

Clarion

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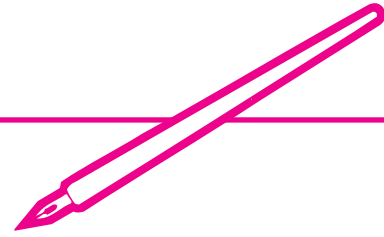


*Living and working in
Guatemala*

Numbers

10:1-10

By Cl. Stam



The Promotion of Church Unity

In the *Clarion* of February 2, 2001, the readers could find the report of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity. In short, this is the committee that is preparing church union with the United Reformed Churches in North America. The committee gives the green light to the forthcoming Synod Neerlandia to instruct deputies to “pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the United Reformed Churches of North America with a view towards establishing federative unity.” The plan is to have this ready by 2004.

It would appear, then, that much ground has been covered and much agreement reached in the past three years. Establishing federative unity is something different from entering into a sister church relationship. In the latter situation the two federations remain independent. In the former case they merge into one new federation. A merger is a much more encompassing and final matter.

We can recognize one another as Canadian and American sister churches.

Therefore I become a bit worried when I read the following sentence, “Although there are a number of outstanding issues, there is substantial agreement on most key areas of church government and general ecclesiastical policy.” Considering our track-record with the OPC, I wonder: what are these “outstanding issues?” And what is “substantial agreement?” Who defines what are “key areas?” A broad sentence as the one quoted above can be misleading. This ecclesiastical smooth-speak can lead to a lot of problems down the road.

Crossing the border?

I know that the committee had to deal with the United Reformed Churches of *North America*. Hence the URCs in the United States are also involved. How many Americans were actually in the committee of the URC?

I mention this because there have been in the past years close contacts in Ontario between the United Reformed and Canadian Reformed Churches. We have come to know one another somewhat, shall we say. But the American segment of the URC is by and large unknown to us.

This would have been an excellent opportunity to raise a question about cross-border churches. Canadians and Americans are undoubtedly the most friendly folk around, and they have a long-standing tradition since 1812 of observing the peace. But this does not require us to participate in an international merger. I prefer to see the United Reformed and the American Reformed churches in the United States go their own way together, and then the Canadians

can also federate nationally. Then we can recognize one another as Canadian and American sister churches. Seems a lot less complicated to me.

This would solve the “problem” of the different theological seminaries. The URC in the United States could decide whether they would use Mid-American Reformed Seminary or Westminster. Instead of establishing a new college, the URCs in Canada could work with the existing one in Hamilton, Ontario, perhaps expanded to meet the greater workload of professors and needs of a growing student body.

Fencing the table again

Under the heading “Agreement on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper” we come across the ever-returning issue of the supervising of the Lord’s Supper. The Canadian Reformed Churches require an attestation issued by the elders of their sister churches. The URCs, however, generally accept upon an interview with a guest his/her own personal attestation.

Earlier I wrote that while this practice may appear to differ from that of the OPC (“verbal warning”), in fact what is decisive is one’s own personal decision to attend the table. To cover this with the term “signed personal attestation” does not suffice. I wonder whether the term “personal attestation” is not an internal contradiction. Ecclesiastically speaking, an attestation is a document issued by an authoritative body which has the proper knowledge. The way the “Statement of Agreement” presents it, it is no longer an attestation. *Qui vive!* I do not want others to note that we are rather inconsistent.

What we may allow in a sister church as a tolerable practice, we cannot accept in a new federation.

We must understand that although the URC’s method of supervising the Lord’s Supper may practically differ from that of the OPC, we have in fact the same issue: the table is not properly fenced as per Article 61 of the Church Order. What we may allow in a sister church as a tolerable practice (be it one that needs continued discussion) we cannot accept in a new federation.


This is not a minor point. I read recently that there are two simple proofs for the allegation that the Canadian Reformed Churches are “sectarian.” One is that we have closed schools. The writer of the allegation did not take into account that our schools are parental, not parochial. The other is more serious: we have a closed table. How’s that for advanced recognition?

Progress made

I am sure that progress has been made by the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity. Are we ready now to go into Phase 2? The report has a sense of seizing the moment. But there are still many loose strings.

We cannot isolate the developments with the URCNA from our contacts with other churches in North America. A sister church relationship is something that we must live with. A merger is something we have to live in.

We have come a long way in some respects. The report states, "We acknowledge that due to the many limitations and shortcomings of human understanding, there is the brokenness of the church both in local situations and in broader federations. This implies that there can be more than one true church in a particular place at any given time." Thirty years ago the latter would not so easily have followed from the former.

Savour another one-liner, "We need to reject a broad denominationalism on the one hand, as well as a narrow sectarianism on the other." I wholeheartedly agree. But I'd rather not use such terms at all. Even if we understand them properly, they are all too quickly and easily applied. 

What's inside?

In his editorial, Rev. Cl. Stam deals with the report of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity. A summary of this report can be found in *Clarion* 50:3. He focuses on the discussions between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches. His observations will no doubt cause the reader to take another careful look at the report.

The second part of Rev. P.G. Feenstra's article on the providence of God speaks about the significance of the expression, "the hand of God." God's hand affords us unspeakable comfort.

Dr. R. Faber supplies us with the second part of his article outlining the principles supporting the first psalter of the Reformed Churches. In this issue he examines what Martin Bucer and John Calvin had to say about congregational singing. It is most informative! The goal of congregational singing is to offer praise to God: by means of psalms and hymns the congregation brings a sacrifice of thankfulness.

A recent public meeting between members of the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches in Abbotsford, B.C., receives a review by Jane deGlint. Ruth Meerveld provides us with a report on living and working in Guatemala.

This issue also contains the regular columns, *Treasures New and Old* and *Education Matters*. We also have a press release of Classis Pacific East and a letter to the editor which reminds us of the need for prayer in seeking church unity.

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By E.T. Van Den Born

Eating and Drinking as Wedding Guests

*Jesus answered: "Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?"
Luke 5:34*

This is the way it happened. The Lord Christ had called Levi the tax collector. Although He had merely said, "Follow me," the authority of this "Follow me" was the authority of the Son of God, who gathers unto himself a congregation, and who invites wedding guests to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

The day when Levi was called was a day of fasting. According to the law there was only one prescribed fasting day, but the Pharisees and some others were fasting twice a week. A fasting day is a day of humiliation and prayer, and abstinence of food and drink.

Levi, after having been called, had prepared a great dinner in honour of Jesus. Many friends of Levi attended as well. No wonder then that the Pharisees and Scribes criticized the goings-on: just imagine, eating and drinking on a fasting day! And, of all things, with tax collectors and sinners as well! Is this the kingdom of God He is preaching about?


Christ began his reply this way: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." For what had He done recently? He had pulled Levi out of the cesspool of sins, and during this dinner He was still active healing those that were sick.

But this answer of Christ was apparently not good enough for the disciples of John. Why should all this happen exactly on a fasting day? Then Christ answered them: "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?" For, as matters stand, is it not the Bridegroom who is here? Should it therefore not be a festive occasion? Well then, go out to meet the Bridegroom.

No one can object to fasting days, since doing penance and repenting are daily requirements because of our sins. But now the kingdom of God has arrived, and He is here to heal the guests of their sins so that they may inherit the kingdom of God. For there is manifested here his sphere of action: healing the sick and enabling

them to serve God. Everything is permissible in the kingdom of God, provided we are wedding guests, and whatever we do is a continuance of the kingdom of God.

For those whose lives are centered upon the forgiveness of sins are – just like that – able to step out of this life and enter into the halls of eternal life. So here is the answer to the question: What am I allowed to do and what not? Provided we are truly wedding guests, we are allowed to do all things: we are allowed to do feasting and fasting, as long as our lives are focussed on the future coming of Christ. Calling guests to the wedding feast, that is the work of Jesus Christ. The question now is whether we love Him so much that our lives are a feast already at this very stage. If so, who then would stumble over problems he is unable to overcome?

The late Rev. E.T. Van Den Born was a Minister of the Word among the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. 



The Gospel of God's Providence (Part 2)

By P.G. Feenstra

The providence of God is the scriptural doctrine of God's care for the world He made. The Lord directs all things to fulfill his plan and to bring about what He has willed and determined from before the foundation of the world.

Fundamental to our faith is the knowledge that the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is for the sake of Christ his Son, my God and my Father. I can trust him so completely as to have no doubt that He will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul. He will turn to my good whatever adversity He sends me in this life of sorrow. The God who created this earth out of nothing has the power and ability to do so, being Almighty God. He is willing because He is our faithful covenant Father (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 9).

Contrary to the theory of evolution

In spite of all the evil and wickedness found in the world, God's plan and counsel will not be foiled or thwarted. God will finish perfectly what He has started. The Lord maintains and governs what He created by his sovereign and majestic design. Thus the theory of evolution not only flies in the face of the doctrine of creation, as it questions how the world began, but it also attacks and denies the doctrine of God's providence. The evolutionist suggests the world is governed by a random sequence of events, by chance, by the survival of the fittest or by natural selection. We confess the entire cosmos is in the hands of God. He has inscribed us on the palms of his hands (Isa 49:16). "The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut 33:27).

Providence unfolds the gospel of God's hand

A key figure of speech the Bible uses to describe providence is "the hand of God." The psalmist confesses, "The Lord upholds all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing" (Ps 145:14-16). Even adverse events are controlled by the hand of the Lord. They are used by our faithful covenant God to purify us and draw us to himself. In his adversity Job recognizes he has been touched and chastened by the hand of the Lord. He says, "Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me" (Job 19:21).

Like little lambs we are safe in the hands of the Good Shepherd. No one can snatch us out of the Father's hand (John 10:28,30). The Lord hems us in behind and before and lays his hand upon us (Ps 139:5). There is nowhere we can go that is beyond God's view. His presence even reaches death because, "even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me" (Ps 139:10).

God will finish perfectly what He has started.

The Heidelberg Catechism highlights this as well. Lord's Day 10, answer 27 states, "God's providence is his almighty and ever present power whereby, as with his hand, He still upholds heaven and earth and all creatures . . . indeed, all things, come not by chance but by his fatherly hand." Answer 28 closes in a similar way: "for all creatures are so com-

pletely in his hand that without his will they cannot so much as move."

Hands symbolize more than one thing. They represent warmth, love and presence. Hands also indicate activity and power. Thus we pray, "Bless the work of our hands," that is, "Bless our everyday activities." To say everything the Lord made is in his hand implies that life to the minutest detail is under his government, rule and authority. If the Lord would withdraw his hand from the universe, everything would become chaos.

The Lord calls us to acknowledge that all things – including sickness, disease, loneliness, depression, hard financial times, injustice and death – do not happen by chance but by his fatherly hand. It is God's hand in action that permits accidents to happen. The Lord determines the course of all events. "Indeed before the day was, I am He; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?" (Isa 43:13).

The hand of the Lord ought to be confessed beyond special occasions or shocking events. His hand is in the ordinary events of life and also in those things which may upset our plans or complicate and make things more difficult for us. We believe that the Lord gives husband and wife to one another. "Since they are united by his hand, nothing shall separate them in this life" (Form for the Solemnization of Marriage). Yet at the same time we must confess that the Lord's hand determines whether we will remain single. Children come from his hand but He also fulfills his purpose and has a place in his plan for those who remain childless. God's will is accomplished as much through financial stress as it is through business success. When the shadows of terminal illness and death darken our path we may look to the

light of his providence. The Lord will not forsake the work of his hands. Our times are in God's hand (Ps 31:15). Trials and adversity are sometimes brought upon us to make us see more clearly how we cannot take matters into our own hands. Our only hope and security is in knowing the Lord has our lives safely in his hand. His hand comforts us and gives us peace and quietude for our souls.

A confession of King David

We also come across the confession of God's hand in 1 Chronicles 29. King David is about to die. Prior to his death he assembles together all the officials of the tribes, the representatives of the congregation of Israel. David expresses his desire that the people give freely and willingly for the building of the temple. The people respond positively.

Our only hope and security is in knowing the Lord has our lives safely in his hand.

David, however, does not praise the people for making such a large contribution. He leads them in a prayer of thanksgiving saying, "Both riches and honour come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all" (1 Chron 29:12). These riches were not given through hard work but by the activity of God and from the hand of God. "For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You" (14).

David blesses and praises the God of the open hand. He acknowledges that the money we earn belongs to the Lord. This is why we need to be good stewards of all we possess. Confessing God's providence keeps us from thinking in terms of "I will look after my own needs first and once I get my business on its feet, or my personal finances in order, then I will see if there is something left for the Lord." Confessing the gospel of God's hand puts voluntary contributions in a whole new light. Living by the providence of God we will contribute in accordance with the measure the Lord has blessed us.

Joining hands with God

Acknowledging God's providence is to join hands with the Lord. This point is made beautifully in 2 Chronicles 30.

Hezekiah, king of Judah, organizes the celebration of the Passover. The king calls together the whole congregation of the people of Israel – of both the Southern and the Northern kingdom to come join in the celebration. This Passover celebration takes place after the majority of the Northern kingdom had already been sent into exile by the hand of the kings of Assyria. Hezekiah sends forth couriers throughout the land with this message: "Children of Israel, return to the LORD God . . . Now do not be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD" (30:6,8). Translated literally, "Yield yourselves to the LORD" is "join hands with the LORD!" Hezekiah encourages the people to join hands with the Lord by coming to his house, which He has sanctified.

In the Ancient Near East two people who made a covenant joined right hands, just as today a couple is asked to join right hands when exchanging the vows of the marriage covenant. Hezekiah says as it were, "Yield yourselves to the Lord, join hands with the Lord! Renew the covenant with God. The hand of the Lord lay heavy on you and your fathers and He gave you into the hand of the oppressors who took away your food and drink, your riches and your security. But renew the covenant and it will go well with you. And as you join hands, promise to be faithful, never to forsake the Lord, but to be true to Him always, in good days and in bad, in riches and in poverty, in health and sickness, for as long as you live."

Since Christ committed his life into the hands of the Father, we may now join right hands with God.

Christ and providence

Our Lord Jesus Christ showed us what it means to live by the gracious hand of the Lord. Throughout His entire life He was faithful to his Father. Even when He suffered the anguish and reproach of hell He did not rebel. He knew that in this too, the Lord was carrying out his eternal counsel and plan. And therefore in the deepest suffering and the greatest adversity, when He experienced the loneliness of hell, He cried out, "Father into Your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46).



Accepted the call to Kerwood, Ontario:

Rev. J.G. Slaa

of Elora, Ontario.

* * * * *

Declined the call to Smithers, British Columbia:


Rev. J. Van Vliet

of Lincoln, Ontario.

* * * * *

Examined by Classis Ontario on March 9th, 2001 and received consent to speak an edifying word in the churches (C.O. Art 21):

Student Walter Geurts

Since Christ committed his life into the hands of the Father, we may now join right hands with God. For only those who have clean hands and a pure heart may stand in God's holy presence (Ps 24:3,4). Our hands need to be washed before we can join hands with the Lord. Through Jesus Christ our hands have been washed and He keeps them clean by the working of his Spirit. The hands of our Saviour were nailed to the cross to fulfill God's purpose in our lives. The Lord has entered a covenant with us and in his providence He promises to keep us in his hands . . . Will you now join right hands? 

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The Reformers on Psalms and Hymns in Public Worship (Part 2)

By R. Faber

Martin Bucer

Thanks to the efforts of Martin Bucer, Strasbourg was one of the first cities to produce a song-book in the German language for use in Reformed worship. As early as 1523, Bucer had criticized the abuse of the Latin chorales, and he had expressed the need for metrical psalms in the common tongue. Bucer rightly observed that congregations were being prevented from using the biblical psalms, which had been reserved for the priests in the mass and the daily offices of the Romanist church. Bucer's own commentary on the Hebrew text of the Psalms, as well as the publication of a psalmody

The Holy Spirit edifies the body of Christ through congregational singing.

devised by the church-father Athanasius, aided the development of a German psalter in Strasbourg. By 1524 the congregation was reciting a church-hymn, and when in 1525 the *German Service Book* appeared, it was singing metrical psalms and some rhymed versions of the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. The psalters published in Strasbourg influenced those compiled in several different places, including England, France, and the Netherlands.

Singing serves to edify the congregation

1 Corinthians 14:1-6 is fundamental also to Bucer's view of the goal of congregational singing. There we read that communal worship should be conducted in such a way "that the church may be edified." When they address one another in spiritual songs, believ-

ers pursue what makes for mutual unbuilding. In fact, it is the Holy Spirit who edifies the body of Christ through congregational singing. Therefore, like the catechism, the hymn-book is a means of instruction in the faith; it assists in gaining a better knowledge of Christ, and helps to effect a life of Christian piety. For this reason, too, the Strasbourg hymn-books, like many of their modern counterparts, contained also the Lord's Prayer, the Creeds, and the like. And they were to be used as teaching manuals in school as well as church. In fact, in order to help the youth appreciate the gift of song, the schools in Strasbourg made the practice and theory of music part of the curriculum. It is to the sixteenth century that modern Reformed schools trace the worthy exercise of memorizing the text and music of the church's psalter. By storing the Word of God in their minds through music, children may worship God in song both at home and in church. Bucer knew that one believes with the heart, and so is justified, and confesses with the mouth and so is saved (Rom 10:9).

Bucer agreed that the Book of Psalms, since it was inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the best source of material for the song-book of the new dispensation. However, like Luther, he did not object to a judicious selection of songs based upon other Scripture passages, so long as they edified the congregation and promoted a desire for godliness. Thus, while the earlier edition of the Strasbourg psalter contained mainly metrical psalms, the publication of 1537, entitled *Psalms and Spiritual Songs*, included hymns and songs for festal occasions. This edition contains also the liturgical texts for the Sunday and forms for the two sacraments and marriage, so that the psalm-book became an important document

in the public worship. This hymnal anticipated the definitive, "great" hymn-book of 1541. It is not surprising to learn that when John Calvin first heard the believers in Strasbourg singing God's praises, he was moved to produce a similar hymn-book for the French-speaking refugees under his care in that city.

John Calvin

For John Calvin, Ephesians 1:3-6 is an important text for our understanding of congregational singing. There we read that in his love God destined us to be his children through Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace. We worship God because He has created us to worship Him. Beginning with the characteristic emphasis on the doctrine of predestination, Calvin views worship in light of God's election of humans to serve his glory. In other words, true worship is an act of obedience to God, who commands us to have no other gods before Him. And congregational singing is the sacrifice of thanksgiving brought to God by his church, the gathering of the elect. Therefore, while congregational singing is subservient to the

Musical accompaniment should draw attention to the text of the psalm.

Word of God, it in no way is secondary to, or dependent upon preaching. As in the old, so too in the new dispensation, praise is an essential action of the liturgy, and contributes to worship in a way different from preaching and the use of sacraments. It is the special offering of glory to God, the true doxology.

Calvin treats congregational singing as a form of the public prayers that are

offered by the believers. He does so on the basis of the association which the Bible makes between song and prayer. Of the numerous texts in which they are linked, we note only James 5:13. And like the other Reformers, Calvin observes that prayers and songs are offered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; as agents of his will, the elect proclaim, confess, and praise the Lord. While Romanist theology makes a sharp division between laity and clergy, the Reformed faith teaches that all believers possess the spiritual office. Therefore congregational singing is not included in the liturgy merely to allow some "audience participation," but it is the duty of all God's elect. Prayers, almsgiving, and congregational singing are to be offered by all involved in worship.

The Holy Spirit effects true worship in congregational praise

Even more than his predecessors, Calvin stresses the operation of the Holy Spirit in congregational singing. Just as the proclamation of the Gospel can be done only by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, so too public prayers and songs are presented to God by his working. In Romans 8:15-16 we read of prayers that are offered by the power of the Spirit; indeed, "the Spirit himself is bearing witness with our spirit" when we pray. It is out of faith worked by the Spirit that believers can offer true worship as an act of obedience to God. Ephesians 5:18-20 states that true congregational singing occurs when believers are "filled with the Spirit." In other words, there is an intimate relation between faith and the form of worship which expresses it: both are effected by the Holy Spirit. And it is only in this way that congregational singing becomes an integral part of worship, for the Holy Spirit is operating in the body of Christ for the glory of God the Father.

There has been considerable debate concerning Calvin's view of compositions not based upon the Book of Psalms. On balance, the evidence suggests that while Calvin has a high regard for metrical psalms, he was not an "exclusive psalmodist," as some have alleged. Like the other Reformers, Calvin does make a clear distinction between the psalms inspired by God, and those of "merely human composition." And he makes an eloquent argument for the primacy of metrical psalms. In the preface to the *Genevan Psalter* (1543) he writes: "the psalms

incite us to pray to God and praise Him, and to meditate upon his works in order to love, fear, honor and glorify Him . . . no-one can sing things worthy of God save what he has received from Him."¹ Therefore, "we shall not find better songs nor songs more suited to that end than the Psalms of David which the Holy Spirit made and uttered through him (348)." When we sing the Psalms of David, Calvin goes on to say, we sing songs that come from the Holy Spirit himself, so that God is putting his Word into our mouths, "as if He himself sang in us to exalt his glory (348)."

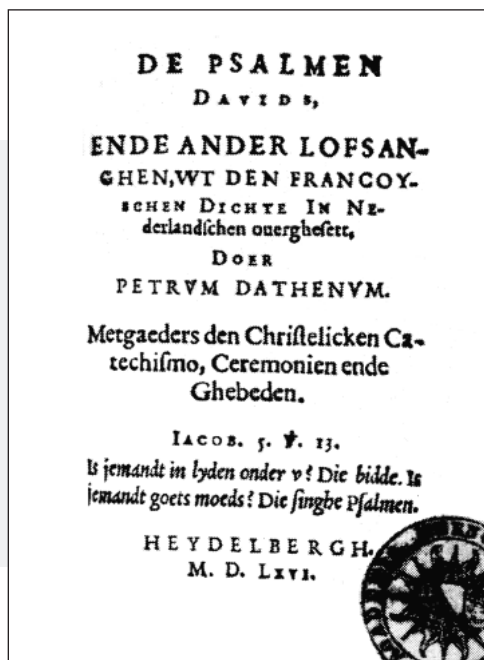
While Calvin has a high regard for metrical psalms, he was not an "exclusive psalmodist," as some have alleged.

Another reason for Calvin's high regard of metrical psalms is the unity of Scripture: the psalms given to the people of God in the Old Testament are those of the new dispensation also. And whereas the history of revelation developed in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ is the substance of both the old and new covenants. The numerous quotations of the psalms in the New Testament attest to their abiding value and their role in the church of the new dispensation. Thus, while

the psalters associated with Geneva are indebted to those of Strasbourg, they contain a greater number of metrical psalms, and fewer hymns.

The first French edition of metrical psalms appeared in 1539 (*Aulcuns Pseaulmes*), and it contained eighteen psalms. It was followed in 1542 by the *Genevan Psalter* (also called *Huguenot Psalter*), which became a classic in its time and influenced Reformed churches for centuries. For both the text and the musical notation, this *Genevan Psalter* garners praise from many critics of ecclesiastical liturgies. This edition, too, contained a few canticles of the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the like, but was mainly a collection of psalms based on the Old Testament book. Thirty of the metrical psalms in it were the composition of the leading French poet of the time, Clément Marot. Influenced by the successful practice in Strasbourg of composing metrical versions of the Psalms, Marot interpreted the Psalms using the commentary of Bucer and writings of the French Hebrew specialist, François Vatable.

Like the other Reformers, Calvin held that the purpose of musical accompaniment is to carry the text forward, not to distract from it or to replace it. Ideally, he thought, there should be a simple melodic line, with one note to each syllable, designed to be sung in unison without accompaniment. In the preface to the 1543 edition of the *Genevan Psalter*, Calvin advises



Title page of Dutch psalter.

Composed by Petrus Datheen.

“that the song be not light and frivolous but have weight and majesty; . . . and there is likewise a great difference between the music one makes to entertain men at table and in their homes, and the psalms which are sung in the church in the presence of God and his angels (346).” Like Luther, Calvin advised against lyric tunes, which do not force the singer to focus on the words of the text; the melody should be “moderated . . . that it may have the weight and majesty proper to the subject (348).” The definitive edition of 1562 contains fifty-two Gregorian tunes, and thirty-eight tunes in major keys, thirty-five in minor keys. Widely used throughout France, this psalter became the hallmark of Huguenot worship in home and church. It was translated into Dutch by Petrus Datheen in 1566, and into German in 1573; thus the *Genevan Psalter* enjoyed even wider circulation in those languages than in the original.

Conclusions

This brief survey of the development toward a Reformed psalter in the sixteenth century reveals the individual emphases of four major Reformers. From initial reaction to Romanist liturgy, through the stress upon the Gospel of Christ, to the formation of the Reformed church and the place of congregational singing in the system of theology, the contributions of each Reformer are evident. Yet, since common principles support the arguments of each, there are a number of general statements that may be made about the Reformed perspective on congregational singing of psalms and hymns. And so we may define the criteria for selecting material appropriate to the psalter that reflects the Reformed faith as follows:

1. Like prayer and almsgiving, congregational singing is subservient to the proclamation of the Gospel. In itself, singing is not a means of grace and adds nothing to the Word of God; by repeating Scripture in musical form, it puts the Word on the lips of believers.
2. In placing the Word of God in believers’ mouths, psalm-singing promotes the faith of the congregation. By helping believers commit the Bible to their hearts and lips, communal singing edifies the congregation. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is at work when psalms of praise are sung.

Some Psalters of the Reformation

1523

Wittenberg: *German Hymnal of Eight* (four by Luther)

1524

Wittenberg: *Wittenberger Hymnal* (38 polyphonic motets)

1525

Strasbourg: *German Service Book*

1537

Strasbourg: *Psalms and Spiritual Songs*

1539

Strasbourg: *Aulcuns Pseaulmes* (for the French refugee church)

1541

Strasbourg: the “great” Hymn-book for church and school (psalms, hymns, choir-songs)

1542

Geneva: *Genevan Psalter* (or *Huguenot Psalter*, first complete edition of metrical psalms in French)

1562

Geneva: *Pseaulmes de David*


1566

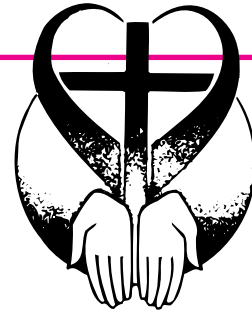
Petrus Datheen provides Dutch translation of *Genevan Psalter*

3. Psalms and hymns help believers profess the knowledge and firm conviction that God has saved his people by the death of Christ. True congregational singing arises from God-given faith and not from human emotion. Feelings of self-fulfillment are not a motivation for congregational singing; rather, joy results from the faith that is expressed in what is sung.
4. Therefore the congregation sings only in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as other elements in the liturgy are offered in his name, so too in communal song believers do the will of Christ. Denial of oneself and acknowledgment of the all-sufficient power of Christ’s death form the proper basis for singing praises to God.
5. Singing in the name of Christ is not a natural human undertaking; it can be done only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Just as true prayer is the work of the Spirit (Rom 8:15-27), so too He fills the hearts of believers when they address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Eph 5:18-20). Worshiping in spirit and

truth is not the activity of mortals, but of God the Spirit.

6. Because it is inspired by the Holy Spirit, the biblical Book of Psalms provides the best material for congregational song. Hymns based on other inspired Scriptures (The Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Song of Simeon, etc.), and a careful selection of hymns closely following them (the Apostles’ Creed) also belong to the catholic church. Songs not drawn from the Bible are of a status different from the Psalms inspired by God.
7. Communal singing, as an act of doxology, is essential to public worship in the old and new dispensation.
8. The goal of congregational singing is to offer praise to God: by means of psalms and hymns the congregation brings a sacrifice of thankfulness. Hebrews 13:15 says, “through him [Christ] let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.”

¹Preface to 1543 *Genevan Psalter*, in O. Strunk, ed., *Source Readings in Music History*. (New York: Norton, 1950), 348. 



Living and working in Guatemala

By Ruth Meerveld

Land of eternal spring

Guatemala . . . it's a name which brings to mind guerrilla warfare and steamy jungles, a name often lumped together with those of the rest of Central America's countries. Yet how inadequate those images are. True, Guatemala did suffer a thirty-five year long civil conflict that when it ended in 1996 left 100,000 dead and hardly a family untouched. And true, Guatemala harbours lush rainforests in the north and coastal tropical areas. Yet this land bordering Mexico, Honduras and El Salvador, covers five climate zones. It's a land where every type of fruit imaginable grows, where lowlands give way to rugged mountains and volcanoes and where the people of both Mayan and Spanish descent are gracious, friendly and beautiful.

It is the "land of eternal Spring" where CRWRF has supported a development project since 1997 which on its behalf we (Geraldine Ysselstein and myself) were privileged to visit for one short week in December. What a trip.

Guatemala harbours lush rainforests in the north and coastal tropical areas.

From the time we landed in Guatemala City and Linda Baartse met us at the airport, we were bombarded by a host of new impressions. The air was fresh with bougainvillea as we drove into Antigua, the former capital. Only a glimpse there of gracious courtyards, open markets, convent ruins and cobblestone

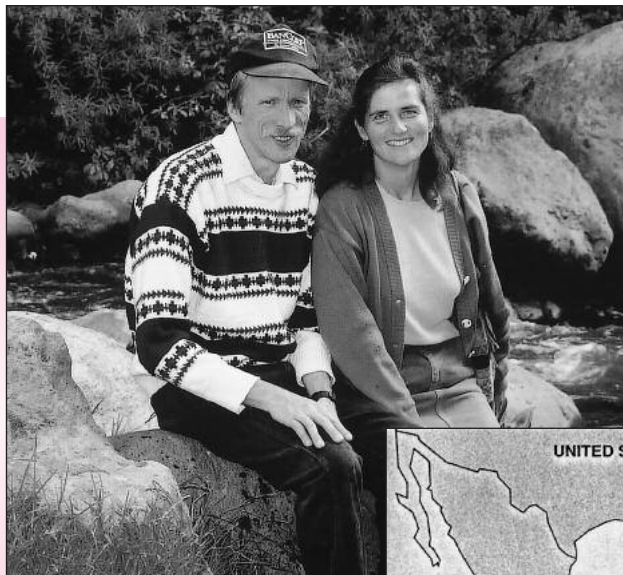
streets before we were whisked away for an eight-hour drive (though only about 270 kilometres) to Tajumulco where Linda and James live and work. Linda's confident driving in the busy towns and especially in the mountains on winding roads near steep drop offs was appreciated!

The road took us to 10,000 feet and then back again to just over 6,000 as Linda answered a host of questions and aptly introduced us to the history and culture of this area. She has lived and worked in Guatemala since 1991 after also doing development in Honduras and overseeing relief and development projects in a host of other countries. Her love for the work and people is obvious and especially after being there a week, we wished we could bottle her energy!

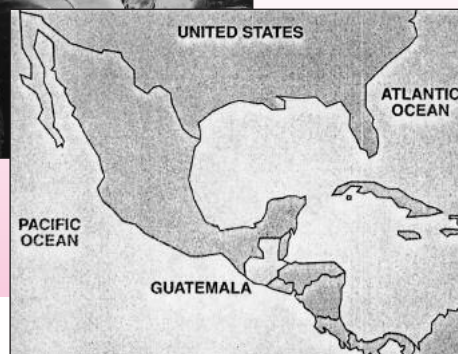
Visits at the homes

Our first full day in Tajumulco was spent hiking up to one of the villages involved in the development project. Surefooted men and women passed us as we climbed, carrying impressive loads of wood or corn on their backs. (The secret, we were told, is in balancing the weight properly.) Unaccustomed to the mountain air or steep inclines, we persevered rather slowly.

The visits to the women's homes were special, the people gracious and welcoming. Conscious of our sensitive stomachs, they offered Pepsis they could ill afford and eagerly answered our many questions which Linda translated into Spanish. Armed with only a few simple phrases, we could do little more than smile and nod! We heard how the development project, by God's grace, has brought new skills and knowledge to many homes. Children played underfoot or nursed as we visited. Reina, one of the Educators, has had twelve; only seven still live. Such sad numbers are not unusual in this beautiful but harsh area where



James and Linda Baartse.





Estella, Linda's assistant, helps to prepare lunch for the Women Educators meeting.

until recently knowledge about hygiene, nutrition and childhood diseases has been limited. Vibrant and enthusiastic, Reina is a much-appreciated part of the program, coming to Linda's home each month for teaching which she then capably passes on to the women's group in her village.

The women here, as elsewhere in the villages surrounding Tajumulco, are Mayan in ancestry, short in stature with long, lustrous black hair. Their richly embroidered huipils (blouses), distinctive skirts and aprons are very beautiful. They were pleased to have us visit and clearly appreciative of Linda who has worked tirelessly on their behalf.

Requests for help

No one has a phone. James and Linda can receive a knock on their door and a visit or plea for help at almost any time. The week before our arrival, they had helped get necessary aid for a woman in difficulty with her tenth delivery. Not long ago Linda drove another woman in great distress down the bumpy mountain roads to the nearest hospital. Tajumulco has a clinic but if it cannot help, the hospital must be reached somehow.

James and Linda labour in this area gladly, their tongues fluent in Spanish, their hearts tuned to the task of helping the Mam people. They live in a spot which, for all of its poverty, is breathtakingly beautiful. Their backyard, home to passionfruit vines, poinsettia bushes and a lemon tree, is overshadowed by Guatemala's highest volcano.

James and Linda see their work as complementary. James writes language primers and works with translation helpers, turning *Luke* into the local Mam dialect and discipling the men at the same time. (Though most people in the immediate area speak Spanish, it is often a rather poor Spanish and one has only to go a little farther from town

No one has a phone.

to find many who only understand Mam. Hence the real need for Bible translation.) James sees a pressing need here for mature Christian leaders who will train others in living out biblical faith. Too often, in this remote area, where both education and Bible knowledge

are limited, evangelism has consisted of little more than the four spiritual laws. He prays that translation and discipling will be used by God to change hearts and lives and call many to truly live according to God's Word.

As Linda teaches women lessons from Scripture as well as hygiene, finances, nutrition and more from a Biblical perspective, she strongly feels that reaching the heart is the only way to long-term change in a community. One can teach or initiate community development but why would a foreigner's word necessarily bring about long-term change? Unless God changes hearts, the lessons will not last, the development will crumble. Conversely when one can point to biblical principles for living, there is a higher authority than the expatriate's word.

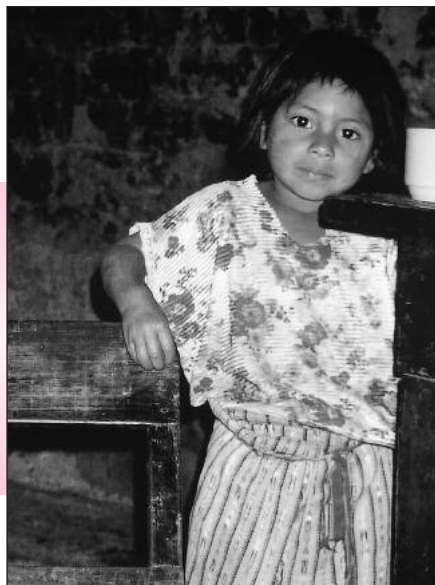
Together, this couple, by God's grace, is impacting lives. It is not easy, for people here are very resistant to change, not always willing to recognize that professing Christ means putting Him first. Jealousies can quickly erupt, lying is common, controversy simmers beneath the surface, undealt with. Other organizations have even given up trying to effect change in the area, moving on to where people are more malleable. In fact, James and Linda are the only expatriates living in the village. They need our prayers not to become discouraged with what seems at times to them like slow progress.

Progress is evident

Yet progress is evident. Translation work is continuing at a faster pace now that James has helpers able and willing



Some of the women who serve as volunteer educators attending the meeting. Reina is the one on the far right.



One of Reina's daughters shyly watched as we discussed the project in her home.

to come regularly. More and more women are requesting admittance to the women's program. And lessons are "sinking in." At a meeting of the eight ongoing Christian women's group leaders which Geraldine and I were privileged to attend, it was encouraging to hear several women admit for example, that before they had never thought to visit the widows or needy in their midst. Now, after studying Ruth and other women in the Bible, they do.

We were moved to be treated with great honour at this meeting. Everyone graciously welcomed us and thanked us, the CRWRF representatives, for the aid and teaching which they have seen make a difference in their lives. Women educators from the eight villages, with the support of their pastors and elders, met to discuss their progress this past year and to chart a course for 2001. With Linda acting as facilitator, these hardworking volunteers agreed to continue meeting each month for teaching, to pass on the lessons learned to others in their villages (some more than two hours walk away) and to continue visiting those in need and holding VBS outreach programs.

New programs

In addition to the ongoing groups which meet all year long, a six-month program is also offered to which women in other communities are requesting admittance. If a community is accepted, Linda finds two women able to act as educators, who then come to her home for regular teaching. They must learn the material well enough to pass it on to those who have registered to attend in their villages. After faithful


attendance at the bimonthly teaching sessions, each woman is eligible to receive help with a special project which will benefit her family. Most choose a *pila*, a poured concrete structure which stands outside the family's simple home and is used for preparing food, washing

Clean water is another benefit which Linda supervises and which CRWRF supports.

dishes, clothes and more. If the group wishes, it can continue to meet and receive both Biblical teaching and practical sessions. The women in the eight ongoing groups are also receiving low-interest loans which enable them to plant crops, start a small business and

get ahead. The spiral of debt which many in the area are forced into when funds run out and they must pay twenty percent a month, is thus lessened or avoided. This past year the payback rate was an incredible 100%!

Clean water is another benefit which Linda supervises and which CRWRF supports, helping fund projects in the villages around Tajumulco where water springs are capped and the water channelled to people's homes. Instruction and materials are also provided for the construction of all-important latrines. Such work has tremendous health benefits for people's lives.

Praise God for those who in obedience to Him are ministering here. Geraldine and I loved our time with James and Linda and were encouraged to uphold them and to multiply our prayers for the people of Tajumulco. I pray that this little window into their world will encourage you to do that also – and to reach out to others God has place in *your* path, living before the watching world with love and in truth, walking according to the Scriptures alone. *Sola Deo Gloria!* 

Gifts for the works of CRWRF may be directed to:

**Canadian Reformed
World Relief Fund**

PO Box 85225
Burlington, ON L7R 4K4
Fax: (905) 525-4449
E-mail: crwrf@home.com

All gifts are gladly received. Donors of \$10.00 or more will receive a receipt for income tax purposes.



Women who follow the six month training course may be eligible to receive a pila such as the one seen here.

Divided by History, United in Truth:

Reflections on a Public Meeting between the Free Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches at Abbotsford, B.C.

By Jane deGlint

Church-historical perspective

From a human perspective it seemed down to earth. Cars drove up to the building of the Abbotsford Canadian Reformed Church and came to peaceful rest on the parking lot. People walked up to the doors and easily found a seat inside. Without pomp and ceremony a meeting was called to order.

Only in reverent humility are we able to know what the Lord's perspective was on that meeting between members of two different church denominations. In light of Christ's prayer for the unity of those who believe in Him, we may carefully conclude that this gathering of faithful believers had the Lord's blessing and was pleasing in his sight.

From church-historical perspective this gathering was of great importance. It is a sign of good communication that this meeting was called jointly by the External Relations Committee of the Free Reformed Churches and the Subcommittee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Thankfully, the willingness to communicate is not restricted to those who sit around committee tables. Indeed, the attendance showed that many members of each participating church federation are ready to think seriously about the possibility of forming a federative union with each other.

Those who were there had looked forward to this date. For a date it was. Of course, the meeting had a date: February 8, 2001. But it also was a

date. It was an opportunity for each participating denomination to find out more about the other. Church-historically this comparison to courtship is quite appropriate. It was a fairly common analogy in the final years of the nineteenth century, when the two "parent" denominations of the Free and Canadian Reformed Churches prepared for their union.

We must understand each other's past if we want to fruitfully talk about getting together today.

Lesson in church history

However, it was concern about this union which caused the birth of the Free Reformed Churches. The Reverend J. W. Wullschleger of the Langley Free Reformed Church clearly pointed this out. He was the first speaker of evening. With emphatic clarity he taught us a detailed lesson in church history. He did not keep us in the dark about the reason for his lesson: we must understand each other's past if we want to fruitfully talk about getting together today.

The Reverend Wullschleger took us across the ocean to the Netherlands and back in time to the period from 1886 to 1892. The State Church of the Netherlands was in the grip of modernism and liberalism. Even those who had serious objections to the confessions were allowed to publicly profess

their faith and participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Three Forms of Unity stopped functioning as standards, since ministers were at liberty to take them or leave them.

Under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper many church members started to protest against these modernistic trends. Initially they wanted to reform the State Church from within. However, that proved impossible. The awareness grew that a breach was unavoidable. In 1886 these protesters, also called "mourners," left the State Church. No fewer than 200 congregations and seventy-six ministers stepped out. Since the Latin root for mourning is *dole*, this breach was called the "Doleantie": the breakthrough for those who mourned the unbiblical teachings and hierarchical government of the State Church.

Doleantie and Secession

Interestingly, the "mourners" were not the first group that had left the State Church. In 1834 another group had seceded, for similar reasons. This event was called the Secession. At this point we discretely interrupt Rev. Wullschleger, to give ourselves a moment for storing the facts properly into our memory. The Secession took place in 1834; the people who left the State Church at that time were called Seceders. In 1886 the "Doleantie" occurred; those who departed then are referred to in this article as "Mourners." Back to the lesson.

Shortly after the "Doleantie" the Mourners were approached by the

Seceders. The Seceders were glad that another group had left the State Church and they hoped that this group would join their federation. However, the Mourners were not ready to do so. Kuyper was not interested, since the Seceders had separated with an appeal to the articles 27, 28, 29 of the Belgic Confession, thus implying that the State Church was false. Kuyper did not say that yet, though he considered the actions of the government of State Church very incorrect.

It goes without saying that this position of the Mourners hurt the Seceders. The Seceders saw the hand of the Lord in the Secession. In the meantime the followers of the "Doleantie" were not very successful in changing the government of the State Church. Many of Mourners were placed under discipline and their claims to church properties were denied by the courts of the land. As a result the "Doleantie" of the Mourners became in fact a second Secession.

Reconsider their relationship

The realization of this fact forced the Mourners to reconsider their relationship with the Seceders. Now the churches of the "Doleantie" took the initiative for contact. Ironically, this time the Seceders were not enthusiastic. They demanded that the Mourners first publicly acknowledge the Secession to be from God. The training for the ministry had become an obstacle as well. The Seceders had instituted their own training for ministers in Kampen, whereas Kuyper had started the Free University in Amsterdam, which included a theological faculty.

In spite of these difficulties the discussion between the Seceders and the Mourners continued. In 1891 the Mourners came to Seceders again with the urgent question, "What does each of us have to do in order to unite?" This appeal caused unrest among the Seceders. Some were ready to unite, but others had strong objections. These concerns were not heeded, however. The churches of the Secession and "Doleantie" were officially united into one federation in the year 1892. They called themselves the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands.

Objections to unity

Rev. Wullschleger's lesson was not over yet. In a sense he was just getting to the point, because the Union

of 1892 marked the beginnings of the birth pangs of the Free Reformed Church. This is how the story continues. Those Seceders who were concerned about the Union voiced their objections, five in total. They included: the synod acted without the local churches; the opposing views about method of separation were not satisfactorily resolved; not all the churches of the "Doleantie" were pure and Reformed; mutual love was lacking; and, most importantly, the erroneous views of Kuyper concerning presumptive regeneration were not Reformed.

"What does each of us have to do in order to unite?"

However, this *cri de coeur* of the concerned brothers was not heeded. For that reason they were not able to join the Union. Their concerns proved valid when in 1905 the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands pronounced officially that it is less proper, but not wrong, to say that baptism of infants is administered on the ground of presumptive regeneration. By 1906 the concerned who had refused to join the Union, had formed seventy-one instituted congregations. Their name tells us who they are. These concerned brothers and sisters from the Secession federated themselves under the name – as it is known in North America – the "Free Reformed Churches!"

We have existed as two separate federations for about 100 years.

Plea for understanding

At this point Rev. Wullschleger's lesson turned into a heartfelt plea for understanding. Did the view of Kuyper concerning baptism not continue to cause trouble? Church union cannot be forced from the top. And to arrive at today: having the same confessions does not mean that these documents are interpreted in the same way. The Canadian Reformed sermons have sound explanation, but lack application. Moreover, the Canadian Reformed churches have an optimistic

view of the covenant. And what hurts, when someone leaves the Canadian Reformed Churches to join a Free Reformed congregation, it reads in their church bulletins, "Brother X. has left the church of Jesus Christ." Does that mean that the Free Reformed churches are false?

Response

Rev. W. B. Slomp of the Canadian Reformed Churches had the honour of responding to Rev. Wullschleger. It took the resilient audience a moment to shift from the articulate phrasing of Rev. Wullschleger to the fast-track approach of Rev. Slomp.

The Canadian Reformed minister had to concede that his Free Reformed colleague was historically correct. Yet, some points required further elaboration. Kuyper played a dominant role in the union of 1892, but he was not the only participant. There were many more players, for example Herman Bavinck. Furthermore, Kuyper's viewpoint on the State Church progressed. Initially he disagreed with the Seceders who called the State Church false. Kuyper had a different approach. According to him, the State Church was false as institute (the way it was governed), but it was still true as organism (the spiritual health of the members). However, eventually Kuyper agreed that the State Church was false.

Rev. Slomp also pointed out that at the time of the Union of 1892 the local churches had time to involve their congregations. It is also not true that love was lacking as the Union came about. And here Rev. Slomp picked up on the imagery of courtship. The groups were not yet married, but they were one in Christ. This love was to be expressed. That command must be obeyed, in the past as well as in the present. We have existed as two separate federations for about 100 years. Though much communication will be necessary before we can reunite, we have the command to love. This love will seek to be expressed in union.

The liberation of 1944

The Canadian Reformed minister then took us to the time of the Liberation, which took place in the Netherlands in 1944. At that time a group of people left the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, because the teachings

of Abraham Kuyper concerning presumptive regeneration had actually become binding. Moreover, the government of those churches had become hierarchical. The brothers and sister who left the Reformed Churches organized themselves under the name – as it is known in North America – the “Canadian and American Reformed Churches.” That means that both the Free Reformed and the Canadian Reformed churches have rejected Kuyper’s teachings. Would that not be a good starting point in our discussions about church unity?

In our unity discussions we cannot get around the concept of “Experiential Preaching.” For that reason Rev. Slomp tackled that topic frankly. He started by reminding us that this problem did not come up at the time of the Union in 1892. As important as this point is, however, it must be borne in mind

that the question should not be “Was his sermon experiential?” but “Does the preaching in the Canadian Reformed churches reveal the whole council of God and is it in agreement with the confessions?”

Another point which Rev. Slomp, on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches, would like to see discussed with the Free Reformed Churches, deals with the pluriformity of the church. Is there one manifestation of Christ’s body in one place, or can two true churches coexist side by side as different expressions of the truth?

In closing Rev. Slomp reminded us to progress with proper planning and prayer. With our Lord Jesus we ought to pray, “that they may all be one . . . so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” The world must see that God’s children belong together!

Lively question period

The lively question period proved that our attention span can still reach two hours. Both speakers took the opportunity to fill in details. It was encouraging to observe that also young people have an active interest in unity. The subjective element in the preaching received quite a bit of attention, especially as it relates to the man in the pew: Does this type of preaching make joyful believers, or believers who doubt their salvation?

In conclusion it can be said that, yes, the Canadian Reformed and Free Reformed churches are divided by history. However, history also shows that both churches have found the Reformed path. By grace both have remained faithful to the truth. The closing words of the Free Reformed minister Rev. L. Bilkes sum it up well, “We have the responsibility to come to unity. But, if it happens, it was God who worked it.”



LETTER 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.

Dear editor:

I have read with interest and thanksgiving the various articles that have appeared in both the *Clarion* and the *Christian Renewal* concerning the fraternal discussions between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches. Much work has been done by both respective committees and by local congregations. Evidently more needs to be done if unity would be achieved. I have appreciated reading the various initiatives already taken and the strategies suggested for the future.

One strategy for unity, however, has not been noted: prayer. I assume that prayers have been offered dur-

ing committee and local meetings. But are the Sunday congregational prayers including intercession for the Lord’s blessing upon the Canadian Reformed Church just down the road or the United Reformed Church in the next town? Are families offering up prayer for the Canadian Reformed or United Reformed neighbour? Only when we have united before God’s throne of grace in prayer, we will be able to sit together at the Lord’s Table with pure and sincere hearts.

Jesus Christ *prayed* for the unity of his church (John 17). We can do no less than to follow his example. And even if someone should have bitter feelings about the other group,

recall Christ’s words: “Pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:28).

I’m in Quebec City, geographically distant from the local discussions, tensions and aspirations, and a long ways from Neerlandia and Escondido. But brothers and sisters, I am near to you in prayer. Weekly I pray that your two federations may express visibly the unity of our Reformed faith and Christian love. May your actions demonstrate that the purity of our churches does not ultimately depend upon the distinctives of one federation or another, but upon the powerful grace of God found in Christ, and in that grace alone (Col 2:16-23).

With Christian affection,
Ben Westerveld, Jr.



A Story about Guido de Brès Beginnings

by A. Kingma

The good old days

Looking into old yearbooks gives one a sense of “the good old days.” Guido de Brès Christian High School’s twenty-fifth anniversary yearbook had a thousand and one pictures in it, mostly about students and teachers. Of course, anyone who glances through all these pictures can chuckle many times over about clothing, hair styles, and about “how young they all look.” But the picture that caught my eye was not my own, another student’s, or a teacher’s, but one belonging to a “pillar” of the school, a stalwart and dedicated man, one who even spoke at the twenty-fifth anniversary ceremonies: Brother Jack Schutten. Although his picture gives some indications how he changed in twenty-five years – it actually says very little about him – I think it is necessary to create a deeper, clearer, and more colourful picture of him. I’ll share with you Jack’s story.

My intent is not to honour man. Brother Schutten will be the first one to say that God used him and others to set up a Canadian Reformed high school in Ontario. My intent is to focus on what led Canadian Reformed people like him to set up Guido de Brès Christian High School, and what had to happen to get the school going.

The John Deere salesman

Back in 1970, Jack was a John Deere salesman. He still is, sort of. Although he is happily retired for several years now, he still can proudly say, “Yeah, I sold Mr So-and-so a combine this year. I got to have a little butter on my bread, you know.” But back in 1970, when brother Schutten finished his term as chairman of the board of Smithville’s John Calvin School, others asked him what he planned to do with his extra time. “Start a high school,” he replied. They chuckled. The thought of starting our own high school, however, had been on his mind for a while. It was also on the mind of other parents

his age who were sending children to public high or to a general Christian high school. Jack sent his oldest four children to Great Lakes Christian College, an interdenominational Christian high school located within reasonable bussing distance.

“It was not because the public schools had declined so much, but because we learned to believe that establishing a Reformed high school was the best way to keep our promises at the baptism of our children.”

With another brother of the church, brother Schutten wrote a letter and sent it to all the congregations in Ontario – even as far away as London and Chatham, asking for a meeting about this matter. Brother Schutten acknowledged that he was not the first one to think of “our own high school.” Only two or three years earlier, people in Burlington had tried to get congregations together to start one, but those endeavours were unsuccessful. This time, almost all churches replied and delegated a brother or two to attend the first meeting in Smithville on November 6, 1971. Mr. Schutten chaired that first meeting, and after some hours of serious discussions, it was decided to establish a steering committee composed of brothers Adri VanEgmond, Kees Nobels, C. Walinga, Martin Van-

dervelde, Nick Torenvliet, Len VanZandwijk and Jack Schutten as chairperson. This committee then decided to visit every congregation to discuss the matter further.

Lost on the 401

Brother Schutten had a few good stories to tell about all these meetings. Brother VanEgmond always made sure that they used his vehicle, that he paid for the gas, and that he was the designated driver. Brother Schutten was always chairman, so he had too much stress to drive. Rev. P. Kingma was often the speaker, so he was always too deep in thought or discussion to drive. The steering committee would have its regular meetings in brother Jan Gelderman’s house in Burlington, a rather central location. Because of some rather heated debates held there, this place earned the nickname “Lion’s Den.” Other stories were told about the contents of the discussions. You can just imagine how lively these discussions were, for all the issues had to be discussed openly. Not one issue could be left untouched. The issues were: why a Reformed high school? Why not a Christian high school? Should it be a church school or a parental school? Isn’t mixed Christian education good enough?

The best story for me was the one when brother VanEgmond could not be the driver, so Rev. Kingma drove to London. There were no problems driving to London and there were no problems while in London. On the way home from London on the 401, brother Schutten slept in the back seat because



Br. Jack and sr. Elly Schutten

he had to be awake the next morning at five o'clock to milk his eighty cows. Well, the discussion between Rev. Kingma and brother Martin Vandervelde became so intense that it led them to drive unwittingly one hour north of the then Hwy 53 exit to Brantford-Hamilton. Brother Schutten woke up, quickly gave them a chairman's sense of direction, and straightened them out, only to be home after two in the morning.

A necessity

In May 1973, the steering committee was dissolved. In a year and a half, enough agreement had been reached throughout all the congregations of Ontario to realize that our own Canadian Reformed high school was a necessity. "It was not because the public schools had declined so much, but because we learned to believe that establishing a Reformed high school was the best way to keep our promises at the baptism of our children," said brother Schutten. To make the school a reality, a constitution committee was established consisting of the brothers H. Aasman, H. deBoersap, A. Hordyk, A. vanEgmond and Jack Schutten. Brother Schutten was made chairman.

In this committee, some more difficult issues arose: Who can be a member? Who can be a teacher? Who will be the students? How is the baptismal promise connected to the need for Reformed education? What should the basis of the school be? All such like issues needed to be firmly addressed. Although the temperature and the volume did rise at times, the atmosphere both in the steering committee and in the constitutional committee remained good, for no one held personal grudges.

Being a chairman was stressful. "Every time I would go to a meeting, I would first pray for strength and wisdom," said brother Schutten. He acknowledged that his training as a sergeant in the Dutch army and that taking a Dale Carnegie course were good training sessions for a chairman's task. Also, brother Schutten shared that he had received great advice and help from Mr. Jeff Ellis, chairman of Great Lakes Christian College, and in Mr. Klim, the area superintendent of public schools. By February 1974, the new constitution was agreed upon by all the churches and in the fall, a Guido board was formed. Brother Schutten's task as chairman was now over, he thought, but they called on him once more to chair the meetings. In February 1975, in the old Ebenezer Burlington church

building, the board finally decided to start the school.

Practical concerns

Now the board had to solve practical concerns in six short months. How will we fund it? Can we find a suitable building? What about textbooks and curriculum? Who will be the staff? How much should we pay them? Who will be the principal? Brother Schutten had a sister-in-law who was teaching at the University of Winnipeg. . . . The board hastily appointed an education committee to help them out. Phone calls were made. All contacts were followed, and after a flurry of activity, the board was ready. Perhaps not all textbooks or supplies were in, but in September of 1975, Guido de Brès High School officially opened with students and teachers. Those who attended that opening day offered thanks to God in songs of praise and in prayer.

Why were there difficulties?

Why was starting a Reformed high school so difficult? It was difficult because local situations varied so much. Not all congregations were yet convinced that Reformed elementary school was really necessary, while Burlington and Smithville had a Canadian Reformed elementary school for many years already. It was difficult because congregations had to work together for the first time in a non-ecclesiastical setting. It was difficult because the high school would be located centrally in Hamilton, not in Fergus/Guelph, not in Chatham or London, and not in Smithville. And it was difficult because almost everyone truly couldn't afford it. "We were all poor," brother Schutten mentioned several times. He had already taken out loans to pay for the Christian education that his four children were receiving at Great Lakes. "You don't know now how poor we were. But we had done enough fighting and the people were ready. We trusted each other and we believed that the Lord would provide." And the Lord did provide. Spiritual support and monetary help came from Holland, and other money came from local drives.

Talking to a "pillar" of Guido leads one to asking him to evaluate what he now sees. Is Guido what he envisioned it to be? Brother Schutten stated that he loves what he sees, but there are differences. One difference is in the curriculum. The curriculum has expanded to include courses for the less academic students. "We should have done more in the beginning, but we had limited

funds, limited teachers, limited space, and we just had to go," brother Schutten admits. Another difference is in discipline. Although it has thankfully improved lately, Guido's discipline dipped compared to what it was in the beginning. A third difference is in sports. In the beginning there was a limited emphasis on sports, but now the students play with Christian school and public school teams. Isn't that too much emphasis on sports, brother Schutten wonders? A fourth difference is that Guido is bigger than was envisioned, and that is regrettable. "When Guido would get too big, we were to start another high school in the area where there was the greatest need. That should be in one of the minutes," brother Schutten stated. A last difference is the fact that Guido is now incorporated. "We are now putting more trust in a system and less trust in one another as a communion of saints," he laments. "We are also hereby causing membership to be based on dollars rather than on trust to pay. Now you're not a member unless you pay so much. Then there were \$1.00 members. Donations should not be on the budget. Children should not be sent off the school for financial reasons." Yet, brother Schutten also shared that the basis of Guido is still the same, and for that he is very thankful.

Retired

Brother Schutten is now retired, living in a quiet residential area of Grimsby. He greatly enjoyed telling this story, not because they did such a good job that Guido started, but because he can so clearly see that God guided everything. "I never knew how big of a job it was," he said, "or I would never have started, humanly speaking." Now he is thankful that he was enabled to be a willing instrument for Guido. Brother Schutten humbly treasures a compliment that Dr. J. Faber gave him at the first alumni meeting, "Jack is the Trudeau of Guido. You have pulled the churches in Ontario together. You are a federalist."

When you now look at the picture of brother Schutten, you should be able to see his dedication, commitment and character a little more clearly. May God bless the school that he was privileged to help start, that I was privileged to attend, and that brother Schutten's grandchildren are privileged to attend now. May Guido de Brès continue to provide reformed education for the coming generations.





Press Release Classis Pacific East, February 15-17, 2001

1. The chairman of the convening Church of Aldergrove opens the meeting in a Christian manner. He welcomes the delegates as well as the deputies for Regional Synod. The credentials are found to be in good order. The suggested officers take their place and the agenda is adopted.
2. The Church at Vernon has requested the approbation of Classis for the dismissal of the Rev. D. Moes according to Article 11 of the Church Order. This request is declared admissible. After several rounds of discussion, the matter is referred to a committee.
3. Classis receives several packages of appeals from the Rev. D. Moes against various actions and decisions of the Council of Vernon. This material is declared admissible. After several rounds of discussion, the matter is referred to a committee.
4. A number of letters were received from brothers and sisters of the Church at Vernon. They are declared admissible and are discussed individually. After several rounds of discussion, these letters are referred to a committee.
5. An appeal is received from a brother and sister against actions of the deacons of their church. After some discussion, this matter is referred to a committee.
6. The committees of classis continue to meet for the afternoon and evening of February 15.
7. After reconvening at 9:00 a.m. on February 16, the committees of classis continue to meet.
8. The committee report concerning the request of the council of the Church at Vernon to approve the dismissal of its minister is tabled and dealt with in closed session. The request of the Church at Vernon is denied. Classis is not convinced that due process has been

entirely followed in the events and decisions which led to council's decision to dismiss its minister.

9. Classis reconvenes at 9:00 a.m. on February 17. The committees of classis continue to meet.
10. The reports of the committees dealing with the appeals of the Rev. D. Moes are tabled and dealt with in closed session. After discussion and slight modifications, the committee reports are unanimously adopted. All the appeals of Rev. Moes are denied.
11. The committee report concerning the letters of various members of the church at Vernon is discussed in closed session. The committee report is unanimously adopted. Replies will be sent by the clerk of Classis.
12. The committee report regarding the appeal of a brother and sister against the actions and decisions of the deacons of their church is discussed in closed session and adopted as presented.
13. Question Period is held in accordance with Article 44 of the Church Order. Advice is given to delegates in regard to the government of their church.
14. Appointments: Chilliwack is appointed as the convening church for the next Classis. The agreed upon date for the next Classis is May 24, with September 27 as the alternate date. Suggested officers for the next Classis are: Chairman - R. Schouten, Vice-chairman - C. VanderVelde, Clerk - B. Wielenga.
15. Personal Question period is held.
16. Brotherly censure according to Article 34 is deemed unnecessary.
17. The Acts of Classis are read and adopted.
18. The Press Release is read and approved.
19. The chairman leads the delegates in closing devotions.

For Classis,
R. Schouten, Vice-chairman e.t.

Press Release Classis Central Ontario held on March 9, 2001 in Burlington

1. On behalf of the convening church of Flamborough Rev. J. DeGelder called the meeting to order, and asked the brothers to sing Ps.89:1, 2, 3. He then read 1 Samuel 3 – the text for the sermon proposal of br. W. Geurts – and led in prayer.
2. On behalf of the church at Flamborough he welcomed the delegates, and extended a special welcome to br. W. Geurts, who was present to be examined for preaching consent, to Rev. Bosch, who was able to attend Classis for a while as guest, and to Rev. H. Zekveld, who was present as representative of the Classis Ontario South of the United Reformed Churches. In his memorabilia Rev. DeGelder expressed thankfulness for Rev. Bosch's good recuperation so far, and congratulated Rev. Jagt with his upcoming wedding.
3. The credentials were examined by the delegates of the convening church of the previous Classis and found to be in good order. The church at Toronto had an instruction.
4. Classis was then constituted. Officers were: Rev. M. Jagt, chairman; Rev. J. DeGelder, vice-chairman; and Rev. W. DenHollander, clerk.
5. The proposed agenda was adopted.
6. Classis granted the request of br. W. Geurts to be examined for permission to speak an edifying word in the churches, according to Art.21 C.O. The required documents were found to be in good order, and br. Geurts then delivered his sermon-proposal on 1 Samuel 3. In closed session Classis discussed the sermon-proposal and judged that the examination be continued. Br. Geurts was then examined in his knowledge of doctrine and creeds. In closed session Classis discussed the examination, and decided to grant br. Geurts permission to speak an edifying

word in the churches for the period of one year, upon the successful completion of his 3rd year at the Theological College. Br. Geurts signed the subscription form for students, after which this part of the agenda was closed with singing, prayer and congratulations for br. and sr. Geurts.

7. A report from the Committee for Needy Churches was received and discussed. Classis decided to instruct the clerk:

a. to inform the Committee for Needy Churches that it should uphold and implement the decision of Classis Ontario North of December 11th 1998 (acts 10.a.4), including the agreement that "for the time being support for the needy churches in the two classical districts remain a joint responsibility" (Acts of Classis Ontario North, September 18, 1998, art.14. d.3). It is the understanding of Classis that the expression "for the time being" means "until the two Classes agree that this joint responsibility is no longer required."

b. to inform the Classis Northern Ontario of March 23, 2001 of the above instruction, requesting this Classis the continued "support for the needy churches in the two classical districts, as per the decision of Classis Ontario North of September 18, 1990, Acts, art. 14. d.3.

8. In the question period according to Art. 44 C.O. the church at Toronto presented its instruction and asked for advice concerning the position and the future of the house-congregation in the Trenton area. Advice was given.

9. The Rev. H. Zekveld from the United Reformed Church in Strathroy received the opportunity to address Classis. He expressed his appreciation for the invitation, and elaborated with thankfulness on the growing contacts between the URC and the CanRC. Although there is much mutual understanding and consensus, there will still be many roadblocks on the way towards full unity. Let us pursue the goals before us in faith and with patience. The chairman responded with appropriate words.

10. Classis appointed the church at Ottawa as convening church for the next Classis, scheduled for June 8, 2001 (or September 21, 2001). Suggested officers are: Rev. G. Nederveen, chairman, Rev. W. denHollander vice-chairman and Rev. M. Jagt, clerk.

11. Question period was not made use off.

12. Censure according to Art. 34 C.O. was not needed.

13. The Acts were read and adopted, after which the Press Release was read and approved.

14. The chairman expressed appreciation for the harmonious and brotherly cooperation, requested to sing Ps.107:1, 2, and led in thanksgiving prayer. He then closed Classis Central Ontario of March 9, 2001.

For Classis Central Ontario of
March 9, 2001,
Rev. J. DeGelder,
vice-chairman of that Classis

Press Release of the Classis Manitoba held on March 12, 2001, at the Carman East church building

1. On behalf of the convening Church, Rev. D. W. Vandeburgt opened the meeting by reading Ephesians 4:1-16. This was followed by the singing of Hymn 40:1,2 and prayer.

2. The credentials were examined and found to be in order. There were no instructions.

3. The Classis was constituted and the executive officers took their places.

4. The officers were as follows: chairman: Rev. D.W. Vandeburgt; vice chairman: Rev. A.J. Pol; clerk: Rev. J. Moesker. The chairman congratulated Pastor VanRaalte with the birth of a baby daughter.

5. The agenda was adopted after some changes.

6. There were the following reports.

a. Church for the Inspection of the Books of the Treasurer: The books were reported to be in order.

b. Contact with Provincial Government: Rev. Jonker made arrangements for two ministers enabling them to officiate at the solemnization of marriages.

c. Church Visitors Reports: Reports were brought forward concerning

visits brought to the churches of Carman East, Carman West, and then Grace Canadian Reformed Church and Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg. With thankfulness to God it was concluded that the churches continue to strive to be faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7. Two proposals from Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church were dealt with. The first, which was accepted, concerned minor amendments to the Classical Regulations. The other proposal to approach Classis Alberta for help to finance the Fund for Needy Churches was rejected.

8. Question Period according to Article 44 of the Church Order was held. Nothing special was brought forward.

9. A request for a fireproof cabinet for the archives of classis was approved.

10. Grace Canadian Reformed Church was appointed to be the convening church for the next classis, to be held D.V. at the Grace Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg either on June 4 or October 1, 2001. Suggested officers are: Chairman: Pastor T.G. VanRaalte; vice-chairman: Rev. D. W. Vandeburgt; clerk: Rev. A.J. Pol.


11. Personal Question Period was held. Rev. D.W. Vandeburgt reported that in Denver there has been positive contact with the Calvary United Reformed Church of Loveland Colorado. Two office bearers have been invited to attend the URC Southwest Classis on March 12 as observers.

Rev. Jonker reported that a meeting has been scheduled for March 29th between the consistories of Grace Canadian Reformed Church, Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church and the Providence Reformed Church (URC).

The clerk was requested to take up contact with the treasurer of classis to supply the churches with a report concerning the year 2000 and a current report on the finances of classis.

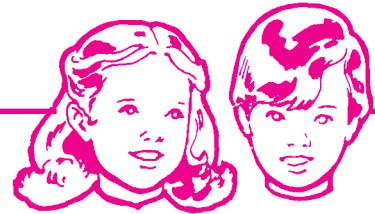
12. Brotherly censure (Art. 34, Church Order) was not necessary.

13. The Acts of Classis were adopted and the Press Release was approved.

14. Rev. D.W. Vandeburgt closed the meeting with prayer. 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

Welcome to another Little Magazine. Does it sometimes seem to you that two weeks is a long time? Do you sometimes think “when are we going to get another *Clarion*, so I can do some more puzzles?” I used to think the same. Waiting can make time seem so long. And yet sometimes two weeks is a very short time. When you are having fun, the time seems to fly away and then you wonder where it has gone. If you go on a vacation, time always seems to disappear in a hurry and your time is already up.

However, you must still remember that the time still comes from God, and no matter how quickly or slowly it goes, you must always have time for Him. He should be most important in our lives, no matter how fast or slow the time goes. Remember that, won't you.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

PUT AN END TO IT!

Complete the group by replacing the blank space.

1. Adam and _____ .
2. Abraham, Isaac, and _____ .
3. Tyre and _____ .
4. Samson and _____ .
5. Cain and _____ .
6. Mary, Martha and _____ .
7. Shadrack, Meshack and _____ .
8. Moses and _____ .
9. Aquila and _____ .
10. Peter, James and _____ .

Puzzles

Fill in the Gaps

by Busy Beaver *Jolene Breukelman*

Behold, I am coming soon. _____ is he who keeps the words of the _____ in this book. Rev 22:7.

The _____ and the _____ say, “_____!”
And let him who hears say, “_____”

Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever _____, let him take the free gift of the _____ of _____ Rev 22:17.

He who _____ to these things say, “Yes, I _____” Rev 22:20.

Starting with the bold “O” in line 4, find out what the message is in this puzzle.

A	G	A	Z	S	F
M	T	T	I	I	U
E	L	I	N	E	N
S	O	L	R	O	F
R	U	R	B	U	S
E	V	A	E	B	

Murders

The people in the first column were responsible for the deaths of the people in the middle column.

Match the murderer with the murdered and then the reason for the murder.

- | | | | |
|--------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Cain | Genesis 4:4-8 | a. Amnon | a. Offering |
| 2. David | 2 Samuel 11:3-12 | b. Urijah | b. Revenge |
| 3. Joab | 2 Samuel 3:30 | c. Abel | c. Throne |
| 4. Benaiah | 1 Kings 2:29,34 | d. Uriah | d. Prophecy |
| 5. Absalom | 2 Samuel 13:22,28-29 | e. Joab | e. Persecution |
| 6. Pekah | 2 Kings 15:23-25 | f. James | f. Solomon's instructions |
| 7. Herod | Acts 12:1-2 | g. Doeg | g. Hatred |
| 8. Ahimelech | 1 Samuel 22:16,18 | h. Pekahiah | h. Bathsheba |
| 9. Jeroiakim | Jeremiah 26:20-23 | i. Abner | i. Saul's instructions |
| 10. Jael | Judges 4:18-22 | j. Sisera | j. Enemy |



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