

A Tribute to Dr. L. Praamsma 1910-1984

In December 1984, Dr. L. Praamsma passed away. His family and friends will miss him. He was a family man, a warm hearted pastor, a scholar, theologian, poet and an outstanding church historian with a rare writing skill. Over the years, through an occasional visit and correspondence, I came to know him as a compassionate friend, a man of deep convictions, honest and outspoken when necessary, concerned about the trends within the Christian Reformed Church he loved and served so faithfully.

Dr. Praamsma was a prolific writer. The first "Praamsma" book I read, while I was a student at the Free University of Amsterdam in the early 1960s was *Het dwaze Gods*, a history of the Reformed churches in The Netherlands since the beginning of the nineteenth century. This book demonstrates his vast knowledge of the Dutch revival that took place after the French Revolution. I had the privilege of reviewing his four volume work *De kerk van alle tyden: Verkenningen in het landschap van de kerkgeschiedenis*, a popular work on church history, the finest in this field. His last book published by Paideia Press is entitled, *Let Christ Be King: The Life and Times of Abraham Kuyper*. Dr. Praamsma was a "conservative" theologian, squarely against women serving in ecclesiastical office. However, in correspondence with me he wrote that he "wouldn't dare to say that this is the breaking point" for the CRC, referring to Calvin's Institutes (IV.i.12). He regretted the departure of the Rev. Van Dyken and Rev. Bout from the CRC. According to Praamsma, they should have stayed within the denomination. He was saddened by the continuous fragmentation within the Reformed faith. In his last letter to me, he referred to John Calvin's correspondence sent to his faithful followers in Geneva, when he was expelled from Geneva and worked in Strassbourg. They wanted a separation. He very seriously warned them against such a step.

In our correspondence we discussed Dr. Willem Bilderdyk and his times and their significance for today. So in tribute to Dr. Praamsma I dedicate to him an article on Dr. Willem Bilderdyk, a brilliant Dutch thinker who became the father of the Dutch revival movement.

Johan D. Tangelder
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