this meeting, this decision was noted with thankfulness.

The church at Coaldale – under the questions of Church Order Article 44 – informs the churches of classis that:

- “1. since the relationship between the POD and Classis AB MB has been restored by the gracious forgiveness by the POD, and since the POD considers ‘the Denver matter closed’ it would be wrong now for Coaldale not to extend the right hand of fellowship to Denver. Coaldale, therefore, will ‘normalize’ its relationships within Classis Alberta-Manitoba and with Denver on the basis of the restored relationship between Classis Alberta-Manitoba and the POD;
2. Coaldale accepts the consequences of accepting and recognizing Denver into the federation but will not take responsibility for the process;
3. on the basis of the inclusion of the above in the Acts and Short Report, Coaldale considers ‘the Denver matter’ closed.”

The church at Taber requested advice on their relationship with the church at Denver, especially in light of Article 131 of the Acts of General Synod Fergus, 1998. Classis advised the following:

Considering that: (1) Article 131 of Acts of General Synod is the federation’s response to an appeal of the church at Taber. In this article General Synod does not grant or deny this appeal; (2) Classis is not called to judge the validity of General Synod’s response; (3) Taber may reserve the right

to appeal the fact that General Synod 1998 refused to come to a judgment concerning their appeal;

Classis advised the church at Taber that it does not have to accept the argumentation of General Synod, but they should acknowledge the church at Denver as a sister church in the federation. This was decided at General Synod 1995, and implicitly confirmed by General Synod 1998. The church at Taber should therefore normalize its relationship with the church at Denver. They can do this on the basis of the fact that the POD has restored its relationship with Classis Alberta-Manitoba.

Advice was given to the church at Coaldale in closed session.

The next classis was scheduled to be convened by the church at Carman on December 8th at 9.00 a.m. in the Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton. Suggested officers: chairman Rev. Lodder; vice-chairman: Rev. Tiggelaar; clerk: Rev. Eikelboom. All church visitors were re-appointed. Rev. Moesker was also appointed to this task. Rev. Eikelboom was appointed to visit the next meeting of the POD in March; Rev. Lodder is alternate. Examiners were reappointed with the following changes: Rev. Moesker: diaconology, Rev. van Popta: Church Polity. All other standing committees were reappointed.

Question period was made use of. The chairman noted thankfully that brotherly censure was not required. The Acts and Press Release were adopted. We sang Ps 67:1,2 and Rev. Tiggelaar led us in prayer.

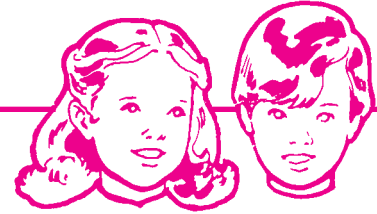
For Classis,
Rev. Eikelboom,
vice-chairman

CORRECTION:

In the Kuyper issue (Nov. 13, 1998), the third line of the editorial should have read in part: “Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey.” – GvP

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

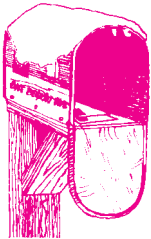
By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

The weather is getting colder and colder. Have you had much snow yet? Enough to make your first snowman of the season? Which reminds me, in other parts of the world, it is getting warmer and warmer. While in Canada and Holland it is nearly winter, in Australia and South Africa it is almost summer. Funny, isn't it? But wouldn't it be horrid if we didn't have any seasons? Then it would either always be cold and raining, or it would always be hot and sticky. Don't you think that the Lord was very kind to us to give us four seasons, where we can enjoy the weather differently each time? After all, summer is fun, but so is the snow in winter.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty



FROM THE MAILBOX

Thank you to *Cheyenne Bergsma* for her lovely letter. I'm glad you enjoy doing the puzzles in the *Clarion*, especially because then you don't get bored. I bet you are very excited about having a baby soon. Write again, won't you Cheyenne.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Rhonda Wiersma*. It must be fun to live on a farm. And no, I agree, you're not a baby anymore, especially because you're nearly eleven. Thanks for your puzzle too, Rhonda. Till next time.

Thanks to *Melissa Tuininga* for your letter, puzzle and photo. I'll stick you photo in my book with the other nephews and nieces who write to me. I suppose you had to do a lot of work when Mom broke her ankle. And it must be quite exciting to have a nephew and another nephew or niece coming. Write again, Melissa.

WANTED: PEN PALS

Melissa Tuininga is looking for a pen pal who would love to write to her. Melissa is 11 years old and is in grade 6. If you would like to write to her, please send a letter to:

Melissa Tuininga
Box 59,
Neerlandia, Alberta T0G 1R0

Meagan Bremer is also looking for a pen pal. Meagan is 7 years old and has three sisters and one brother. Her favourite subjects are Art, Phys Ed and Science. She likes to play soccer, badminton and tennis. She would especially like it if her pen pal lived out west. If you would like to write to her, please send a letter to:

Meagan Bremer
1467 Alderson Road
Carlisle, Ontario L0R 1H1

UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS

by Busy Beaver Rhonda Wiersma

1. Cows give lots of IMLK
2. Cats are fluffy and UETC
3. Dogs are very frisky and UFLYLAP
4. We live on a very clean ARMF
5. Cows are ULLBS eat YAH and
6. Sheep are DEREHS every summer
7. SOREHS need a lot of exercise



BIBLE NAMES

by Busy Beaver Melissa Tuininga

J E S U S A P O J B D Z Q J A P
O B M G S A M U E L H U K A I E
N L I J M O S E S U S N C M K T
A W S N E S H P E S O J T E A E
H Q A C I D N A S W I U N S P A
D K C M D M C M R E H D R I J G
A F I S A A C Z E M I A J G S H
N K S R H E Z E K I A H T M A P
I N O O Y X L Z C F I Y P J M O
E R H P B S A B R A H A M Z U P
L E Y I F G P U L O V W U E E T
J A C O B Q P E T E R T X K I T

Find: Hezekiah Isaac Jacob
Jesus Joseph Peter James
Moses Jonah Samuel
Judah Abraham Daniel