

Volume 52, No. 7  
March 28, 2003

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE



*NAPARC in session*

## INSIDE:

- *The Calling Process*
- *Christ's Compassionate Cleansing Power*





By J. De Jong



## The Calling Process

### Some concerns

Recently there have been some questions and discussions concerning the calling process among our churches. There is no doubt that we are faced with somewhat of a quandary on this point. We have a candidate ready for call, but calls are not forthcoming. We also have churches that are vacant, making use of regular pulpit supply, but not getting involved in the calling process.

The reason for delays in the calling process can be legitimate, but the real question for a consistory is: what is the best for the congregation? Regular pulpit supply may help cover the preaching, but it does not provide the assistance needed with regard to the pastoral work in the congregation. The end result is that in many ways the congregation is left shortchanged.

*The churches should then seriously consider calling these young men for work in the congregations.*

Vacant churches should reflect seriously on the manner in which they are exercising their calling options. It is true that the person called should be examined in terms of his suitability for the congregation. There must be a proper "fit" if you will. But on the other hand, it is unwise on the part of a consistory to sit back and wait until the right person comes along. The idea is: choose from the pool and make the best of what you have!

### Ongoing training

The Theological College trains young men to be effective pastors in the congregations. If these young men properly complete their work, and pass their classical examinations, they become ministers of the word. The churches should then seriously consider calling these young men for work in the congregations. Here and there I have heard the argument: even with the training these young men have received, sometimes there's one or two that just don't have it! But this argument is flawed and needs more reflection.

To be sure, once a student graduates and passes the examinations for eligibility, he is not as yet an experienced preacher. Indeed, we have programs that assist the students in the preaching process. They have the right in their last year to apply for speaking an edifying word. We also have the Pastoral Training Program, a program in which Rev. J. De

Gelder of Flamborough coordinates to aid the students on the practical side of the training. These are all avenues implemented to aid the student as he heads for the pastorate.

Yet the pastorate itself in its initial stages is also a learning process. No one should underestimate the importance of the first consistory in the life of a young minister. The first consistory is indeed also a teaching team, and lays a foundation that will affect the young minister for the rest of his career. And this should be a joyful service for a team of elders! For the idea is that you as elders mould the candidate towards effective service.

I suspect that too often consistories think that once the student graduates, he is fully trained, and thus can fully manage on his own. Certainly, the candidate should be able to put a sermon together, and should know his Bible and confessions. But the key element on the practical side is dealing with pastoral issues, working as a team, providing leadership in harmony, and learning the ropes of the broader ecclesiastical processes, that is, classis, regional synods, and so on.

The first pastorate is in a sense an extension of the learning process. Elders who call a candidate who is entering the ministry must see their role as different from a consistory calling a minister who has been in service for many years. A new candidate needs training and guidance on the practical side. It is often wise to appoint one or two elders to monitor a new minister's development, and interact with him occasionally with regard to his progress in the congregation. Issues relating to his work come up at consistory meetings, but a more in-house rapport with the new minister has its own value as well.

*The right man is not something preordained, but something that develops over time.*

Of course, the minister must be there for his consistory and for his congregation. As he develops his rapport with the congregation, issues that he deals with will also be reflected more in his preaching. At the same time, the monitoring process which has a one on one basis can be very helpful for young ministers in their first years.


### Too selective?

Sometimes consistories hold back with the calling process because they want to be sure that they get the right man for their congregation. And indeed there must be a good

fit. Every candidate is not suited for every church. However, there must also be some leeway in this process, and the deliberations should not be too rigid. The right man is not something preordained, but something that develops over time. It's a learning process on both sides: for the new minister and for the consistory. And as the process develops, the rapport with the congregations grows.

Therefore churches should not hang back in a skeptical way with regard to new candidates. Let the churches get involved and continue with the training! I can speak from experience! As a minister I learned a lot at the College, but I learned a lot more on the practical side when I started in the ministry! Elders and deacons should also see themselves as trainers for ongoing ministry.

We are thankful that the College has the support of the churches. It is an important task to train young men to be effective servants in God's kingdom for ministry, mission and outreach. But the churches can continue the process with a helping hand. The calling process is in a sense an extension of the training. It's the time when you get hands-on training!

Therefore I hope the churches will not ignore our plea. If you see candidates that at first do not seem suitable, don't just shy away from them. Hold an interview and weigh the situation! Give it a try and participate in their further development! In the end you may be surprised at their progress! 

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## What's inside?

The editorial is written by the professor of diaconiology and ecclesiology at our Theological College: Dr. J. De Jong. He makes a plea to vacant churches to consider calling students who have graduated from the College and have not yet received a call. No student comes from the College with all the skills and maturity sought in a minister. But with the right guidance in a local congregation, he can grow. There is some food for thought here.

Some students who are finished at the College do not receive calls. Others who have been ordained do not always find life in the ministry an easy one. I remember Dr. J. Faber saying to me when I entered the College: "You choose a beautiful work, but not an easy one." We have an article from a sister in anguish over the treatment of some ministers. Again, food for thought.

In connection with the College, we also find an article by Margaret Van der Velde who is a librarian at the Theological College, and press release of a recent board meeting of the College.

Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff completes her two part series on Klaas Schilder and his discussion on the creation and flood. It becomes clear that Dr. Schilder's primary concern is the legitimate use of exegesis when dealing with these parts, and for that matter, any part of Scripture.

Rev. K. Jonker supplies us with his first impressions of NAPARC, and of a copy of his speech delivered there.

We have two letters to the editor, and a meditation by Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer.

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Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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Email: [clarion@premier.mb.ca](mailto:clarion@premier.mb.ca)

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Advertisements: \$13.00 per column inch

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Publication Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

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Agreement No. 1377531

PAP Registration No. 9907

ISSN 0383-0438

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By P.H. Holtvlüwer

## Christ's Compassionate Cleansing Power

*"... Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' And immediately the leprosy left him."  
Luke 5:12-16*

There he came, walking slowly down the street toward the Lord Jesus. "Unclean, unclean!" he shouted, as he made his way through the crowds which parted before him like the Red Sea. Covered with leprosy, here was the village outcast making his way to meet the Lord.

This is the frightening scene that opens our text. Perhaps this does not scare you at first. We do not likely know anyone with leprosy nor have we heard of recent outbreaks. For us, leprosy does not quickly evoke horror.

But what if our text read that the man was "full of cancer?" We would then immediately know how serious this man's condition is, for cancer in our day is mostly an incurable disease – especially if we are full of it. And many of us know people who have suffered greatly from cancer. We have seen them lying in hospital beds, wasting away so that there is hardly anything but skin and bones left of them. Cancer is a horrible, painful, debilitating, and eventually terminal disease.

Well, in a manner of speaking, leprosy was the cancer of the ancient world. As a skin disease, it was debilitating and deadly. Leprosy was greatly feared in the ancient world for there was no known cure. Like cancer today, it was most often terminal and so it was known as a disease of death.

But that's not all. To make matters worse, leprosy was a highly visible disease and it was highly contagious – or at least it was believed to be. Today someone might be walking around with cancer in his body and no one would know, maybe not even the person himself, for years on end, but with leprosy the skin broke out in sores, welts, and rashes.

Our text says this man was "covered with leprosy" – you could tell he was a leper from a mile away. Over time leprosy had the tragic effect of causing nerves to effectively cauterize and muscles to cease. Because a leper felt no pain in these areas, he regularly unwittingly suffered further injury, often losing fingers and toes. One writer describes this disease as living a "painless hell." Leprosy was a living picture of the consequences of sin.

But for this leper, the situation was still worse for it affected his covenant relationship – both with the LORD and his people. You see, a leper was pronounced by the priest to be "unclean" in the sight of God and that is truly a horrible thing, for no unclean person could approach the holy God. Nor could he live among his brethren.


God made this clear in Leviticus 13:45, "The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, 'Unclean, Unclean!' As long as he has the infection, he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp." The leper became a highly visible, highly audible social outcast – cut off from communion with God and cut off from communion with his people. He was totally alone, living his painless hell outside the camp.

How amazing, then, to read the response of our Lord to the leper's plea for cleansing in verse 13, "Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man." Imagine what this would have meant to this leper, who had lived in isolation for so long. For years this man would have felt no human touch, certainly not from a clean person, a fact that only would have heightened his loneliness

and despair. But now Jesus deliberately reaches out his hand and touches him! That one action sent an incredible message of hope to the leper – here was the Lord, the great Healer, reaching out and touching him!

And with that extended hand, we see the essence of what the Son of God came to do – he reached out to join Himself to our condition. Sent by the Father, Christ came to take on our sin and all its consequences – also the diseases and the handicaps. We see in this touch the tremendous compassion of the Lord Jesus who, though He was holy in every way, associated with and even identified with the most unclean of Israel – even the lepers. Christ reaches out and brings this man back into communion again with his God and his fellow man: "I am willing, be clean!"

Can you imagine observing this miracle? The blotched skin becomes clear! The severed fingers grow back! The rotting flesh becomes whole and white again! The ceased-up muscles become loose and all nerves are restored to full feeling again – the man is made whole in an instant of time! As devastating as the disease was, even more powerful is the One who has conquered sin and its consequences – the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Lord Jesus is willing to heal, He is willing to cleanse, and in his time and on that great Day of the Lord, He will cleanse us from every consequence of sin. In Christ we have, just as the leper did, a total cleansing by his compassionate power. 

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# Klaas Schilder on Creation and Flood (Part 2)

By F.G. Oosterhoff

## The days of creation

We continue with Schilder's defence of the Reformed theologians who had been accused of wrongly interpreting the creation account. The accusation, as we saw in the previous article, was made by supporters of Dr. J.G. Geelkerken, the man whose views on Genesis 2 and 3 had been condemned by the Synod of Assen of 1926. One of Geelkerken's champions, the Rev. J.L. Jaspers, responded to the Synod's decision by means of an anonymous pamphlet. Herein he argued that various members of the Synod (people he referred to as "the men of Assen") lacked the moral authority to judge Geelkerken, since they themselves departed from the literal teaching of Scripture. He based his accusation on the fact that according to these theologians the days of creation may not have been 24 hours in length.

Schilder introduced this particular controversy as follows (see pp. 39-46 of his brochure): Jaspers knows that there are people who do not consider the days of Genesis 1 to have lasted 24 hours, or who at least dare not state with absolute certainty that the author of Genesis 1 intended that meaning, and who therefore in principle admit the possibility of those days having been periods of unknown length. This leads him (Jaspers) to the following conclusion: Assen says that Geelkerken must read literally what the Bible states. Anyone, however, who does not interpret the word "day" in Genesis 1 as a 24-hour period (not a second more, not a second less), does not read literally. And therefore, those among the "men of Assen" who hold that position are guilty of placing a burden on Dr. Geelkerken which they themselves refuse to touch. Nor is that all. Assen's verdict in the

Geelkerken case implies that such men are themselves assailants of the authority of Scripture.

In his reply, Schilder challenges Jaspers' statement that Synod Assen has spoken of "the normal literal interpretation of Holy Scripture," pointing out that Assen did not and could not have done so. In fact, it admitted that there are statements in Scripture, also in the paradise account, that one cannot take "literally." Anthropomorphisms (such as descriptions of God's actions in human terms) can serve as an example. The issue between Assen and Geelkerken,

*When interpreters submit to Scripture, they may disagree on certain matters (such as the length of the days of creation), but their differences remain within the realm of exegesis.*

Schilder says, was not between "literal" and "non-literal" in this sense. It was about the interpretation of events that the Bible (in Genesis 2 and 3) clearly describes as historical and factual, as having occurred in the time and space of our common reality, but that Geelkerken believes can be interpreted as non-historical and non-factual, as allegorical or symbolic representations of a "higher reality."

And that, Schilder says, is different from what is at issue in the dispute regarding the days of Genesis 1. For none of the "men of Assen" promoted a non-historical or non-factual interpretation of these days. All agreed that creation took place *in time and space*; that the days, whether or not they lasted 24 hours, were periods of real

time (p. 40). "A day of 24 hours or of 25 hours, of 240 hours or of 2400 hours, and so on," he says, such a day is still a period of time and of our normal, real world; it is by no means a matter of a "higher reality." On the other hand, when Geelkerken says that "that tree. . . is not to be understood as a tree, and that 'eating' was perhaps no eating at all, and so on, then we have an altogether different situation from the one wherein one says: the six days were periods, measurable in time; we differ on the question whether they were periods as we measure them now or whether they were of a different measurement. But they certainly were periods in time, fragments of time" (pp. 42f.). This interpretation, he adds, cannot be compared with that of Geelkerken, which treats of historical events as non-real (*oneigenlijk*) and non-factual.

Another point Schilder raises is that of biblical warrant for one's interpretation. Jaspers complained in his brochure that Geelkerken was told that Scripture must provide the grounds and justification for his exegesis, but that the men who held the disputed view on the days of creation did not themselves base their conclusions on Scripture. Schilder challenges this statement. The exegesis of these men, he says, may well have been incorrect, but that is not at issue here. What counts is that they *tried* to prove that their viewpoint was warranted by Scripture, something Geelkerken did not do with his teaching of a "higher reality" (p. 43). Schilder tells his readers, as he has done before, that in the matter of the days he does not take sides and that, in any event, his own position is irrelevant. For even the most determined opponent of the view that the days were not 24 hours in length will agree with him, he says,



that in principle justice is done to Scripture if in our exegesis we meet the following three conditions:

1. that not a single notion is allowed to enter our believing thought unless we truly believe that we may derive it from Scripture or can reconcile it with Scripture;
2. that extra-biblical scholarly research may never be the norm or standard (*bindende maatstaf*) for our believing thought (it always can and may and indeed must be occasion [*aanleiding*] for a further testing of our insight, since we can be mistaken in saying: thus speaks Scripture;<sup>1</sup> but it may never be the norm or standard; so that, when it is certain that Scripture teaches such and such a thing, no science may ever exalt itself as the judge of Scripture);
3. that the reality whereof one speaks remains the reality of the time wherein we live here on earth with all creatures, and of the space wherein God placed the world (p. 44).

And these conditions, he says, the “men of Assen” met in their speaking about Genesis 1.

*Schilder asks if it is really all that foolish to consider the possibility that our rest- and workweek of seven 24-hour periods is a reflection of the seven divine periods in God’s week of creation and Sabbath rest.*

In view of the foregoing it is irrelevant, Schilder believes, whether in the “incidental case” of the days Jaspers and Geelkerken and their supporters are right and someone else is wrong. The question is and remains *how* the exegete is reasoning, what his position is with respect to the concept of revelation (*openbaringsbegrip*) of Holy Scripture, and whether he is willing or not to bow before Scripture once its express meaning has been clearly established (p. 45). When interpreters do submit to Scripture, they may disagree on certain matters, but their differences remain within the realm of exegesis.

Schilder concludes his remarks on the controversy of the days by asking Jaspers to consider whether it is really all that foolish to accept the possibility that our rest- and workweek of seven 24-hour periods is a reflection of the

seven divine periods in God’s week of creation and Sabbath rest. But then always, he adds, God’s week of working *in time and space* (p. 45).

### Fear of evolutionism

One of the reasons why many Christians cling to the belief that Genesis 1 speaks of ordinary, 24-hour days is the fear that any other interpretation will lead to the acceptance of the theory of evolution. Jaspers also had used this argument. He stated in his pamphlet that the danger of the evolutionary theory infiltrating the Reformed churches was immanent; that in fact the “men of Assen” opened the door to it (p. 47).

Schilder takes issue with Jasper’s view of evolution, which he says is too limited. It is superficial to say that the theory concerns only, or even primarily, the origin and development of the earth and of the species inhabiting it. Evolutionary theories do not stop with geology and biology and other sciences but infiltrate every sphere of life and thought and belief – including the sphere of religion. Especially today, now that the Reformed concept of revelation is at the centre of the spiritual warfare, the most important question is whether the content of Scripture is a revelation which came from above, from God, or whether it derives, in part or in whole, from the milieu wherein the authors lived – specifically the milieu of the ancient oriental world. The question is, therefore, whether Israel’s religion, the biblical doctrine of monotheism, the exalted concept of God, the messages in the first chapters of Genesis regarding man’s original righteousness, his sin, and his redemption in Jesus Christ – whether all this is the fruit of human development or the work of God, a work that He revealed to us. For that reason, he adds, if the question of evolution must be raised, Jaspers should look not only at the “men of Assen” but also at Geelkerken, who, after all, spoke of “oriental light” and an “oriental kind of narrative” in defending his position regarding Genesis 2 and 3 (p. 47).

Schilder does not say that Geelkerken favoured evolution, but neither does he agree that the “men of Assen” promoted it. In connection with this accusation he once again addresses the question as to *how* the interpreter arrives at his exegesis. He answers (as Kuyper and Bavink did before him) that much depends on one’s presuppositions. Someone who accepts evolu-

tion but also wants to retain the Bible will, he says, naturally try to interpret the days as ages, preferably spanning millions of years. But such a person is not led to his acceptance of evolution as a result of his biblical exegesis. The opposite is true: his belief in evolution has led him to his exegesis. It is conceivable that in such a case someone else, who also holds to a day-age interpretation but on altogether different grounds, will be among those who must judge the former. In short, what looks to be the same is not necessarily the same. The one may have come to his conclusion by denying the authority of Scripture, the other by honestly attempting to uphold it (pp. 48f.).

*For Schilder, it seems, the matter of the days as such was neither a life-and-death issue nor the touchstone of a person’s orthodoxy; that it belonged, rather, to the category of “indifferent things.”*

As to the specific threat of evolutionism, Schilder writes:

So long as the “men of Assen” cling to the concept of “creation,” and to the transcendental meaning of “God said,” and to the difference between the first and the second creation, and to the doctrine of the *Logos* [the divine Word], and to the absolute “in the beginning,” and so on – so long as all this is the case, so long will there be a dam that will stop any fundamental turn to the doctrine of evolution (p. 49).<sup>2</sup>

### The Flood

We must look yet at Schilder’s defence of Abraham Kuyper’s exegesis of the flood. Kuyper, we saw, had considered the possibility that the flood had not covered the entire earth. Jaspers attacked Kuyper’s position, insisting that the Bible does not allow for his interpretation, since we read in Genesis 7:19 that “all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered.” Kuyper’s exegesis, Jaspers said, implied the possible survival not only of wild animals but even of human beings. This would mean that the human race did not necessarily come from Noah alone, and that God’s covenant with Noah lost its validity.

Schilder took the controversy seriously, as is evident from the fact that he devoted more space to this topic than to any of the other ones (pp. 15-27). He began by declaring that Jaspers had overstated his case. Kuyper's dilemma had been: either the entire earth was covered, or only the *inhabited* part, which obviously meant the part where the entire human family lived. The part of the earth that perhaps had not been covered was located on the other side of the earth from Noah, namely the area of the Americas and so on, which Kuyper apparently believed were still uninhabited in Noah's days – that is, before the dispersion of mankind at Babel. In any event, he taught expressly that with the exception of Noah and his family all of Adam's living descendants had perished in the flood. Humanity was also according to Kuyper descended from Noah and from him alone (p. 16).

Another problem with Jaspers' account, Schilder noted, was that Jaspers ignored the arguments that can be marshalled in support of Kuyper's position. Kuyper had mentioned that there are other places where the Bible speaks of "the entire earth" when only a part is meant, for example in John 21:25 and Lamentations 4:12. Apparently such hyperbolic speaking was Hebrew usage. Schilder added other examples, such as Acts 2:5, which states that at Pentecost there were Jews in Jerusalem "from every nation under heaven," Deuteronomy 2:25, where Moses is told that "this very day" God would put the fear of Israel "on all the nations under heaven," and Judges 6:40, where we read (in the Dutch *Statenvertaling*) that Gideon's fleece was dry but the entire earth (*de gansche aarde*) was covered with dew (pp. 17f., 21).

Schilder further points out that the Hebrew word used in Genesis 6:7 for "earth" often means not the earth as a whole but only the part that can be or has already been brought under cultivation. He admits that the biblical account creates the impression that the destruction wreaked by the flood was universal, but maintains that for the biblical author "the world" referred to the part of the earth that was inhabited, had a history, and was known to the people of the time. For that reason, to ask whether the earth is meant here as a geographic or a cultural-historical entity is not, he says, an assault upon the authority of Scripture, but simply an attempt to do justice to all the data (pp. 18f.). Nor

was Kuyper the first to consider choosing the second alternative. Schilder mentions that ancient Jewish theologians, as well as Christian thinkers of past and present, have held an opinion similar to Kuyper's. He further tells us that the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) leaves out the adjective "entire" in Genesis 7:19. The theologians of the Synod of Dort who wrote the notes (*Kanttekeningen*) for the Dutch Bible translation, the *Statenvertaling*, did not take sides in this particular issue, but were sufficiently cautious to refrain from commenting on Genesis 7:19. This is remarkable, he says, because in other places they do tend to explain this kind of expression. In any event, it can't be said that Kuyper was an innovator (pp. 18-24).

Schilder shows that Kuyper considered the possibility of a limited flood because he thought that the context required it. Specifically, as we will see, he believed that some animals must have survived the flood. But was Jaspers not right in complaining that such a view directly contradicts the information we receive in the account of the flood?

*Schilder does not try to protect Scripture by looking for arguments by which to refute the theory of evolution. It is clear that for him the Bible does not need that protection. By implication, neither does the believer.*

Don't we read in Genesis 6:13 (*Statenvertaling*): "The end of all flesh has come before my face. . ." (RSV: "I have determined to make an end of all flesh. . .")? Dealing with this complaint, Schilder answers that Genesis 6:13 does not necessarily say what Jaspers thinks it says. To do justice to the text, he says, one has to begin by determining what is meant by the word "end" and the word "flesh." The first word can mean death, but it can also mean (as the Septuagint appears to interpret it) the (remaining) time allotted to all flesh. And the term "flesh" can be translated in a variety of ways. There are places in the Bible where it indeed means all creatures, but elsewhere it refers to human beings alone, or to all *sorts* of human beings, or to the number of people living in a specific area, or to the animals



Declined the call from the church at Carman-East, Manitoba and from Neerlandia, Alberta:

**Rev. P.G. Feenstra**

of Owen Sound, Ontario.

• • •

Retired from active service in Rockway, Ontario:

**Rev. G. Wieske**

as opposed to human beings, and so on (pp. 22f.). The meaning, in short, is not as clear as it seems to be at first sight.

This, Schilder adds, applies also to other texts, such as Genesis 7:14, where we read that "every wild animal according to its kind," "all livestock according to their kinds," et cetera, went into the ark. Referring once again to the *Statenvertaling*, Schilder shows that already according to the *Kanttekeningen* the words "every" and "all" in this text and in similar ones often mean "all sorts of" [*allerlei*]. The same explanation is given of the word "every" in "every kind of food that is to be eaten" in Genesis 6:21 (p. 24). Schilder suggests that one of the reasons why the writers of the *Kanttekeningen* came to their conclusion was the question how there could have been room in the ark for representatives of all the world's animals. In any event, he adds, if the seventeenth-century theologians who wrote the *Kanttekeningen* were allowed to attempt connecting the various biblical data while bowing before the authority of Scripture, Kuyper should not be condemned for attempting to do the same (p. 25).

For Kuyper also chose among the possibilities which he believed the Bible allowed. Specifically, he thought that Genesis 9:5 (the ordinance protecting man against animals) demanded an exegesis allowing for the survival of wild animals in non-cultivated parts of the world. Schilder does not agree that Genesis 9:5 makes Kuyper's exegesis of a limited flood necessary. But he also points out that Kuyper was not dogmatic about it. He spoke only of the *possibility* of a limited flood, and stated

that certain parts of Scripture do not *force* us to accept one interpretation over another. And he certainly did not deny the historicity of the flood, the ark, and so on, or the truly catastrophic nature of the event; Jaspers was therefore mistaken in stating that Kuiper gave a “non-factual” exegesis. Nor did Kuiper come to his exegesis for extra-biblical reasons, even though he believed that in retrospect (*achteraf*) his position was confirmed by extra-biblical data – fossils, height of the mountains, construction of the narrative, and so on (pp.19, 25-7).<sup>3</sup>

Kuiper’s exegesis may well have been erroneous, Schilder says, but the question is not whether Kuiper (or anyone else) has made mistakes in attempting to interpret Scripture, but

whether one places oneself above the Bible. . . and allows one’s own insight to dictate what the Bible CAN and MAY say – or whether one submits to the Bible itself, and makes one’s own insight captive to it – and in all cases where one does not know what the Bible means, honestly admits: I don’t know, but I prefer to reserve my conclusion, if necessary until after my death, rather than say in my haste that what I read in a certain passage cannot be true, and that therefore I will interpret it according to my own opinion (p. 26).

### Summary and conclusion

So much for Schilder’s arguments. To summarize the main points of the foregoing:

1. It was not Schilder’s purpose to solve the question regarding the nature and length of the days of creation. His goal was to refute the claim that Geelkerken’s symbolic explanation of Genesis 2 and 3 was of the same nature as the exegesis suggested by the “men of Assen” regarding the days of Genesis 1. It was in attempting to demolish that claim that he was forced to deal with the matter of the duration of the days, and that issue, as we have seen, he described as peripheral, incidental. He even refused to give his own opinion on it. That refusal notwithstanding, his statements on the interpretation of the days are extensive and at times explicit. They give us a pretty clear idea of his view on the disputed issue. More importantly, they tell us about the manner in which he believed the controversy on the issue should be resolved.

2. As to his own view on the matter, his defence of the “men of Assen” shows that Schilder was sympathetic toward their exegesis, even if he did not openly endorse it. It is equally clear, however, that in his opinion Scripture does not make evident beyond doubt how the days should be interpreted. Therefore neither Jaspers’ interpretation nor that of the “men of Assen” was to be condemned, unheard, as a violation of scriptural authority. It so happened that the offenders were the people of the ordinary, 24-hour days, but if the tables had been turned and the offenders had been the accused, it is more than likely that Schilder would have come to their defence. (The same may well have been true with respect to the exegesis of the flood.) This suggests that for Schilder the matter as such was neither a life-and-death issue nor *the* touchstone of a person’s orthodoxy; that it belonged, rather, to the category of “indifferent things.”

*Schilder’s approach makes it possible to cease looking at Genesis 1 as a source of endless controversy and receive it for what it is, namely God’s Word to us, his Word of salvation.*

3. Worthy of note is that Schilder does not allow the theory of evolution to influence his exegesis one way or another. He does not attempt to accommodate the Bible to the evolutionary theory, but neither does he try to protect Scripture by looking for arguments by which to refute the theory. It is clear that for him the Bible does not need that protection. (By implication, neither does the believer. As article 5 of the Belgic Confession teaches us, the Christian’s faith in the authority of Scripture rests on better foundations.)<sup>4</sup>

4. The all-important thing for Schilder was one’s attitude toward Scripture as God’s revealed Word. For him not science, but the Bible provides the guidelines for biblical exegesis. At the same time he tells the exegete neither to ignore the findings of science nor to underestimate them. Whether they are believers or not,

scientists come with insights that can, as history has shown, truly help our understanding of the Bible.

5. Schilder by no means provides answers to all the many questions that surround the relationship between Genesis 1 and the conclusions of science. It is only fair to say, however, that he never promised to do so. He would be the last person to claim, for example, that a mere “stretching” of the days of creation would resolve the “conflicts” between faith and science in this particular instance. As the above makes clear, his goal was a different and more limited one. It was to reduce the disagreements regarding the days of creation to exegetical differences and so remove a source of conflict among believers. It is this goal especially that makes it worth our while, I believe, to pay attention to his work. An additional benefit is that by following his lead we can cease looking at Genesis 1 as a source of endless controversy and receive it for what it is, namely God’s Word to us, his Word of salvation.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>And therefore, Schilder writes, Geelkerken was not condemned for asking whether as a result of further research, biblical interpreters may not some day have to ask themselves, “Have we perhaps said too quickly that this or that is definitely the teaching of Scripture?” (p. 46).

<sup>2</sup>As for Schilder’s own conservative exegetical approach, see his recent biographer J.J.C. Dee, *K.S. Zijn leven en werk*, I (Kampen, 1990), p. 159, as well as P. Veldhuizen, *God en mens onderweg. Hoofdmomenten uit de theologisch geschiedbeschouwing van Klaas Schilder* (Leiden, 1995), p. 54.

<sup>3</sup>For a brief and lucid treatment of the age-old question regarding the extent of the flood, see Carol A. Hill, “The Noachian Flood: Universal or Local?” in *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, September 2002, pp. 170- 83.

<sup>4</sup>Which is of course not to say that the exegete should not examine and attempt to refute explanations which are contrary to the meaning of Scripture. But that’s a different matter.



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# First Impressions of NAPARC

By K. Jonker

## Ecumenical alliances

In our ecclesiastical world we use many abbreviations. We are all familiar ones such as CanRC, URCNA, OPC, RCUS and GKN (lib). When we turn to the ecumenical scene, the abbreviations become more puzzling. Ecumenical alliances are, for example, ICRC, WCC, REC, WARC, NAPARC. Respectively the latter abbreviations stand for International Conference of Reformed Churches, World Council of Churches, Reformed Ecumenical Council, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council.

Our federation is a charter member of the ICRC, which started in 1982 in Groningen, Netherlands. The ICRC is a conference of Reformed Churches around the world held once every four years. Subsequent meetings have been held in Scotland (1985), Canada (1989), The Netherlands (1993), Korea (1997) and the USA (2001). The next conference will, the Lord willing, be held in the Republic of South Africa in 2005. The observant reader has discovered that the ecumenical alliances do not have the name "synod" or "assembly" in their names. They are called "conference" or "council," the reason being that they are not decision making ecclesiastical bodies. They are ecumenical meetings, which function like a platform where the delegates meet face to face to discuss matters pertaining to ecclesiastical fellowship among the churches. Their conclusions are sent to the churches as recommendations and not as binding decisions. Of course, an important objective of an ecumenical council or conference is to express unity of faith. The ICRC mentions this unity as number one of its purpose: to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ. In the basis of NAPARC (see sidebar) the consequence of unity of faith is crystal clearly expressed, namely that NAPARC is a platform to

"hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice."

## Member of the ICRC and not of NAPARC

While the ICRC is an international ecumenical body, the NAPARC is a council of North American Reformed/Presbyterian churches. NAPARC started in 1975 with the membership of the CRC (Christian Reformed Church), the OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church), the PCA (Presbyterian Church in America), and the RPCNA (Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America). The sidebar shows those who are presently member churches of NAPARC. The American Korean member church has ties with the Hapdong churches in Korea.

Our Canadian Reformed federation is a member of the ICRC but not of the NAPARC. This can be explained as follows. Our churches have been closely involved in establishing the ICRC as a truly Reformed alternative for the WCC and REC. In the past we could not join NAPARC since we had a conflict with one of its important charter members, the CRC. That's why for years we have ignored NAPARC. However, this situation has changed because of the termination of CRC's membership. Furthermore, two member churches, the OPC and the RCUS are now our sister churches. Our churches received gentle encouragement from these churches to attend NAPARC. That's the reason why Synod Neerlandia 2001 allowed the CCCA "to send an observer, at its own discretion, to future meetings of NAPARC to investigate its usefulness and possible membership in this organization" (Acts 2001, Art. 74,5.7.).

## Observing NAPARC 2002 November meeting

In November 2002, three members of the CCCA, the brothers W.



Gortemaker (from Winnipeg Redeemer), Rev. K. Jonker (from Winnipeg Grace), and A. Poppe (from Carman West), travelled to North Carolina to meet with the Inter Church Relations Committee of the RCUS. A separate report is made of this meeting with the RCUS regarding Synod's mandate to continue discussion with them about the Sunday observance, etc. (see Neerlandia Acts 2001, Art. 59, 5.11.). Time and meeting place were convenient since NAPARC would meet on Nov. 12 and 13, 2002.

In this article our first impressions of NAPARC are given. In the future we hope to give some more information about the history, about the member churches and about NAPARC's position in the spectrum of ecumenical bodies.

In 2002 the annual Council meeting of NAPARC was held at the Bonclarken conference centre in Flat Rock, NC. This 28th NAPARC meeting started on Tuesday Nov. 12 at 1:30. Its chairman was Rev. Jack J. Peterson from the OPC. On the evening of this day Prof. D. Kelly (from Reformed Theological Seminary) spoke to the delegates about the distinctives of Southern Presbyterians. The next day Wednesday Nov. 13, NAPARC reconvened at 8:30. At about 11:00 a.m. the meeting was over.

This council meeting dealt with the following agenda items: reports of member churches, reports of observers, report about the various distinctives of the member churches, the membership position of the CRC in NAPARC, the Report Women in the military, and the reception of the ERQ as member church.

The roll call showed that all member churches were represented. Each member church may send four delegates.

ARPC, OPC and RCUS had four delegates; KAPC had three and PCA as well as RPCNA had each two delegates present. This makes a meeting with a total of nineteen official representatives of the member churches.

Four observer churches were present: Canadian Reformed Churches (three delegates, L'Eglise Réformée du Québec (two delegates), the Presbyterian Reformed Church (two delegates), and the United Reformed Churches of North America (one delegate).

In a very expedient way this meeting of NAPARC dealt with its agenda. After each church had given a report of their actual church life with its joys and concerns, a member of the NAPARC commended the reporting church in prayer to God. Observer churches received also the opportunity to report about their churches and to address the council. Our address is published separately in *Clarion*.

At this NAPARC meeting all the member churches reported that their General Assembly or Synod agreed with NAPARC's action to terminate the membership of the CRC. This caused much grief to the meeting as it was expressed in prayer, asking the Head of the church for a change of hearts in the CRC so that they might return to the true tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in their confessions.

The proposal to accept the ERQ into the membership of NAPARC was unanimously accepted. Pending the approval of two-thirds of the Synods/General Assemblies of member churches, the ERQ will be seated as member at the 2003 NAPARC meeting.

The expelling of the CRC from – and the acceptance of the ERQ into membership show that the individual member churches play a decisive role in determining which churches are and will be admitted to NAPARC! The next meeting will be hosted by the RPCNA and will be held on Nov. 11,12, 2003 in Pittsburgh, PA.

Finally, two interesting points should be mentioned: The OPC announced that they hope to have face-to-face meetings with all the member churches in NAPARC. They expressed the desire to discuss the divergences with their other NAPARC member churches as they have been doing with the Canadian Reformed Churches! The PCA came with a proposal to organize a Calvin celebration in 2009 on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth date.

## Conclusion

We could observe that the various delegates enjoyed each other's fellowship. There was a sincere interest in each other's churches. However, at the moment, NAPARC seems to us nothing more than a meeting platform of various churches which have contact with one another but which are still going their different ecclesiastical ways. There is an attempt to speak about all the different distinctives. However, this attempt has not come any further than to take stock of the differences and file them.

NAPARC will become really interesting for us when this Council starts to evaluate and to discuss the divergences between the member churches in the light of Scripture and Confessions. Our Canadian Reformed federation must decide whether we want to contribute to that discussion passively as an observer church or actively as a member church.



*Rev. K. Jonker is a member of Synod's Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas – CCCA.*

### Member churches of NAPARC are:

Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church	ARPC
Korean-American Presbyterian Church	KAPC
Orthodox Presbyterian Church	OPC
Presbyterian Church in America	PCA
Reformed Church in the U.S.	RCUS
Reformed Presbyterian Church of NA	RPCNA

*NAPARC meets once a year in the month of November*

### Basis:

Confessing Jesus Christ as only Savior and Sovereign Lord over all of life, we affirm the basis of the fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches to be full commitment to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God written, without error in all its parts and to its teaching as set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms. That the adopted basis of fellowship be regarded as warrant for the establishment of a formal relationship of the nature of the council, that is, a fellowship that enables the constituent churches to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with one another and hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice.

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# Introduction of the Canadian Reformed Churches at NAPARC

By K. Jonker

## First some statistics

Our federation was formed in the early fifties by Reformed Dutch immigrants to Canada who could not find an existing church federation to join. In the fifty years of existence our churches have grown to a membership of about 15,500 members of whom more than half are non-communicant members. So we have a lot of young people! There are fifty-one Canadian Reformed congregations with forty-five active ministers and six full time missionaries working abroad and also in Canada. Our churches maintain their own Theological College in Hamilton with four professors.

*Our churches want to be the pillar and foundation of the truth and only the truth.*

Our churches maintain ecclesiastical fellowship with the *Free Reformed Churches of Australia*, the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*, the *Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika*, the *Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koshin)*, and *The Free Church of Scotland*.

On the American continent, the Reformed Church in Brazil (IRB), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) are our sister churches. Now, one federation in North America is more than a sister church. With the United Reformed Churches (URCNA) we are on the way to full *federative* union. In the so-called "Phase 2" process, both churches shall assist and consult each other on matters listed in the Acts of our Synods 2001; the churches shall open their pulpits for each other and receive their members at the Lord's Table; and the churches shall invite and receive each others delegates at the *broader* assemblies.

Furthermore, we are a founding member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). The ICRC is a useful vehicle to practise our biblical and ecumenical calling in this world. In the ICRC we meet Reformed sister-churches, which are Reformed churches we have recognized as true and faithful. We also meet other churches with which we have contacts, and still other churches which send observers and are not members yet.

Finally, our close contact with the *Eglise Réformée du Québec* (ERQ) should be mentioned. With these churches we are positively working toward formalizing a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship. Our churches are encouraged to support the ERQ financially, when needed. The Canadian Reformed Church at Owen Sound (Ontario) has very close contact with the ERQ congregation at St. Georges.

## Some of our distinctives

Our churches have a strong link with the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands our Covenant God preserved his church in a special way. While the very roots of the Reformed faith are in Germany and Switzerland (in Heidelberg and Geneva) the Lord protected the Reformed faith especially in the Low Countries, making them faithful in safeguarding the Reformed heritage. God richly blessed the work of the renowned International Synod of Dordt of 1618-1619. Throughout the centuries, the Reformed faith has been under attack, and the GKN in the Netherlands is not an exception in this respect. At the moment our sister churches suffer heavily under the evil attacks of post-modern secularization. We pray that the Lord will grant them firmness and steadfastness to remain faithful to their Reformed heritage.

As I said, in the past, the Head of the church made our Dutch sister churches persevere. This especially happened by the church struggle of the 1940s. Then the Liberated Churches rejected wrong teachings especially regarding the covenant and the church, and wrongly applied church polity. We are thankful that we still reap the benefits of this faithful struggle. It has made us more strongly anti-hierarchical. Our churches want to be the pillar and foundation of the truth and only the truth (1 Tim 3). We show this by being unapologetic in upholding God's Word as the inspired truth of God, and binding our membership to the Reformed Confessions, also called the Three Forms of Unity, which are a clear summary of the truth, and therefore the expression of our unity.

We impress upon our people that we should be the best citizen the nation has, pursuing our political calling as expressed in the Belgic Confession article 36, and promoting the honour of God in civil matters. On the labour scene, our churches take the following

*A confession is not a mere historical document.*

stance. We find that the methods, practices and ideologies of today's secular and violent trade unions conflict with the teaching of God's Word. That's why we believe that membership of a revolutionary trade union and church membership are incompatible. Thankful people of the Lord must place all their trust in the heavenly Father, withdrawing it from all creatures (Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 94,125). Our members request exemption from union membership and pay the equivalent of union dues to a charitable organization of their choice.



As part of our Reformed heritage, we expect that members send their covenant children to a Christian school where education takes place in agreement with our confessions.

### Confessional membership

How do we adhere to our confessions? A confession is not a mere historical document. Neither is it the mere expression of the faith of our forefathers. *A confession is the church's faithful response to the living Word of God.* When members express agreement with this confession then we witness the work of God (Matt 16:17). Through its confessions the church wants to be obedient to the apostle's admonition to "guard what has been entrusted" to her (1 Tim 6:20). Now Scriptures are inspired but the confessions are not. The confessions don't have divine authority. They have, what I would call: ecclesiastical authority. They are not just man-written documents. No! The eyes of the church, so to speak, have gone over the confessions and the church has found that the confessions are a faithful summary of what the Bible teaches. That's why we bind each other to the confessions and cherish them as "Forms of unity!"

With some of your membership churches, we share confessional membership. This means that church members and office bearers alike bind themselves to the Three Forms of Unity. So, we don't allow scruples. We don't use vague statements like subscribing "to the system of doctrine." No, in our official language we closely keep to what we confess. That's why we e.g. do not speak about the church as the visible "institutional church," and the invisible "spiritual church" of all the elect.

In fact we do not use those theological distinctions in our official documents as our RCUS brothers very well know. We find that through such philosophical or speculative distinctions the clear sight on the church of Christ is darkened. Distinctions have the inherent danger that they will take a life on their own. Then the one church of Christ gets divided into an "institutional church" with its offices, committees, regulations and procedures. That church, often seen as an organized denomination of like-minded people, is not as important as the "invisible church" taken as the essential church.

### Rejection of "pluriformity"

Therefore, our confession speaks against an opinion like the following (the

so-called Kuyperian pluriformity theory): "although it is not possible to have full church union with others who belong to differing churches, yet we can freely exercise communion with them; we can even open the Lord's table to them for we all are part of the invisible church."

Members of differing churches come together and want to work together for God's church. One of the aims of their meetings is: to have fellowship, to enjoy the communion of saints with one another. But we believe that our confession speaks against such thinking and activity. We are obliged to maintain the unity of the true church, submitting to the same doctrine and discipline.

*Indeed, this unity must be in truth, testifying that the church of Christ is truly catholic as it is spread out and dispersed over the whole of the earth.*

Of course, we cannot and do not want to deny a certain affinity with other sincere Christians, like Baptists, Free Evangelicals, or an organization like "Focus on the Family." But our Reformed Confession objects to the presentation of such an affinity as if it would be a full union and communion between true Christians. It is not. And in this regard to talk about "branches" of the church, or about different parts as "denominations" is not our confessional language.

Christians in free groups and in para-church movements are called to join themselves with the church Christ is gathering. All true believers are called to accept his work and to maintain the unity of his church. That's the call we must extend to them.

### Don't be arrogant!

Adhering to our confession are we now saying: we are the only ones who are saved and all other Christians, who have joined other churches, are condemned? Thinking and saying this is indeed a danger, in which we easily can fall. Never must we say: our church is the only true church and everyone who does not belong to us is lost. Our fathers never judged in this way. They were convinced that those who stayed in the unfaithful church acted contrary to the ordinance of God. They were disobedient. Our fathers, however, knew (and we do with them) that God's grace is

over the disobedient. Many will be saved who in their remaining weakness have erred in their duty to join the true church of the Lord.

However, does God's grace give us the right to say, oh one does not have to be too strict on church membership; it does not really matter to which church one has belonged, God will forgive him? Such an attitude would be grossly arrogant towards our Lord! In his gospel He has written that it does matter (compare texts about the one body). We must follow Him fully and completely and not people.

Our fathers who seceded from unfaithful churches did not want to leave the church nor did they do this! They – and we with them – remained in the true church for we all want to have everything in Christ as members of his body.

### True ecumenicity

With the courage of faith we want to be active in ecclesiastical contacts and establishing fellowship. However, in doing this we want to maintain our confessional integrity without any scruples. The Lord makes his people agree and confess that the church is his work. He makes the church for Christ's sake. Christ is our Head. Today, we are present as delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches to observe the NAPARC proceedings "to investigate its usefulness and possible membership in this organization." We don't want to compromise our duty or mandate to express God given unity. We must do so "diligently and very carefully from the Word of God."

I hope that the above amply shows that the Canadian Reformed Churches do not shy away from our ecumenical calling, locally, nationally and internationally. In submission to the yoke of Christ "we must serve the edification of the brothers and sisters," according to the talents which God has given us as members of the same body.

Indeed, this unity must be in truth, testifying that the church of Christ is truly catholic as it is spread out and dispersed over the whole of the earth. She must be a faithful witness to *the* faithful witness, the first born from the dead! On his day He will take his faithful church as his bride to himself in eternal bliss!



Rev. K. Jonker is minister of Grace Canadian Reformed Church at Winnipeg, Manitoba.

# COLLEGE CORNER

By Margaret Van der Velde



## From the library

Several years ago a contemporary description of an eleventh-century English monastic library was published by Henry Petroski, in a book entitled *The Book on the Bookshelf*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999, pg. 41) In this library, the librarian doled out one book per year to the brothers of the monastery, giving them an entire year to read and contemplate the contents of the book. During a solemn communal ceremony exactly one year later, with a special carpet rolled out, each man's name was called out by the librarian and the book borrowed the previous year had to be returned. And if the book had not been read, the delinquent brother had to fall on his face and ask for forgiveness. Centuries later it would be hard to imagine a student at the College who would please his professors, or even the librarian, if he admitted to having read only one book during the course of a year!

The "library" is the place where a lot of reading, studying, and word processing occurs. For some students the "library" is at their home, in a room surrounded by books carted home from the library, while for others it really is in the library at the Theological College. Wherever the students choose to study, there is never a lack of material for them to read as they prepare for classes and write papers. In fact students may just wish at times that they lived in the simpler world of reading one book per year!

Today we may chuckle at the idea of reading only one book per year, but of course the world has changed dramatically. Consequently there is a never ending stream of new publications which must be purchased for the library, if the library is to stay current and if the students and faculty are to remain knowledgeable about the new trends and ideas that are being promoted in the world of academia, in seminaries and via popular Christian literature, affecting all of us.

## Organizing the library

Any library requires a great deal of organization, planning, and maintenance,

if it is to be useful and remain accessible to the students. The library at the College is no different than other libraries. Faculty members pore over reviews and catalogues to make suitable suggestions and recommendations for library purchases, books must be ordered, catalogued, processed, and put out on the shelves. And of course there is a constant stack of books which must be returned to the shelves after they have been used, whether the students have read them or not. In a sense, the library is very much at the centre of the College and everyone at the College is a participant in the development and use of the library.

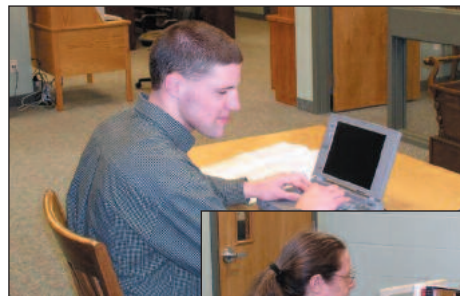
The librarian has been ably assisted over the years by a number of volunteers. Although the names may change, the enthusiasm and dedication that the volunteers exhibit does not change. It is the volunteers who often put the final touches on the books before they are put out in the library, who try to keep control of all those magazines and journals which can become a huge jumbled mess in no time without due diligence, and who help return the books to the shelves. Their assistance

allows the librarian to tackle some of the many other tasks which need attention. If the librarian would roll out a special carpet, it should surely be for the volunteers!

## The big picture

Students are currently in the midst of writing papers, preparing seminars, and reading assigned books. In fact, before too long the 2002-2003 academic year will be history. The activities that take place at the College, including those which are more often than not behind the scenes, are important in themselves, but the real purpose of the College is to give men the training and preparation to become ministers of the Word. The College is grateful that people right across the country and beyond contribute their time and money to help collect funds for the library. And may the Lord continue to bless the students and faculty as they deal with the pressures of reading and studying what seem to be ever increasing amounts of information and knowledge. C

*Margaret Van der Velde is a librarian at the Theological College.*



*Student: Reuben Bredenhof, currently in third year.*



*Mrs. Dini Gootjes*



*Mrs. Harmina Vanderbrugghen*



## Press Release of the Meeting of the Board of Governors (BOG) of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches held on January 23, 2003.

**Opening:** Rev. R. Aasman opened the meeting with the reading of Luke 2:29-36 and led in prayer. He extended a special welcome to Rev. C. Bouwman of the Church at Kelmscott, Australia, who had taken time out from visiting his parents and relatives to attend the BOG. A special welcome was also extended to the new principal, Dr. C. Van Dam.

**Roll Call:** Everyone was present with the exception of Rev. J. Moesker, who was unable to attend due to his move from Carman, Manitoba, to Vernon, British Columbia.

**Minutes of the meeting of September 5, 2002:** They were read and adopted. As business arising from the minutes it was noted that there was no Governance Committee report on the possible legal impediments re official representation at the BOG by the Australian sister churches. This report is expected to be ready by the next BOG meeting.

**Agenda:** The agenda was established after adding a few necessary items to the provisional agenda.

**Academic Report:** The Academic Committee will share its perspective on various matters as they appear on the agenda.

**Reports of visits to Lectures:** The governors who visited the lectures on October 30 and November 8, 2002, could state with gratitude to the Lord that *the lecturers teach their disciplines with erudition*. They were especially thankful to have witnessed that *the professors teach pastorally, i.e., with the ultimate goal of training students for the ministry*. They concluded that *all the lecturers teach in humble submission to Scripture and the Confessions*.

**Governance Committee:** Rev. J. Moesker was appointed to investigate past synodical procedures to come to the appointment of new members to the faculty so that, upon approval of the next synod, a proper formulation on this matter can be inserted in the proposed Board of Governors Handbook. It was

decided to seek feedback from the faculty on the proposed appointment of an evaluation committee and the development of a standard questionnaire. This report is expected to be tabled at the next BOG meeting.

**Correspondence from the Principal:** The Principal informed the secretary of schedule changes on Oct. 29 and Nov. 8, 2002 due to guest lectures by Dr. David Schuringa and Rev. Victor Atallah. In response to a question from the Academic Committee, the Principal reports that there are no fixed criteria for guest lectures. The faculty invites speakers who have known expertise in areas related to the College curriculum.

**Report of Sub-committee:** The report on the feasibility of appointing a fifth professor and the feasibility of integrating the Pastoral Training Program, as mandated by Synod Neerlandia, is expected to be ready by the next BOG meeting. The date for the first draft on this report is set for June 1, 2003.

**Conference Reports:** Dr. C. Van Dam reports on his participation in the 54th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, as well as on his attendance of the Institute for Biblical Research and of the Society of Biblical Literature. All of these meetings took place in Toronto, Ontario. Dr. Van Dam was able to conclude that "the considerable effort expended in attending, listening and debating issues was well worth it. In short order one is brought up to date as to what is happening in academia." He also noted that no lecture hours were missed due to these conferences. Prof. G.H. Visscher filed a report on these conferences as well, and commented that he regards "the attending of such conferences as very worthwhile."

**Report of the Finance and Property Committee:** The Minutes of the meetings held on May 23, August 12, and September 5, were submitted to the Board.

**Communication from the Ontario Government, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities:** This communication gives information re the new regulations under the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act,

2000. The Senate reported that it has studied this document and concluded that it does not apply to the College. However, it added the recommendation to have the Board seek legal advice to verify its conclusion. The Finance and Property Committee is mandated to seek this advice.

**Report to Synod 2004:** In view of the early date of the next Synod (February, 2004) the Board mandated the secretary to prepare a first draft of its report to this Synod by June 1, 2003, and to circulate it among the Board members for input.

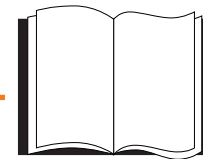
**Australia – Deputies for Training for the Ministry:** The Australian deputies were mandated by their Synod 2000 to make arrangements for a guest lecturer from the Theological College. On recommendation of the Senate it was decided to ask Prof. J. Geertsema to represent the College. The Australian churches offered to pay for the Professor's return airfare. It was decided to fund the return airfare for Mrs. Geertsema so that she may accompany her husband on this trip.

**Question Period:** Dr. C. VanDam was congratulated on his recent contributions to the *Dictionary of the Pentateuch* published by Inter-Varsity Press. It was decided that publications and other important activities of the professors should be mentioned in the annual Principal's Report. Rev. G. Nederveen shared some statistics on the rate of ministerial vacancies among the Canadian Reformed Churches. They underline the need to stimulate young men to prepare themselves for the ministry. The Principal asked whether the governors have any suggestions to make the College better known among the United Reformed Churches. It was decided that the Senate investigate the cost of a monthly advertisement in *Christian Renewal* and to seek authorization with the Finance and Property Committee on the expenditures involved.

**Closing:** Br. G. Nordeman led in thanksgiving and prayer. The chairman, Rev. Aasman, closed the meeting.

For the Board of Governors,  
B.J. Berends





## Please Tell Me I'm Wrong

If you keep your ear to the ground in the Canadian Reformed Churches, it's not hard to hear some persistent rumblings of discontent. Decisions of Synod with regard to contact with other churches are not happily received by all. Young folk and others would like to see changes in the *Book of Praise* and changes to the liturgy, but are not prepared to wait the dozen or so years it might take. Some people simply leave because they are thoroughly fed up with the debilitating and endless controversies in their home congregation. As in politics, when there is persistent unrest, leaders take the brunt of the blame. It often happens that the pastor – there's nothing new under the sun – becomes the lightning rod of all discontent, no matter what the real, underlying congregational issues are. In politics we eventually get a chance to kick our leaders out of office. In the church it doesn't work that way. We can't vote to get rid of our pastors. But of course there are other ways of doing that. So here's a list of suggestions how to get rid of your pastor and at the same time make sure there are no new theological students on the horizon.

1. While you are sitting in church, frown and sigh audibly every time you disagree with the minister.
2. Flip noisily through your Bible and *Book of Praise* (the Three Forms of Unity section especially) to check up whether your pastor is quoting and explaining things properly.
3. Look at your spouse and raise your eyebrows derisively when your pastor mispronounces a word or stumbles over a difficult passage. A nudge with your elbow works just as well.
4. Criticize your minister's sermon right after church while you are standing in your circle of like-minded friends. Comment on his irritating mannerisms and his awkward gait as he walks up to the pulpit.

5. Send your pastor e-mails on Sunday evening or at the latest Monday morning detailing everything you disagreed with in his sermon, pointing out where his exegesis and application were un-Reformed (or too traditional, or too intellectual, or too experiential – take your pick). E-mailing is easier than phoning or visiting in person, and you get to say what you really think without being interrupted or having to speak face to face.
6. Encourage your wife not to socialize with the pastor's wife. Discourage your children from inviting the pastor's children over. While you're at it, make sure your friends' families don't either. Don't offer their teenage children part time or summer jobs. It might send the wrong message.
7. Complain to your district elder that you "are not being fed by the preaching." Make sure he understands that you "don't get anything out of the sermons."
8. Discuss the minister's (and consequently the consistory's) shortcomings frequently – when you have your coffee and cake after the morning service, at Sunday evening social gatherings, at family birthday parties and at your morning coffee breaks at the local doughnut shop.
9. Make sure that you speak your mind at every congregational meeting. Don't worry if people start to cringe or roll their eyeballs when you take the floor. After all, you know that your position is the right one and if they'd just learn how to think properly, they'd realize that.
10. Get groups of like-minded people together and work behind the scenes to get the right men into the consistory – the ones who think like you do.
11. If the right men don't "get in," don't give up, but complain vigorously about every decision the church

council makes. This will keep them from giving leadership in frivolous, non-essential areas like evangelism, youth missions, adult education, and new members' classes. They likely won't get around to family visits either. Ensure that your council keeps the minister on the straight and narrow, that he realizes who's in control. Make sure that the council understands that its most important task is to keep the church pure.

12. If the council doesn't get the message, appeal to classis. If that doesn't do it, follow the church orderly route to the nth degree, making sure you get as many of your people on board as possible. Closely scrutinize any decisions of the broader assemblies to see if they've left any loopholes so that you can appeal your case again and again. This will keep your pastor and council busy with these essential issues and will make sure that you are getting your money's worth out of the church federation budget.
13. Then when you have enough people convinced that your pastor just isn't cutting it, go the Article 11 route. After all that's what it's there for. No congregation should have to put up with a minister they don't like and can't get along with. After all, his preaching might change things in the congregation and that would be too bad, because you and your supporters like things the way they've always been. "I mean, the way we were in the 1950s, or 60s or 70s man, the way we were when we still had Pastor So&So, that was really Reformed. It's just been downhill ever since!"

Sarcasm is awful, isn't it? It hurt me to think this up. It physically hurts me to write it. It makes my heart pound in frustration and sadness. But sometimes sarcasm helps us to see ourselves in sharp relief. I sincerely hope that someone will respond to this article – some

will call it a diatribe – and tell me that I’m all wrong.

Tell me, please, “This is not the way we do things.” Tell me that we can confidently assure our sons and grandsons, “Yes, you should become a pastor. Yes, it is hard work to get there, years of tough study but it’s worth it. There is no more beautiful calling than digging into Scripture and preaching the Word of God week in, week out. There is no more wonderful task than

lovingly shepherding Christ’s flock.” Tell me that our consistories, councils and congregations support, encourage and protect their pastors. Tell me that when our pastors make mistakes – and they will – tell me that we correct them gently, even firmly, but in a constructive manner. Tell me that we are striving for unity of faith in Christ, not uniformity of opinion. Tell me that we truly love being the body of Christ, each member with its significant func-

tion. Tell me that we don’t want a congregation of clones but one in which the Spirit of the living God works out its dynamic unity in diversity. Yes, tell me that we have a dozen young men – well maybe eight – lining up at the registration desk of our Theological College in Hamilton. Maybe then I’ll believe you. Tell me. . . Please, tell me. . . ! I want to be wrong!

Filia Pastoris 

## 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.

### Dear Editor

It was with interest that I read, in our last *Clarion* under “Press Review,” the article by Dr. J. De Jong entitled “A Noble Warrior.” If I understand this article correctly, it was a tribute of sorts to the work of Dr. H. Evan Runner. Although Dr. De Jong does not mention it, we should also remember that it was Dr. Runner and his wife who together translated the well known Dutch book *Verbondsgeschiedenis* by Rev. S.G. DeGraaf into what we know today as *Promise and Deliverance* (four volumes). Let me quote the last line that Dr. Runner wrote in his Translator’s Introduction: “Together with my wife, Elisabeth Wichers Runner, who has spent fully as many hours on this translation as I have, I would like to dedicate our joint endeavour to our children, with the prayer that it may enrich their lives for better service in the Kingdom of God.” It is safe to say that this work of translation coupled with the many “translators notes” has truly benefited all God’s English speaking children that have read and continue to use this work in their ongoing study of God’s living Word.

Norm Schuurman  
Beamsville, ON

### Dear Editor,

The January 31 issue contained an interview with Mr. Martin Vandervelde, a former principal in one of our Christian schools. Assuming the interview is accurate, some of his comments were not upbuilding to parents in our churches who have chosen to fulfill their baptismal vows by educating their children at home. Br. Vandervelde asserts that “Those who home school have lost this: do they really teach Bible history and church history reformedly? Do they present a Reformed view on history and geography?” The questions here are plainly rhetorical. Br. Vandervelde is asserting that all homeschoolers in our churches do not have the capacity to be as Reformed as teachers in our Christian schools. Two points in response:

First, Br. Vandervelde’s comments do not take into account that many of our Canadian Reformed homeschoolers have been teachers in our schools at some point. That being the case, what are the implications of his remarks for our Christian schools? Br. Vandervelde can have his opinion, but neither our Christian schools nor our homeschoolers are edified with the publication of his opinion.

Second, Br. Vandervelde reflects what seems to be a common malaise in our churches: the we-have-arrived syndrome. Being Reformed is to be always reforming. Being a Reformed educator is to be always learning. That goes for Christian school teachers and homeschoolers. To assert that the Christian schools are Reformed, but the homeschoolers have lost something – that is patently unfair. It does no justice to the many homeschoolers in our churches who value their “reformedness” as much as Br. Vandervelde.

We all know that homeschooling is a controversial topic in our churches. The point here, however, is not homeschooling: right or wrong. Rather, our point is that Christian charity and fairness should govern the tone of our discussion. Being Reformed requires that we learn to disagree without flinging insults. “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” Galatians 5:15.

Wes and Rose Bredenhof  
Fort Babine, BC

*The Education Matters column will address this matter in an upcoming issue.*