

# Clarion

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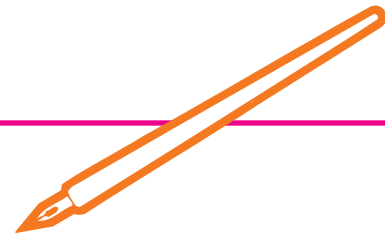


*On the  
Westminster Confession*

*Numbers*

*10:1-10*

By N.H. Gootjes



## Baptism and the Doctrine

The sacrament of baptism and speaking about one's faith go together. This can be seen already in the early centuries of the Christian church. Adults publicly professed their faith when they were baptized. There were two ways of professing the faith. They either recited a confession similar to the Apostles' Creed, or the Creed was read to them and they stated full agreement with it. Following their confession they were baptized.

The Reformation followed in this old tradition; adult baptism was preceded by a profession of faith. The baptism of infants, however, required some adaptation. The baby presented for baptism was obviously unable to answer any questions. The parents had to answer questions. They did not answer the questions in the name of their children, however, they answered as adults and parents who had to raise and educate their child.

The second of these questions deals with the doctrine. This question has recently come under discussion again. Originally, this question mentioned the "Articles of the Christian Faith." When it was argued that this expression refers to the confessions of the church, I objected, for it can be shown that the Apostles' Creed is meant. Rev. P.K.A. De Boer has now entered the discussion. He agrees that the original expression "Articles of the Christian Faith" did not refer to the confessions, but the next sentence: "taught in this Christian church" does. And he expressed amazement at the fact that I overlooked this.

Two things must be noted. In the first place, the discussion has led to at least one positive result. It is again generally acknowledged that the expression "Articles of the Christian Faith" refers to the Apostles' Creed. In the second place, we need some further investigation of what the Form for Baptism says about the doctrine. We may be thankful that this Form is used so often, but we need to listen carefully to what it says. How does it speak about the doctrine?

The first question that must be investigated is whether the Form refers to any confession at all. It has been argued that the Form did not point to a confession of faith. The basis for this opinion is a rather early Form for Baptism, which was made by John à Lasco, superintendent for the reformed Refugee churches in England. Here we find the following question:

Do you acknowledge that our doctrine which you have heard concerning baptism and its mysteries is true, and that our children, although by nature children of wrath and death, as we all are, nevertheless, since they on account of Christ are already included in the divine covenant with us, they too must be sealed with baptism, instituted by Christ and the very sign of his acceptance and righteousness?

The second part of this long question is similar to the first question of our Form for Baptism. It is quite possible that our first question goes straight back to it. The question we are considering, however, is whether the term "doctrine" means something like the Apostles' creed or any other specific confession. Obviously that is not the case. In this Form, the

word refers back to the explanation of baptism given earlier in the same Form.

Does that not prove that also in our Form the expression "the doctrine" means the explanation of baptism as given in the Form? A comparison of the question as given by à Lasco and the one we use shows that they are not the same. Our question goes back to the question as given by Datheen. He formulated it as follows:

Do you not confess that the doctrine which is taught here, and is further contained in the Old and New Testament and in the Articles of the Christian Faith, is the true and complete doctrine of salvation?

The doctrine taught in the church is the doctrine contained in Scripture and the Apostles' Creed. Parents who wanted to have their child baptized had to acknowledge that this was the true doctrine. Baptism required a confession of faith from the parents. The content was determined by Scripture, and specified as the Apostles' Creed. Our Form does refer to the doctrine.

This leads to the second issue, whether the confessions of the church are indicated in the Form for Baptism. Rev. De Boer is of the opinion that they are meant in the expression "which is taught here in this Christian church." According to him, this means that parents declare allegiance, not just to the Apostles' Creed but also to the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort.

The question is whether it is correct to identify the words "which are taught . . ." with the Three Forms of Unity as they are adopted in the Reformed Churches. A closer look at the formulation makes us doubt whether the confessions are meant. On reflection, this doubt is caused by two factors. In the first place, why does the Form not say this in a more straightforward way? Its intention would have been so much easier to understand if the question had simply been formulated as: Do you believe the doctrine summarized in the articles of the Christian faith (= the Apostles' Creed) and in the confessions (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort)? In that case it would have been made clear that the Apostles' Creed and the Reformed Confessions must be placed side by side. But the original formulation is more complicated.

Another problem is that the relation between the two parts is changed. Rev. De Boer says that the doctrine of the Apostles' Creed is expanded upon and maintained in the Three Forms of Unity. The Form, on the other hand, speaks of the doctrine "which is taught here in this Christian church." Rev. De Boer's explanation does not take into account the word "taught." For a proper understanding of this phrase, we have to carefully consider the expression that is used.

When we consider what is meant with "taught" we realize that "teaching" in the church occurs particularly in two ways: in the preaching and in the catechetical instruction. The parents are, therefore, required to state that they agree with the teaching of the church in its preaching of the Word and in the instruction during catechism classes and in the catechism preaching.



Obviously, the confessions have a very important function, both in the preaching and in the teaching of the church. The confessions summarize the scriptural doctrine, and the teaching of the church has to stay within those limits. But the parents of a child that was going to be baptized did not state anything directly about those confessions. They had to promise that they agreed to the teaching in the church, and this teaching had to be in accordance with the confessions. There was no direct reference to the confessions in the questions for baptism. The confessions remained in the background.

That leads to yet another issue in connection with the second question of the Form for Baptism. It speaks of: in this Christian church. What is the reason for the emphasis on the word "this"?

There is a history behind the use of the word "this." It begins with the expression used by Datheen which was mentioned earlier in this article: "the doctrine which is taught here." That expression referred to the doctrine as taught in this church and before this congregation.

The next stage in the development was that Synod Middelburg 1581 allowed the words "which is taught here" to be left out when the Form for Baptism was used. We are not sure why, for the Acts of this Synod do not give any indication of the discussion concerning it.

At a later Synod, held at The Hague 1586, another formulation of the same second question of baptism came up:

Do you confess that the doctrine of the Old and New Testament which is contained in the Articles of the Christian Faith and accordingly is taught in the Christian church, is the true and complete doctrine of salvation?

It is unclear whether this was a proposal made at Synod or whether it was adopted at Synod. At any rate, this version was printed in some later versions of the Form for Baptism in the church book. Two formulations of the second question existed side by side. It was a time of confusion for the Form for Baptism.

This was followed by a period of debate in the years leading up to the Synod of Dort. Two groups emerged within the churches: the Reformed who wanted to maintain the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Remonstrants who could not agree with several of the teachings in the Confession and the Catechism. The result was that within the same church Reformed and Remonstrant ministers used different formulations of the second question of the Form for Baptism. The Reformed used the old formula: "the doctrine taught here" but the Remonstrants used the newer for-

mula: "which is accordingly taught in the Christian church."

The disagreement even led to two confrontations during the ceremony of baptism, prior to the Synod of Dort. On two occasions, leaders of the Remonstrants were present as witness and godfather. To both, the question was put whether they agreed with the doctrine taught here (the "Reformed" expression). The one promised. When he was later questioned about it, he responded that he thought the formula "which is accordingly taught in the Christian church" was used. The other appears to have softly repeated the formula in the "accordingly" form and answered with agreement. He was reprimanded from the pulpit!


Synod Dordrecht, 1618/1619 rephrased the question to make it straightforward and clear:

Do you confess that the doctrine which is contained in the Old and New Testament, and in the Articles of the Christian faith, and is taught in the Christian church at this place, is the true and complete doctrine of salvation?

That formula was used for over 350 years until the 1970s when the Forms were rephrased in more modern Dutch.

This was a rather complicated story, but it was needed for understanding the

formulation used in the second question of baptism: the doctrine taught in the Christian church at this place (Dutch version), or: the doctrine taught in this Christian church (Canadian version). The Reformed rejected several teachings in their confessions. They rejected doctrines of the Roman Catholics and of the Anabaptists in the Belgic Confession and in the Heidelberg Catechism. And they rejected several teachings of the Remonstrants in the Canons of Dort. The teaching and preaching in the Reformed churches must be in accordance with these confessions. That is the reason why office bearers in the churches have to subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity.

But that is different from what was asked of parents at the baptismal font. They did not state that they agreed with the confessions as the true and complete doctrine of salvation. Rather, they had to declare that the doctrine as summarized in the Apostles' Creed was the true and complete doctrine of salvation. And they had to declare that the Reformed doctrine taught in the churches, was the true and complete doctrine of salvation. The Three Forms of Unity played a role in the background, as the subordinate norm for preaching and teaching. The Form for Baptism did not directly refer to the Three Forms of Unity. 



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By G.Ph. van Popta

# Labour Day

*The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. Genesis 2:15*

Summer is almost over. Labour Day signals that. It's back to school and back to the regular congregational activities. Perhaps you had some time to go on vacation this summer. Your vacation is now memories – photos in an album.

Vacation is good – or a week or two . . . or three or four – but work is better. On Labour Day we can remember, with thanks, that it is God who gives us our work. We work because God made man in his image (Gen 1:26-28).

The Bible opens with a picture of a working God. God worked in creating a universe. He has been at the job of sustaining creation since He fashioned it. He created man to tend creation in his name. God placed Adam in a garden with the command to cultivate it. God placed gold and precious stones in creation for man to find and exploit.

The idea that labour came into being as a result of humanity's fall is wrong. Paradise had its work. Sin, however, made the work much more difficult.

Adam and Eve would have to labour hard to carve out a living. Sin hinders man's efforts. Nature would not cooperate like it did without the curse. God told Adam: "[C]ursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground . . . (Gen 3:17-19). Further, our physical and mental abilities have been very seriously impaired by sin.

However, the original commission to work remains in force. In the garden of Eden, man and woman were to work the soil. Today the range of work includes every pursuit – cultural, physical, social, and spiritual. The Bible teaches that work is still something for which to give God highest praise.


In Psalm 104 the psalmist praised God with these words: "You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for

man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen man's heart . . . Man goes forth to his work and to his labour until the evening."

In several places God commands us to work: *Six days you shall labour, and do all your work* (Ex 20:9). Paul told the Ephesians to "[l]et the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need" (Eph 4:28). Paul was very clear to the church at Thessalonica when he, in his second letter to them, 3:10-12, said: "For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: If any one will not work, let him not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living."

There is no question about it – ever since God told Adam and Eve to cultivate the earth, man has been under divine obligation to work. And so, let us work faithfully, wherever God has placed us – in the home, at school, in the marketplace. And let us thank God for the work He gives us to do. If you suffer unemployment, ask God to provide you with work. Pray about it, keep trusting in the providential care of your heavenly Father, and don't give up looking for work.

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, our lives have been entirely redeemed by his blood. We belong to Him body and soul. Let us show that by working faithfully for Him in all our labours – on the job, in the home, or at school. Whether we work as boss or employee, as student or teacher, as parent or child, let us work so as to honour the Lord Jesus in all we do.

The promise is that if we are steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, none of our labour will be in vain (1 Cor 15:58). 

## What's inside?

In most of our churches, the baptismal form is read quite often. Though it is very familiar, the discussion on certain aspects of it continues. In the editorial, Dr. Gootjes explains what the expression "the doctrine . . . taught here in this Christian Church" exactly refers to.

The meditation focuses on Labour Day! Wow, Summer is almost over already!

Some time ago, Rev. J. Mulder translated a series of articles on the Westminster Confession written by Prof. J. Kamphuis of Kampen. You will find the first installment in these pages.

From the "Westminster department" we also publish a report of the Rev. E. Kampen's recent visit he made on behalf of the churches to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland.

Special events keep happening in our community of churches. You will find several reports. As we indicate under "Special Events," we are very happy to offer space to churches and schools who have something to share with the rest of us, but please keep your report brief. Thanks!

Mrs. Ravensbergen supplies us with her regular Ray of Sunshine.

And then you'll find a few contributions from readers.

Enjoy!

GvP

# The Westminster Confession<sup>1</sup>

(First of Four Parts)

By J. Kamphuis

## Contact with churches abroad

Right from the start the Reformed Churches have tried to fulfil their ecumenical calling to seek contact with Reformed Churches in other countries. That is a biblical and Reformed tradition. Churches which together enjoy the riches of God's grace in the unity of faith should also practise this unity as much as possible. They do this so that the LORD will be praised, so that the churches may be mutually strengthened in the good fight of the faith and so that the world may see something of the glory of God (cf. John 17 and Ephesians 4). There has often been a struggle for unity in the Reformed Churches, also in the Netherlands. To see this we can go back to the last century.

The churches in the Netherlands which had seceded from the Protestant state church in 1834 were busy building their own ecclesiastical life. It was the same later on, after the Liberation of 1944, with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, which had to restore and redirect many activities. You may think of the Theological College, mission, and also on the local level there was so much to be done. Questions concerning how to study the Bible in our Study Societies, how the churches should be governed, how to fulfil our political calling, and about the education of our children – and many other issues – had to be dealt with. It all required much prayer, study and action.

Yet not that long after the Secession of 1834, Helenius De Cock (son of Hendrik de Cock of Ulrum, the Netherlands) published a little booklet giving information about the Presbyterian churches in Scotland with whom the seceded churches had already taken up contact earlier. He tells about their history, their confession (the Westminster Confession), and also how these churches wanted to live in obedience to the Word of God.

It was the same after the Liberation of 1944. Much work had to be done locally and nationally. Still, our fathers did not forget that God also gathers and preserves his Church in other countries and places. The Reformed Churches in Holland under God's providential care came into contact with faithful Presbyterian churches in Korea.

**It was somewhat of a miracle for us to meet in a country so distant and so different in language and culture [Korea] brothers and sisters in the Lord and churches which can be classified as thoroughly Reformed.**

Already in 1967 our Dutch sister churches decided to establish "ecclesiastical fellowship" with these Presbyterian churches on the other side of the globe. In 1972 Dr. L. Doekes and Rev. P. Van Gurp visited these Korean Presbyterian Churches and they wrote an enthusiastic report of their findings. They said, "It was somewhat of a miracle for us to meet in a country so distant and so different in language and culture brothers and sisters in the Lord and churches which can be classified as thoroughly Reformed."

Since that time the Reformed Churches in Holland have established ecclesiastical fellowship with several other Presbyterian churches in Scotland and Ireland and they correspond with similar churches in the USA.

The same can be said of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Already quite soon after the first Canadian Reformed Churches were instituted in 1950, contact was taken up with Protestant Reformed Churches in the USA, and later on with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Korean (Koshin) Presbyterian Churches. And in recent years there has also been contact with the Free Church of Scotland with the result that we now also have a "sister-relationship" with these churches in Scotland and Canada (one in Toronto, one in Edmonton, several in Prince Edward Island). Their ministers can preach in our churches and can be called by vacant congregations; we admit each other's members to the table of the Lord and we receive each other's members into the congregation upon a valid attestation.<sup>2</sup>

In all these contacts Reformed Churches with their Three Forms of Unity meet believers and maintain ecclesiastical fellowship with churches who do not adhere to those Three Forms of Unity but to the Westminster Standards. It is therefore no wonder that the Westminster Confession of Faith (which together with the Larger and Smaller Catechisms is one of the Westminster Standards) always has had a great deal of attention. Not that it was discussed all that much, for it can be said that in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands both after the Secession (1834) as well as after the Liberation (1944) this confession was considered to be biblically sound and entirely Reformed. Indeed, a General Synod of the Reformed Churches in Holland in 1967 accepted the statement of a regional Synod that the Westminster Confession of Faith is "a fully Reformed Confession."<sup>3</sup> Dr. L. Doekes wrote an article in 1970 about this confession and called it a Reformed confession. Not that there was no room for improvement; according to him there



was! But also his conclusion was: "A careful emendation can only enhance the scriptural quality of this reformed confession."<sup>4</sup>

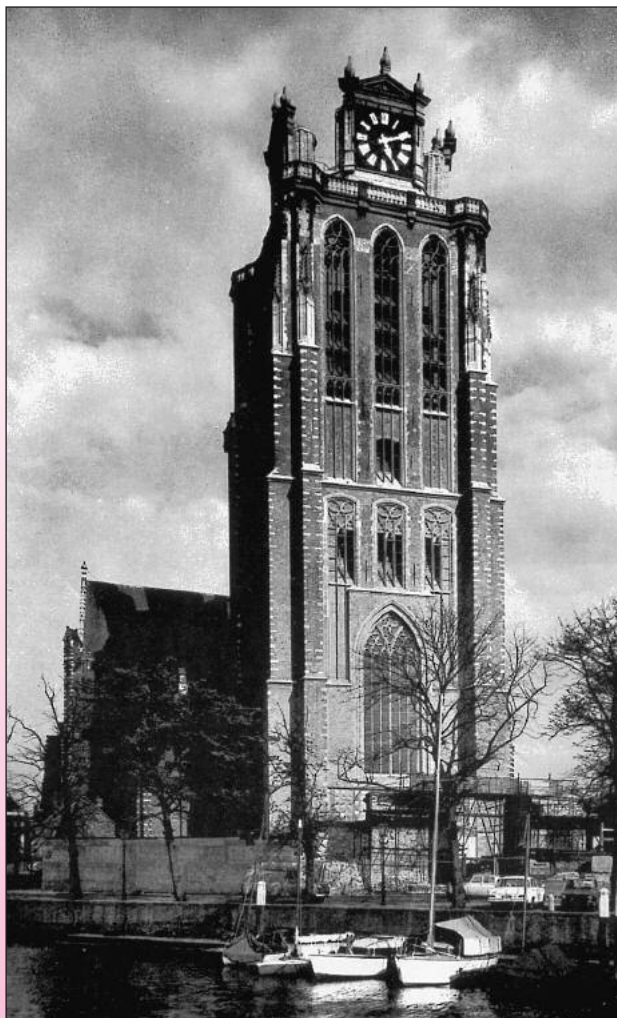
### An old story from the 16th century

It is actually a striking fact that within Reformed Protestantism we meet churches with whom we are one in faith, but who do not have "our" Three Forms of Unity – the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort. Later on we will see that it is no coincidence that we as Reformed churches experience this.

First, we should watch out for and maybe do away with a misconception, namely, the idea that it is in fact the Westminster Confession of Faith which in this respect is the big troublemaker. As if everything would be a lot easier if only there were no churches with that, for us not so well-known, Westminster Confession! If such were the case we would only have to deal with churches who, just like us, have the Three Forms of Unity.

In the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands both after the Secession (1834) as well as after the Liberation (1944) this confession [Westminster Confession] was considered to be biblically sound and entirely Reformed.

Well, you might as well forget that idea! For it is indeed a misconception. Of course, the immigrant Reformed Churches in Canada and the USA, Australia and Africa who came from the Reformed Churches in Holland during the 18th and 19th century have the same confessions as we have. That is, for the most part, also the case with churches instituted on the mission fields of the Reformed Churches.



Church (Grootekerk) in Dordrecht, the Netherlands

But the "problem" of churches having *different* and *various* confessions while there indeed is unity of faith among them – that "problem" did not start when the Westminster Confession appeared on the ecclesiastical scene. If we think that way we do not know our own church history.

We will, therefore, first take a quick look into that history. The Westminster Confession of Faith was published in the year 1647. But already long before that year the Reformed Churches in Holland had to deal with the fact that there were a variety of confessions among Reformed churches in different countries. The churches in the Netherlands already quite early in the history of the Reformation (in the year 1561) received their confession in the 37 articles of faith, the Belgic Confession, written by Guido de Brès. A valuable confession! The churches in the Lowlands very soon, already in the first synodical assemblies, adopted this confession as an expression of their unity in the faith and they accepted one another as churches of Christ.

But just before Guido de Brès wrote "his" confession, the Reformed Churches in France had already in their Synod of Paris in 1559 drafted and accepted their "own" confession (using an outline which was made by John Calvin to serve the French churches). Those two confessions had much in common. And that was really no wonder either! For Guido de Brès used that French (or Gallican) Confession of 1559 as a model when he wrote "his" confession for the believers who were dispersed throughout the Lowlands because of the persecutions. And both confessions, the French as well as the Belgic Confession, show very clearly the influence of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. You can say that those two confessions were brother and sister. And yet, Guido de Brès and the churches in the Lowlands did *not* say: let's just copy and take over the French Confession. No! Although the churches who wanted to live "according to the purity of the Gospel" in the Netherlands and in France were very close and one in the faith, still Guido de Brès considered *the specific situation in the Netherlands* of such great importance that he drafted a confession with a distinctive character. (Among other things, the Belgic Confession of 1561 is directed more against the Anabaptists than the French Confession of 1559.)

The point is that already very early in the history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (and also elsewhere)

there was a variety of confessional documents among churches who were one in faith. At that time (naturally also because of the close mutual relationship) this situation of having different confessions did not create any problems in terms of acknowledging each other as sister churches in the Lord. They acknowledged each other's confession. This was also the case with each other's instruction book, the catechism: on the one hand that of Heidelberg, on the other that of Geneva. Although this variety caused no problems to speak of, it certainly *did* exist!

### Another old story from the beginning of the 17th century

The churches in the Netherlands were confronted with an even greater variety of confessional documents among churches which are one in the faith when the synod of Dort met in 1618/1619. That synod had to make a decision in the struggle with the Arminians about the doctrine of free grace and God's eternal election. Also at that time many churches from other countries were invited to send delegates in order to assist the synod in making a judgment concerning the Arminian errors. All the churches invited reacted positively, except the churches from France. They would have loved to come. They had even appointed delegates. But the Roman Catholic government prevented their journey to that Protestant Northern-Netherlands! All the other churches came. They all had also a *decisive vote* in the matter of the Arminian controversy. That indicates quite clearly how they all acknowledged each other to be one in the faith, especially in the serious controversy which had afflicted the life of the churches in the Netherlands already for years.

There in Dort they all met together, delegates from the different provinces of the northern Netherlands, delegates from England and from the different areas of the German empire (the Palatinate, Hesse, Bremen, Emden, Nassau), and also from Switzerland (Zurich, Bern, Basel, Schaffhausen), while the city-council of Geneva had sent its own delegation.

It is still a moving experience to see a picture of the Synod of Dort in session. The seats of the French delegates remained unoccupied as long as synod met. A symbol of sadness, but also of unity and fellowship! What a great unity of faith is evident in this synod which gave us our third Form of Unity, the Canons of Dort. It is perhaps going a little too far to call this synod an ecumenical one, or (as also has been done)

Already very early in the history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (and also elsewhere) there was a variety of confessional documents among churches who were one in faith.

a synod of "the Reformed World-church." The French churches were not the only ones absent! Also in those days the churches of Eastern Europe (Hungary, Zevenburgen) were not free to do what they liked to do. But still – what a wide spectrum we may observe when we watch this ecclesiastical assembly meeting there in Dort!

But that means at the same time that there was a great *variety in terms of confessional documents*, while in the final analysis they all were one in confessing the doctrine of grace over against a religious humanism, with which they were confronted in the controversy with the Arminians.

We will not mention all the confessions which the churches in the Netherlands were confronted with when they received all those delegates from the churches abroad in Dordrecht. But none of them had the Belgic Confession as a form of unity!

The Church of England, the Anglican Church, which had sent as first delegate a *bishop* (quite an unusual figure in a Reformed synod!) expressed its faith in the so-called 39 Articles, which in 1571 had been adopted by the English Parliament! That was a confession closely related to one of the first confessional documents of the reformation, namely the Augsburg Confession, made by Melancton, Luther's most important supporter. Also the confession of Bremen was closely related to the one of Augsburg (and to other writings of Melancton).

The brothers from the Palatinate had, of course, just as the churches from the Netherlands, the Heidelberg Catechism. But besides the Heidelberg Catechism they also acknowledged as confession the so-called Second Helvetic (or Swiss) Confession of 1566, made by Heinrich Bullinger, who succeeded Zwingli in Zurich. This Second Helvetic Confession became quite an authority

not only in the Palatinate, but also in Switzerland and also in Hungary and in Zevenburgen. But Basel had besides this Second Helvetic Confession of 1566 also an old confession of their own which had already been made in 1534. And, to mention just one more, the delegates from Geneva had as their confessional document the Catechism made by Calvin in 1541. This Catechism not only served very early on as an instruction book for the youth of the Church (just as the Heidelberg Catechism), but it also received official status as a Confessional document.

All these churches and all these brothers were instruments in the hand of God to determine through the Canons of Dort the confessional direction of the Reformed Churches according to the Word of God.

What a variety *within* the unity of faith! Also *within* the Reformed unity of faith!

This "ecumenical" synod of Dort showed a totally different picture than for example, a Roman Catholic council, as the one held not that long before in Trent. With Rome "catholic" and being-united-as-church means: one leader, one church-head, one and the same doctrine decided upon by the church and verbally similar in the whole church.

Among the Lutherans it was quite different than with Rome. But also with them there was still a strong binding of all churches to common confessional documents. (In 1580 the *Book of Concord* was published which contained the Augsburg Confession and all other Lutheran symbols.) Without doubt, this has to do with the central position of that one person Martin Luther whose opinions were generally speaking decisive (sometimes wrongly so!).

But among the Reformed Churches we see *unity* in doctrine while there is *variety* in confessions.

<sup>1</sup>The following articles originally appeared in Dutch in *Rondom Het Woord*, 38:11; 39:1,2,3 (1984/85) and were written by Prof. J. Kamphuis of Kampen, the Netherlands. They were freely translated and adapted to our Canadian situation by Rev. Johannes Mulder of Burlington, Ontario who was assisted by others. Prof. J. Kamphuis approved of our translation and adaptation.

<sup>2</sup>*Acts General Synod Lincoln 1992*, Art. 129, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup>*Cf. Acts Synod Coaldale 1977*, Art. 91.

<sup>4</sup>*Fides Quadrat Intellectum Almanak 1970*, p.189. The *Almanak* was published by the Student Association at the Theological University in Kampen, the Netherlands.

– to be continued 



## REPORT ON

# Visit to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland

May 11-13, 1999



By E. Kampen

### Privilege and responsibility

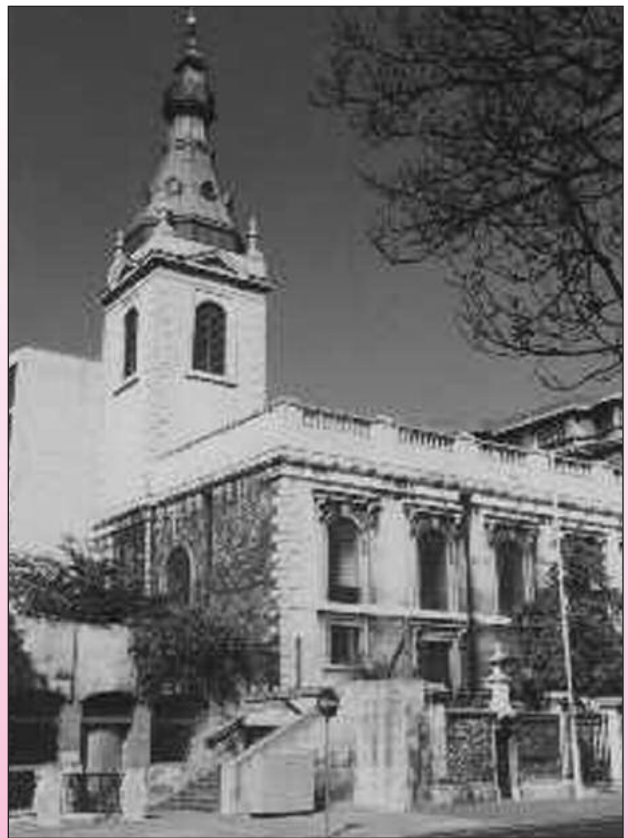
One of the privileges of serving on the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) is the opportunity to visit sister churches in foreign lands as representative of the churches. At the same time, this is quite a responsibility. Particular care must be taken not to speak one's own mind but to convey the mind of the churches one represents. That is a double challenge. It is far easier to speak your own mind. Furthermore, can we truly speak of a collective mind when on many issues we do not have a unity of mind?

With a sense of privilege as well as responsibility I thus prepared for the task assigned by the CRCA to visit the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) and the Synod of our sister churches in the Netherlands, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland – *Vrijgemaakt* in the month of May of this year. In this article I will give you a report on my experiences there. You will also find a copy of the text used for my address. In a second article you will be able to learn about my experiences in the Netherlands.

### First exposure

Upon arriving in Edinburgh around 6 p.m. on May 11, I was picked up by one of the commissioners (delegates) to the General Assembly who took me to the Assembly being held in the St. Columba Church. This church is located opposite the Free Church of Scotland College and is the regular location of the General Assembly (GA). We arrived just after the evening session had begun. The session was taken up by Youth Committee Reports, which included a presentation to young people who had excelled in the annual competition for Bible and Confession knowledge, the Psalmody Committee Report, and greetings from various

*Cole Abbey Presbyterian Church is the London congregation of the Free Church of Scotland. Although part of a Scottish denomination, the congregation is very international: about two-thirds of the members come from countries other than Scotland. (FCS Web page)*



Bible Societies and representatives of a number of sister churches.

### Devotions and committee reports

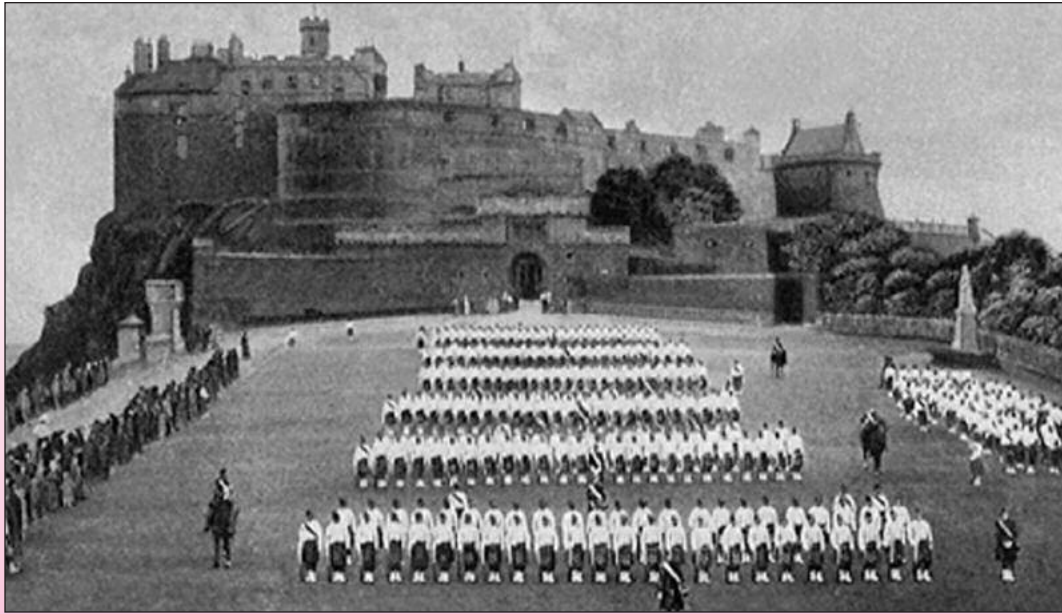
May 12 was a historic day in Scotland as its first parliament in over 300 years was to be sworn in. This ceremony was to take place in the building used by the Church of Scotland for its General Assemblies, located across the road from St. Columba Church. To avoid the traffic, my host took me along on the bus – my first ride in a double decker.

The first hour of the Wednesday morning was taken up by devotions. This consisted of Scripture readings, prayer by a number of members of the Assembly, interspersed with Psalm

singing. The Psalms are sung without the aid of an organ.

The first regular business that day was the Report by the Committee on Public Questions, Religion and Morals. The FCS sees it as the task of the church to study public matters and promote a Christian view on contemporary social issues. The report dealt with Addiction, Alcohol Abuse, Women's Health, and the Alpha Outreach Course, among others. Interesting material can be found and undoubtedly is beneficial for the members. It appears that the idea is that this information can be used when communicating with the civil officials to let a Christian voice be heard. It is not officially forwarded to the government.





Edinburgh

### **“Trials” and tribulations**

The next item on the agenda was a “Libel” with respect to Prof. D. Macleod. In the FCS, a “Libel” is a written accusation. Here we undoubtedly have the key issue confronting the FCS for the last number of years. This matter has gained public attention and has been reported on rather extensively in the public press, casting the FCS in a very negative public light. It was also reported on rather extensively in the Dutch newspaper, *Nederlands Dagblad*. Prof. Macleod, who teaches Systematic Theology at the FCS College, was accused by four women of misconduct. The complaints go back many years. In 1995 the Church courts considered the moral misconduct charges and judged that the charges were unfounded. Some members of the FCS then took it to the civil court in 1996. The civil judge also judged that the charges were unfounded. These people, however, have not been willing to accept that decision and have continued to agitate to have the case reopened. They have formed the Free Church Defense Association (FCDA). At this Assembly three ministers presented libels.

It is interesting to observe how such a situation is handled in Presbyterian churches. Whereas we are accustomed to have only documents which must be judged by the assembly, the FCS has a trial. The appellants orally present their case, which has also been submitted previously in written form. Since they

are appealing the action of a lower body (Synod), all members of the GA who are members of churches in the territory of that Synod, are seated at the “bar.” They cannot participate in the trial, as they are “on trial.” A representative will make a defense. Once both sides have presented their case, the members of the Assembly can ask questions. Next someone will need to make a motion which is then voted on.

The conclusion of this trial was that the General Assembly voted against the appellants. However, the matter was to come back. Later that day, there was another trial related to this matter. Furthermore, among the tasks of the Assembly was the appointment of a new principal for the College of the Free Church. The logical candidate for the position was the same Prof. Macleod at the center of this controversy. This appointment process was to take place on the Thursday and Friday. Much of this was dealt with in closed sessions. The GA did appoint Prof. Macleod as principal, indicating he has the trust and confidence of the great majority of the members. Since I was only able to attend the GA till Thursday evening, I was not present when this situation came to a confrontation with all who had been agitating against him on Friday. This matter was reported on extensively in the press both in Scotland and in the Netherlands. There is the potential of a schism.

All these things are mentioned here to give you some sense of what lives in the churches in Scotland, and what tribulations they are faced with.

### **Back to regular business and address**

Going back to the events of Wednesday, May 12, at noon the Lord High Commissioner, the Queen’s representative, visited the Assembly with all the attendant pomp and ceremony.

The evening session had a report of church extension (Home Mission). The FCS takes this very seriously. This was followed by visiting delegates being given the opportunity to address the Assembly. During this time opportunity was also given to me to pass on the greetings and say a few words about our life as churches. (*Please see elsewhere in this issue for the text of Rev. Kampen’s speech.* – Editor)

### **More of the same**

On Thursday, after brief opening devotions, the GA busied itself with the Trustees Report and the College. It appears that they are trying to obtain accreditation through affiliation with the University of Edinburgh. As indicated earlier, part of the day was spent in closed sessions. In the evening, we heard the report of the Missions Committee. The FCS has wide missionary interests, although it has very few missionaries in its direct employ. The missionary report

was very enthusiastic. This was a bright contrast to the antagonism in any matters involving Prof. Macleod.

### General impressions

It was probably a good thing that this was not the first visit to an assembly of a church with Presbyterian church government – it might have been too much of a shock with all its formality and procedure. Compared to what can be observed in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church or the Reformed Church in the United States, one can definitely say that the FCS comes across as very solemn, formal and dignified. There is a clear resemblance with the British parliamentary tradition. As an aside, comparing that to our church polity, it might be interesting to study the relationship between the form of civil government and church government as it has developed in various parts of the world, and to ask which has influenced the other. The Moderator, almost enthroned as he directs the business of the assembly, is honoured and treated almost like a bishop (though, when you speak to him he is a down to earth, ordinary man with no pretensions). In a way one feels to have stepped back in time. Once you look past this time-warp, you see people at work trying to work out their Reformed confession in the present day world. The church does not live in the past, as is clear from the efforts of the Committee on Public Questions, Religion and Morals. There is great missionary zeal. At the same time, there is a more gentle attitude toward interdenominational cooperation in things like the Bible Societies and Mission among the Jews. The problem around Prof. Macleod is certainly the big problem in the FCS. It is no understatement to say that this is draining the church emotionally and hindering its effectiveness in reaching out.

### Unity despite diversity

At the beginning reference was made to the responsibility to act as representative of the churches. I also see it as a responsibility to report back to the churches and share what has been learned so that it becomes a sort of communal experience.

In connection with that responsibility, I can say that my visit to the Free Church of Scotland reinforced something I have been learning over the years, namely, that in the Catholic Church of Jesus Christ there is diversity. The Lord of history has not directed his



Free Church of  
Scotland College

churches to develop in exactly the same way in every place. Much development is tied to particular historic situations. And yet, that diversity in the end is only superficial. There is a unity in the Reformed faith. The benefit of our contact with the Reformed Churches from Scotland with its rich Presbyterian aroma is that it forces us to deal with the question as to what is truly catholic and what is perhaps more ethnic in our life as churches. It is perhaps a tendency that we quickly evaluate rather than carefully observe, also when it comes to the work of the Lord throughout the world. I am thankful that I have had the opportunity to sit back and observe something of the church of our Lord as He is gathering it in Scotland and sense that fundamental unity despite diversity. At the same time, knowing something of the struggles of the church in Scotland perhaps we can remember them in a more meaningful way in our prayers.

*Rev. Eric Kampen is convener of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad and is minister of Willoughby Heights Canadian Reformed Church in Langley, B.C.*

### Text of speech the Rev. E. Kampen delivered to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland

Esteemed Brothers:

As Christians we confess one, holy catholic church, made up from people of all tribes and tongues and nations. Confessions are basically statements of faith, that is, of things not seen but believed based on the Word of God. Nevertheless, believers are at times allowed to see with their own eyes the very thing they confess. For, when one is able to visit the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland as a representative from the Canadian Reformed Churches this confession of the catholic church is given very visible expression. A visit like this reminds both the visitor (and those he represents) and those visited that the church of Jesus Christ is "spread and dispersed throughout the entire world. However, it is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith" (BC 27).

It is my privilege to pass on to you as General Assembly, and through you to all the members of the Free Church, the heartfelt greetings of the brotherhood in the Canadian Reformed Churches.

With a view to strengthening our bond as Christians, it will be beneficial to give you a brief update on how we are doing as churches.

At present we have a total membership of approximately 15,000 in 48 congregations. Though we are a federation of Canadian churches, five of the 48 churches which are part of the federation are in the United States. They are known as American Reformed Churches. While there are certain clusters of churches, these various clusters are separated by great distances. A journey from the cluster of churches on the west coast, near Vancouver, to the churches in the province of Ontario would easily take you five or six days of travelling by automobile, while by airplane it would take about 4 hours.

The Lord continues to bless us with growth. In light of our Reformed understanding of Scripture, you will not be surprised to hear that this growth is especially through the generations, or, if you wish, internal growth. On average



The Free Church of Scotland has several congregations in North America: Toronto, Edmonton, Livonia, Michigan, and Prince Edward Island.

The congregations in the Presbytery of Prince Edward Island trace their history to the ministry of Rev. Donald MacDonald, a native of Perthshire, Scotland who arrived in PEI in 1826. In 1954, the congregations in PEI were admitted into the Free Church of Scotland.

**CENTRAL CHARGE**

Churches in Charlottetown and Stanchel.

**EASTERN CHARGE**

Churches in Murray River and Birch Hill, Montague and Banger.

**WESTERN CHARGE**

Churches at De Sable, Cape Traverse, Summerside and Coleman.

(Information taken from  
FCS Web page)

the total membership increases over the last number of years has been approximately 200 annually. The largest congregation numbers over 600 members, while the smallest one is a "house congregation" in Laurel, MD with 12 members.

Something which deserves mention is the contacts we have with other Reformed Churches in Canada and the US. Just like in Scotland with its various Presbyterian churches, in North America we have various "Reformed" Churches. Some of the divisions go back to controversies in the Netherlands. Others have their origin in conflicts which arose in North America. The last 10 years or so has seen many people leaving the Christian Reformed Church because of its unscriptural direction. This unscriptural direction was shown especially in allowing women into the various offices in the church. Most of those who have left have federated under the name of the United Reformed Churches of North America. It involves some 60 churches with a membership of 15,000-20,000. Our past Synod reappointed a Committee for contact with these churches, as well as some other Reformed Churches. Especially with the United Reformed Churches, the contacts look very promising. With the Lord's blessing, a union may very well come about

in the next few years. Considering that we hold dear the same confessions and use the same form of Church government, the only obstacle would be human stubbornness and pride. A further goal, though much more difficult to achieve, would be full integration of all faithful Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Our experience is that while it is easy to recognize each other when far apart, it is more difficult to work through the implications of unity in faith when one has different historical and cultural developments. That is the challenge for churches which are the fruit of immigration. Humanly speaking it often appears impossible to blend Reformed and Presbyterian churches, though it has been achieved in New Zealand. In the end we may find courage in the fact that the church is the Lord's work. He has done marvelous things in gathering his church. Who knows what we may witness in our lifetime.

Allow me also a word about the spiritual struggles we face, struggles undoubtedly familiar to you too. There is the struggle against the seductive ways of the world. It can be very hard to hold fast to the faith, to the things not seen, when we are tempted by the many things that can be seen. Materialism is a big danger as we are prone to seek our joy in the abundance of possession rather than in knowing the Lord. There is also the struggle to uphold the Reformed faith in the North American religious context which is strongly shaped by Arminian evangelicalism. Compared to many evangelical churches, Reformed worship is far less appealing to the senses because of the strong emphasis on the preaching of the gospel. It is a real challenge to teach that the Reformed faith is scriptural, and that in all of life, including our worship of the Lord, we must be led by his Word and not merely by our emotions. It is a great challenge to faithfully teach the youth the riches they have received out of grace. It is just as much a challenge to keep those who have grown up in the faith filled with joy over their heavenly treasure and to live in humble obedience.

Brothers, it was good to have the opportunity to give you a brief update on our life as Christ's church in Canada. As you can see, there are

exciting prospects in the future in terms of possible union. There continues to be the struggle to remain faithful. What comfort that we do not have to do this in our own strength but that the Lord preserves and gathers his church. We are mere instruments.

May the Lord bless you as you continue your work as General Assembly, and may He bless you as churches to remain faithful to His Word.



ACCEPTED call for the mission work in Brazil by the Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church, Surrey, BC

**Candidate K. Wieske**

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DECLINED call to the church at Houston, BC

**Candidate K. Wieske**

\*\*\*

CALLED and ACCEPTED to the church at Aldergrove, BC

**Candidate P. Holtvluwer**

\*\*\*

ACCEPTED call to Redeemer - Winnipeg church

**Candidate T. Van Raalte**

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DECLINED call to the church at West Kelmscott, Australia

**Candidate T. Van Raalte**

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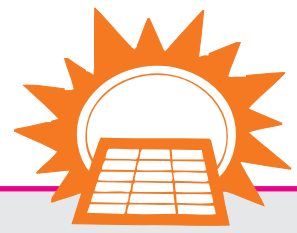
**Rev. A.J. Pol**

ajpol@home.com

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We have instituted a second congregation in the Carman area. Our mailing address is:

Canadian Reformed Church of  
Carman West  
Box 273, Carman, Manitoba  
R0G 0J0



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance, who exult in thy name all the day, and extol thy righteousness.*  
Psalm 89:15,16

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we look around us, we notice much suffering and misery all over the world – so much, that sometimes we are inclined to ask: “Why does the Lord not intervene; why does He allow all those things to happen?” Not only in the happenings in the world, but also in many families is there pain and anguish of both body and soul. When we see the brokenness of this life it is sometimes difficult to experience what we confess. We confess that we “. . . belong with body and soul, both in life and death, to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ” (LD1), and we know that in prayer and supplications we may make all our needs known to Him. Yet, does this knowledge always help us and enable us to “exult in thy name all the day”?

These words are written in the Bible. There are many more places in the Bible where we are told to be happy and joyful. And God’s Word is the Truth. But the truth of God’s Word does not depend on us, and how we feel about it. Out of grace, no matter what our circumstances are, the Holy Spirit will help us to believe what is written in the Bible, and so enable us to rejoice in his Holy Name. The happiness of which the Bible speaks is joy in the Lord! It can only be there when we live in communion with Him. When we are fully aware of our riches in Him, it will be our daily joy to be allowed to love and serve the Lord. Then we can only rejoice in Him who forgives us all our sins day after day, and who crowns us with steadfast love and mercy.

But sometimes we may lose hope. Sometimes the burdens seem too heavy to carry. We can even become rebellious or despair. Where are God’s promises then?

As long as we live our response to what the Lord asks from us will be imperfect (LD 44). We cannot fully obey God’s commandments, and we do not always think right or make the right decisions. Therefore we rely on Jesus Christ, through whom we will be made perfect before the LORD. In Christ we will have peace with God and with our circumstances in this life. And when the consequences of our fall into sin become painful and sorrowful in our daily life then, through Christ, we will be able to rejoice. For Christ himself comforts us with the words of John 16 : 33: “*I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*”

There is much suffering in the world and in our personal lives. We cry, and we hurt. But we will not be defeated by our pain and suffering. For Christ overcame our suffering by his suffering. Thanks to Him we look

past the things that happen to us here on earth. He will help us to bear our cross cheerfully. That will happen when we cling to the Lord in prayer. When we pray, the Lord will hear!!

*With all my heart I thank Thee, LORD,  
Thy wondrous deeds I will record.  
Thou art my joy, in Thee I’ll glory.  
With psalms, Most High, I will adore Thee.*

*Praise Him who does in Zion dwell,  
His deeds among the peoples tell.  
He who avenges blood is near us,  
And when we cry our God shall hear us.*

Psalm 9 : 1, 6

## Birthdays in October:

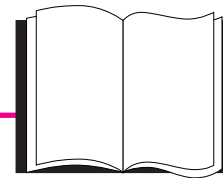
- 6: HENRY VANDERVIET,**  
“ANCHOR HOME”  
361 30 Rd, RR 2  
Beamsville, ON  
L0R 1B0
- 17: ALAN BREUKELMAN,**  
2225 – 19 Street  
Coaldale, AB  
T1M 1G4
- 22: NELENA HOFKINK,**  
“BETHESDA CLEARBROOK HOME”  
32553 – Willingdon Crescent  
Clearbrook, BC  
V2T 1S2
- 25: JOHN FEENSTRA,**  
“ANCHOR HOME”  
361 30 Rd, RR 2  
Beamsville, ON  
L0R 1B0
- 28: MARY ANN DEWIT,**  
“BETHESDA”  
6705 – Satchel Rd, Box 40  
Mount Lehman, BC  
V0X 1V0

Congratulations, Henry, with your 22nd birthday, Alan your 33rd, Nelena your 39th, John your 41st, and Mary your 43rd!!

Until next month,

Mrs.R.Ravensbergen  
7462 Reg.Road 20, RR 1  
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0  
Tel: 905-957-3007; e-mail: RWRavens@netcom.ca





By J.J. Kuntz

In Volume 48, No. 15 (July 23, 1999) on page 359, there is mention of a congregation which has substituted the use of individual cups at the Lord's Supper celebration because, "some brothers and sisters, in their mind for hygienic reasons, are greatly distressed in drinking from a communal cup giving them difficulty in celebrating."

This is a concern which, every now and again, re-emerges and creates unfounded anxiety about participating in a celebration of the Lord's Supper where individual cups are eschewed. The world renowned Atlanta (US) based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has, over the past 25 years, repeatedly tried to put this into perspective, apparently not always and everywhere with success. After reading *Clarion's* "highlighting" of this concern, I contacted the CDC and immediately received the following (probably routine, standard) faxed reply:

For more than 2 decades the (CDC) has stated an official position to inquirers (e.g. lay public, physicians, nurses and other health care professionals) about the risk of infectious disease transmission from a common communion cup. Although no documented transmission of any infectious disease has ever been traced to the use of a common communion cup, a great deal of controversy surrounds this issue; the CDC still continues to receive inquiries about this topic. In this letter, the CDC strives to achieve a balance of adherence to scientific principles and respect for religious beliefs.

Within the CDC, the consensus of the National Center for Infectious Diseases and the National Center for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, and Tuberculosis, is that a theoretic risk of transmitting infectious diseases by using a common communion cup exists, but that the risk is so small that it is undetectable. The CDC has not been called on to investigate any episodes or outbreaks of infectious diseases that have been allegedly

linked to the use of a common communion cup. However, outbreaks or clusters of infection might be difficult to detect if, (1) a high prevalence of disease (e.g. infectious mononucleosis, influenza, herpes, strep throat, common cold) exists in that community, (2) diseases with oral modes of transmission have other modes of transmission (i.e. fecal-oral, hand-to-mouth/nose, airborne), (3) the length of the incubation period for the disease is such that other opportunities for exposure cannot be ruled out unequivocally, and (4) no incidence data exist for comparison purposes (i.e. the disease is not on the reportable disease list and therefore is not under public health surveillance).

Experimental studies have shown that bacteria and viruses can contaminate a common communion cup and survive despite the alcohol content of the wine. Therefore, an ill person or asymptomatic carrier drinking from the common cup could potentially expose other members of the congregation to pathogens present in saliva. Were any diseases transmitted by this practice, they most likely would be common viral illnesses, such as the common cold. However, a recent study of 681 persons found that people who receive communion as often as daily are not at higher risk of infection compared with persons who do not receive communion or with persons who do not attend Christian church services at all.

In summary, the risk for infectious disease transmission by a common communion cup is very low, and appropriate safeguards – that is, wiping the interior and exterior between communicants, use of care to rotate the cloth during use, and use of a clean cloth for each service – would further diminish the risk. In addition, churches may wish to consider advising their congregations that sharing the communion cup is discouraged if a person has an active respiratory infection (i.e.,

cold or flue) or moist or open sores on their lips (e.g. herpes).

Lillis P. Manangan RN, MPH  
Lynna M. Sanulattar PhD  
Linda Chiarella RN, MS, CIC  
Dawn M. Simmonds BS  
William R. Jarvis MD  
Hospital Infections Program,  
National Center for  
Infectious Diseases – Control and  
Prevention  
US Department of Health and  
Human Services  
Atlanta, Georgia

The attached list of footnotes consists of 8 references to individual studies and reports, from 14 medical researchers, carried out between 1943 and 1997, some of which were presented to Meetings of the American Society of Microbiology and/or published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

In a humorous aside a Professor at Clemson University, Beaufort, South Carolina, who teaches Public Health and who assisted me in my Internet search, suggested that where church custodians have responsibility for the disposal of the left over sacramental wine, their incidence of contacting respiratory diseases might make an interesting area of study.

*J.J.Kuntz lives in Hamilton, Ontario, and is a member of Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church.*



*In LINK with you*



*Check out Clarion's website at:  
<[premier.mb.ca/clarion.html](http://premier.mb.ca/clarion.html)>*

*Churches Note: We invite you to link Clarion's homepage to your church's homepage.*

# 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.

## Genevan melodies

This letter is written in response to the one by Mr. P. Schon in the issue of July 23.

Dr. J. DeJong appears to have done his homework before he wrote about our Psalm tunes having direct links to even the Church of the Old Testament, and to have come to the same conclusion as Dr. K. Deddens.

Speaking about the latter, one may disagree with Dr. K. Deddens but then one has to come with arguments and not with suggestive and baseless questions.

Dr. K. Deddens studied specifically the liturgy of the early church, as may be evident to everyone who read his doctoral dissertation *Annus Liturgicus?* Our Genevan tunes are not "European" in the sense that Mr. Schon suggests. One should study the matter first before coming with such statements as Mr. Schon did. And to switch in "argumentation" from *tunes* to *accompaniment* is also logically an impermissible jump.

Besides, to imply that "music from the Middle East," apparently as it exists today after having undergone all sorts of influences, not the least from Arabic sources, is expected to be the same as what old Israel used and heard, amounts to an anachronism.

Is it really "failing to recognize the continuing work of the Holy Spirit" when we want to continue in the line of the catholic church, also in our singing, honouring the *continuous* work of the Spirit throughout the ages instead of going along with all sorts of modern trends that originate from and are influenced by principally different frames of mind and theories? Could the latter really be called a "continuing work of the Holy Spirit"??

To speak of "idolizing" the Genevan tunes is a cheap way of ridiculing those who want to preserve the links with the Old Testament Church, also in their singing in public worship.

Further: please spare us the trauma of additions in the form of the spineless and theme-less tunes to which we are "treated" e.g., at high school graduation ceremonies such as we have to experience here in the Fraser Valley.

W.W.J. VanOene,  
Abbotsford, BC

## Pronouns

This letter is written to express my disagreement with your editorial staff concerning the non-capitalization of the personal pronouns which refer to the Lord. I am confused that some of these pronouns are capitalized while others are not. This brings me to question your editors . . . Is it your decision, or are the articles penned this way by the authors who submit them to *Clarion*?

Allow me to quote a section of the Preface in the NKJV, Nelson Study Bible: . . . **reverence for God** (*emphasis mine*), in the present work is preserved by capitalizing pronouns, including You, Your, and Yours, which refer to Him. Additionally, capitalization of these pronouns benefits the reader by clearly distinguishing divine and human persons referred to in a passage. . . .

I have a difficult time understanding why these personal pronouns are not capitalized. Even though it may (or may not) be grammatically correct, the reverence for God is at stake. Doesn't the Lord at least deserve our reverence? We must differentiate the Divine Person and hu-

man persons. Since I am convinced that many of the readers are offended by the use of these grammatics, would it not be feasible for the peace of Zion to capitalize the pronouns which pertain to the Lord so as not to "cause anyone of these little ones to stumble?" The Lord instructs us in Rom 14 that we "do not put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way." In the same chapter we are admonished once again not "to do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak."

Furthermore, this would not be an issue, as little as one year ago. Why the change? Is it because of our so-called adoption of the NIV in our churches, that the *Clarion* follows suit? What about what the Lord demands of us, namely our fear and reverence of Him.

Finally, I am deeply saddened that I need to write letters of this nature to the Canadian Reformed (Vrijgemaakt) magazine. When the Hamilton Spectator wrote an article concerning the use of God in our constitution, the personal pronouns were capitalized when reference was made to the Lord. Is the world teaching the church proper reverence for the Lord?

Ruth J. Postma,  
Burlington, Ontario

## A response

Obviously, a comment explaining *Clarion's* editorial policy is in order. *Clarion* follows the standard established in *The Canadian Style: A Guide to Writing and Editing* (copyright held by Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, 1997). Following this guide, we capitalize personal pronouns that refer to God when they are used as proper nouns, and not relative and adjectival pronouns. Hence, He and Him, but his and himself (page 77).

Allow me to comment somewhat further. Lower case letters for pronouns referring to God were *not* introduced by the NIV, as the writer thinks. Neither the KJV (1611) nor the RSV (1952) use capitals. In fact, the practice is a very recent innovation. The first English Bible to capitalize (all) pronouns referring to God was the NASB (1963). We are not on some great slide to liberalism here. Whether using the KJV, the RSV, or the NIV, the churches have never used a translation that capitalizes pronouns referring to God. – Editor

## CORRECTION

Thesis 9 of "Theses concerning the Doctrine of the Church," Vol. 48 No. 16. p. 374, should have read:

9. The two churches, true and false are easily distinguished from each other. The original Dutch term here is "lichtelijk," which literally means: "being light," i.e. not heavy or not difficult. The point, however, is not that one can make a hasty or ready-made decision. Rather, we confess here that God has revealed enough in his word to have the two churches carefully distinguished one from the other. Jesus said, "You will recognize them by their fruit," Matt 7:16,20 NIV.

My apologies for the error. – J. De Jong



## Church Growth on the Prairies

"It all started in Homewood, a small elevator village on the Manitoba prairie. The institution of the Canadian Reformed Church took place there on August 12, 1951." So begins the history of the Canadian Reformed Church at Carman, as recorded in *Many Grains . . . One Bread*, published by Premier Printing in 1989. Very similar statements can be repeated again almost 48 years later. The only differences are the place and the date. The place this time is Carman, a town with a population of 2700, barely 10 km. west of original Homewood, and the date is July 4, 1999. The same God who blessed those small beginnings in 1951, so that they grew to a congregation of more than 600 members in the Carman area, is due all thanks and praise for the circumstances which necessitated the institution of a second church in rural Manitoba.

The large crowd of members who filled the church building were eager to witness the historic occasion of the institution of a fourth Canadian Reformed Church in Manitoba – evidence of the continued faithfulness of our covenant God.

The joy and excitement of the occasion was not limited however to the members of the Carman Church as community representative, delegates from sister churches and other guests helped fill the church on 4th Avenue during the afternoon service on July 4th. As the 6 elders and 3 deacons elected by the new congregation answered the questions posed by Rev. J. Moesker with a clear, "I do with all my heart," the new congregation came into existence and the number of churches in the federation reached the number of 49.

During the worship service, Rev. J. Moesker encouraged both the new and

We welcome contributions for **SPECIAL EVENTS** – new buildings, arrivals and departures of pastors, etc.

Contributions will be restricted to one page including pictures. Please keep to about 500 words.



*Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar of Barrhead remembers being at the first institution in 1951.*

*The committee members who made the many preparations for this historic occasion. From left to right – Alan Schulenberg, Harry VanKammen, Dennis Douma, Arno Linde and Les Vanderveen.*



*Members of the first consistory ordained to office on July 4, 1999 – Kees Brouwer, Dennis Douma, Fred DeWit, Paul DeRuiter, Ron Vanderzwaag, John Veldman, Art Poppe, Ben Vandermeulen, Peter Veenendaal.*

existing congregations to be living, vibrant churches of the Lord. With the words of Haggai 2, he urged all to work, to build, and not to become discouraged when we experience difficulties. We may have many concerns but we must work in the Lord's strength.

After the service, br. Les Vanderveen, chairman of the committee for institution thanked everyone for the good cooperation they received in working towards this day. Rev. K. Jonker spoke on behalf of both Grace and Redeemer Winnipeg congregations as well as Classis Alberta/Manitoba. Rev. J. Vanrietschoten addressed the congregation as a former minister. Rev. J. Moesker spoke of a mother/ daughter relationship between the two churches in Carman. Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar (who remembers being present at the 1951 institution and whose grandfather was the first consistory chairman at

that time) represented the brothers and sisters in Barrhead, Alberta. Other congratulatory messages were received from Revs. VanSpronsen, Geertsema and deBoer, and from the churches in Edmonton (Providence and Immanuel), Denver, Taber and Calgary. Reeve Bill Roth of the Rural Municipality of Dufferin, expressed appreciation for the contributions of the Canadian Reformed community in our region. Mayor Murray Rinn of the Town of Carman wished both congregations well in the future.

A lot of work lies ahead for the new congregation in building on the foundations that were built before. But we trust in the God of our fathers who has blessed us so richly in the past and who will surely provide for us in the future He planned for us.

*P. Veenendaal*



## Welcome to Fergus, Rev. J.D. Louwerse!

On Sunday, May 9, 1999, the Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church building in Fergus, Ontario was filled to overflowing. After nearly four years of vacancy, we were about to witness the installation of the sixth minister to serve our congregation.

We were privileged once more to have Dr. J. DeJong on our pulpit for this service. He had been one of Rev. Louwerse's teachers at the College and he (among many others) had been very helpful during our vacancy, coming north often to bring us the gospel. For this special service, Dr. DeJong had chosen to preach on the apostolic mandate to God's servant to build His church, as it is found in Titus 3:8-11. As a minister of the Word, Rev. Louwerse was exhorted to steadfastly preach the true doctrine – to proclaim the truth courageously, clearly and confidently. This primary task is underscored by two other duties of a minister of the Word: to persistently resist all false doctrine and to diligently maintain the true discipline. The minister must turn his back on silly controversies and on legalistic thinking and stand strong in the freedom bought for us by Christ. But he also has the duty to ensure that anyone who challenges the truth or causes schisms is contested. The congregation was admonished to take care to respond to the preaching with wholesome works of gratitude, thus allowing the minister to be especially involved in the most important task of affirming God's faithfulness. We were reminded that if we are stagnantly hearing the minister but not acting on his words we are in decline, but if we live in the truth and resist false doctrine Rev. Louwerse's work will bear fruit among us.

After the service we all witnessed Rev. Louwerse's agreement to the subscription form for office bearers in Fergus, to which he also affixed his signature. Several congratulatory messages were read and representatives of neighbouring congregations presented their greetings.

For his inaugural sermon in Fergus, Rev. Louwerse had chosen Psalm 122



Rev. J.D. Louwerse

### Some highlights



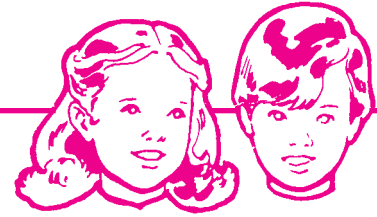
as his text: Rejoice as we worship the Lord God of peace! Our rejoicing is grounded in the work of the Lord, who many years ago had chosen to dwell among his people. In this Psalm David is putting himself in the shoes of the average Israelite, going up to Jerusalem to worship God with many different people from all the tribes. Today we are gathered by Christ through his Spirit every Sunday, to the house of the Lord, to worship in joy among those to whom we are joined in Him. Through the preaching of the Word at his thrones of judgment, God causes us to continue in the joy of salvation and in peace. But while He works in us, we also have work to do, for our joy is assured only through the prayers of all. We must continually pray for peace in the church and for the proclamation of that peace. We must also live with an attitude of love or we cannot expect blessing and prosperity. Rev. Louwerse concluded with the prayer that we all would continue to rejoice together as he proclaims to us the peace of Jesus Christ Sunday after Sunday.

On the evening of Friday, May 14, we all gathered in the gym of the Maranatha/Emmanuel Christian School for the Welcome Evening. Rev. Louwerse was treated to performances by the church choir, "Te Deum Laudamus," as well as the Kindergarten choir and the Fergus students of grades 1-10. Several societies presented entertainment and there was even a continuation of a skit presented at his farewell in Houston. At the end of the evening Rev. Louwerse could take with him boxes of groceries, a beautiful painting and visions of many unfamiliar faces and names among which we hope he will soon feel at home. In his closing remarks, our new minister expressed his appreciation for the warm welcome he had received and remarked that it will take some time for him to become acquainted with all the members of this large congregation – especially all the children! May these joyful days be the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship.

Alison Vanderveen 

# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



## Dear Busy Beavers

Are you having a fun holiday? What are you doing with yourself? Are you helping your Mom do all her spring cleaning, even though it is summer, or are you travelling somewhere? If you're travelling, where are you going? Are you visiting relatives or friends, or just going somewhere to relax with your family, somewhere where you can have lots of fun and games?

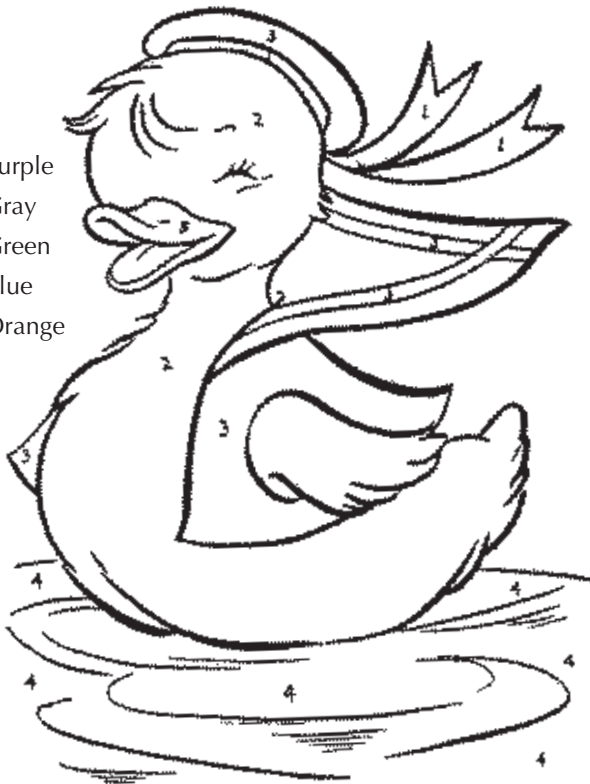
In whatever you are doing, make sure you don't complain, but enjoy it, because remember that God has given you time to play, but also time to work. And although helping your Mom to do her housework, you are making the Lord happy, because you are willing to use your talents to His glory. Remember, if you are travelling on holidays, to stop and look around you, enjoy the scenery, the flowers, the wild animals, and anything else you may encounter, because this is all the handiwork of God. He has put it there for you to enjoy, together with all the others who may be in the same place.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

## AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

1	Lydia Kingma	10	Debbie Olson
4	Melissa Tuininga	18	Rebecca Bethlehem
4	Michelle Deboer	22	Laurence Kingma
6	Hannah Bergsma	26	Arnold Kanis

- 1 – Purple
- 2 – Gray
- 3 – Green
- 4 – Blue
- 5 – Orange



I have not received any letters lately, so I don't have so many puzzles to put in *Our Little Magazine*. However, I found a book with lots of fun crafts for kids, so I thought over the summer, I would put a few ideas for you to do.

Here's a really neat idea. It's called

## FOOTPRINTS

It would be better to do this outside, so that you don't leave a mess in the house.

You will need:

- A large sheet of paper
- Tape
- Finger paint
- Flat dish or tray
- Bucket of soapy water and towel
- A Chair

Tape the paper to the ground on both end or keep the paper down with blocks or some weights. Place your paint dish at one end of the paper. Paint can be very slippery, so it is important that you be very careful to hold someone else's hand as you stand in the paint and then walk along the paper to make your footprints. Keep the bucket of soapy water and towel nearby to wash your feet.

You can also try this someone else and make two sets of prints, or with the washable sole of a pair of shoes, or you could use water instead of paint and do it on the sidewalk beside your house.

## GREETING CARDS

Here's an idea to do on a rainy day. It is easy and fun to make greeting cards for any occasion. There are many ways to design greeting cards. One of the best is to use a stencil, which is just a cutout design. You can cut out any design you like from a magazine or drawing. It is easy to make stencil by cutting a folded design that you make on a piece of paper.

Take a piece of paper and fold it in half. Take a stencil and draw half of it on the folded side of the paper, or draw your own picture on the folded side of the paper. Cut your picture out, then unfold your paper. You should have a perfect picture. Now you can make two cards from one piece of paper – you can glue the open picture onto a different colour card, and you can use the full picture to glue onto another card.

You can make Christmas cards, birthday cards, anniversary cards, Valentine cards, and all kinds of cards by using this idea.

