

Do not take words away from this book of prophecy

*Answer to the brochure
'Not beyond what is written'*

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (restored)
Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad

**Mariënberg,
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Supplement 1: Answer to the letter of appeal of the Gkv (translated)

Supplement 2: Report committee synodical decisions of Synods Ommen 1993 to Zuidhorn 2002/2003 accepted by the Synod of Mariënberg 2005/2006.

1. Introduction

In March 2005 the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) (GKv) published a brochure entitled *Not beyond what is written (NBWIW)*. They sent this to the corresponding churches abroad to defend certain decisions made by their last few synods.

What was the reason for this brochure from the GKv? During many years warnings and objections against the decline in the GKv churches accumulated and many appeals regarding different topics were sent to subsequent synods. However, these warnings did not result in a standstill of disputed developments. In the end, attempts were made to return from unscriptural ways by a multitude of requests for revision at the Synod of Zuidhorn. They were rejected by this synod one after the other.

After that synod, a nationwide *call for reformation* went out to the church members in order to try to convince the consistories that a general repentance was necessary. Consistories were asked not to ratify the disputed synod decisions, especially those for which revision was not further possible according to the Church Order because two synods had already dealt with them. Unfortunately, this call was rejected by churches all over the country, leaving the concerned members without any possibility to maintain the Word of God and the Confession as the only basis for the Church within the GKv.

Following the way the Belgic Confession indicates in art. 28, a liberation was necessary to continue the Reformed Churches. Therefore, members liberated themselves from the unscriptural synod decisions and consistories defending them, and formed new congregations. With the institution of the offices, a new bond of churches was established, now called The Reformed Churches (restored).

This series of events was also a clear signal to other churches that something was definitely going wrong in the GKv. While up until 2005 there was almost complete silence in the GKv in response to all the appeals of the concerned people, one began to realize that something had to be done to keep up the challenged image of the GKv. Especially the warnings from the sister churches over the last years had to be responded to.

The brochure *NBWIW* was sent to the sister Churches abroad as well as to our Churches. However, this brochure that is meant to be reassuring about the developments within the GKv alleviates many of the objections, does not do justice to the extreme critical situation.

We ourselves feel the responsibility for helping the other Churches to obtain an honest and fair judgment of the necessity of our Liberation. We already sent to most of them a letter in February 2005, in which we defended the legacy of our Liberation.

In addition to that, we as 'deputies for the relations with Churches abroad' of The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (restored) will respond in this document to many accusations and misinterpretations in the above mentioned brochure *NBWIW*, especially as to the question why a reformation was necessary. This document is written as requested by the Synod of our Churches held in Mariënberg 2005/2006.

We did not leave the church but we continued it as the Body of Jesus Christ because our wish was and is to obey the God of the covenant and his Word.

The Liberation was the ultimate deed, a necessary deed, because all other legal possibilities to remain faithful according to the Word of God had been exhausted.

In one way it was a joyful liberation because the children of God were no longer bound not only by the many unscriptural decisions, but also by the various applied alterations in the liturgy and the superficial sermons in local churches. Developments which were also based on a deviating interpretation of Scriptures.

On the other hand it was a very sad deed, because other members who stood with us side by side decided not to come with us. They are still subject to the destructive but misleading doctrines applied at the church services, at biblestudy-groups, and their children at catechism-classes.

In obedience to our Father in heaven, it is your responsibility to make a judgement, to search the Scriptures to find out whether these things are so (Acts. 17:1). Do not put your trust in men (Ps. 146:3) but look at the facts while praying looking up to our Lord Jesus Christ who will perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you. To Him be the glory and the Dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Pet. 5:10,11).

2. Do not go beyond what is written

In the year 396 Augustine became bishop at Hippo. During that time a lot of the church members were Donatists. People said: if you are a member of the church of Jesus Christ your life must be completely holy. During terrible persecutions Christians sacrificed to the idols to elude martyrdom. They were called apostates. When circumstances improved, they returned to the church. But the Donatists said that this was only allowed if these Christians were rebaptised. Against these Donatists Augustine had to struggle, to struggle for the true faith. Later they started their own churches. And these Donatists said they were the true church, because they were much holier and better than other Christians. They did go beyond what is written.

In 1944 after several years of struggle against a false doctrine regarding baptism and hierarchy, a liberation took place. This occurred after several preachers and other office bearers were suspended. They and other church-members decided not to go to the next classes or synod to ask for revision of the decisions taken, according to art. 31 C.O.

In obedience to Gods Word they decided to liberate themselves from an institute that did go beyond what was written, even in a time of war.

In 1944 the liberated churches were accused of being 'holier than thou'. They were called "de fijnen", "de scherpslijpers", "de intoleranten", "de kerkscheurders" (they were accused of being narrow minded, being quibblers, intolerant, and causing schism).

In 2003, after some ten years of warning and struggle for the true Word of God, after many years of appealing at church-council meetings and synods¹, after publishing many articles which were publicly ignored, again a liberation was necessary. In obedience to Gods Word. And again they did not go beyond what was written.

They did not follow certain preachers, certain synods (1 Cor. 3), but they obeyed God, because He gives the increase.

For the Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. We have the Spirit of Christ (1 Cor 2:10-12).

Within the GKv we were named "club van gelijkdenkers" (club of like minded people), "scheurmakers" (causing schism, Rev. L.E. Leeftink), Donatists (Prof. dr. M. te Velde), tempelschenders (Rev. P. Niemeijer), as "people that have placed themselves outside the church" (Rev. E.A. de Boer).

With Prof. dr. K. Schilder we say: "I do not bind myself to statements from you [the synod], which have not been clearly taken from the Scriptures. I say: No, I do not bind myself to a statement, for which you do not have the courage to say: see, it is stated there and there in the written Word, and thus, it is true. I bind myself to the Forms of Unity, which originate from the Bible, and the rest I throw overboard" (Sermon, August 20th, 1944, K. Schilder: Preken III, Oosterbaan & Lecointre, Goes, 1955, p.17).

According to the Word of God, the Scriptures, we will prove in this brochure that the liberation was necessary. Obedience to Gods Word does not go beyond what is written.

¹ According to the C.O. you have to present your objections at the meeting which was responsible for the decision against which you object.

In fact this should be the only reason in the face of the Lord for liberating yourselves from those who belonged to you, but with whom you can no longer be united..

3. Call for Reformation necessary?

Deputies of the GKv asked in their brochure *NBWTW* the following questions: What happened in 2003? Had a general synod again proclaimed certain opinions as binding? Were ministers suspended for turning down these statements, or were candidates turned away from the pulpit?

It is clear that these questions are related to the Liberation in 1944. Suspension of ministers and office bearers and prohibiting candidates to become ministers, happened in 1944. Deputies will strongly suggest that reformation can only take place when members are suspended or thrown out of the church. That is what happened in 1944. And therefore, nobody is allowed to separate from the church if one is not suspended or if disciplinary actions have not been taken.

According to the situation of 1944 nobody today has thus a right to liberate because no office bearers were suspended in 2003.

However, is suspension of office bearers the only correct breaking point for a liberation?

Not at all. Prof. dr. K. Schilder very clearly bound himself to Gods Word and the Forms of Unity. That was eventually the only appropriate justification.

No one's obedience can be dependant on synods' decisions or on churches that are not willing to suspend or depose certain people, because of their 'opinion'. In a pluralistic church different opinions can exist and will be allowed. There is no need to take drastic measures like suspension, because the truth has become debatable and, as a consequence, relative and subjective. There is now room for many different views. One can have his own personal view. So, there is no compelling reason for enforcement of synod decisions.

In requiring submission or prosecution as an absolute condition for starting a permissible reformation and liberation, the obedience to Gods Word itself is not the criterion for liberation, but rather the way official church-councils will act. Tradition (history, 1944!) will then replace the criterion of God, which means obedience to his Word alone!

However, when church-members are called upon to judge the liberation of 2003, it is not history that counts but obedience to the Word of God. It is important to indicate that our Belgic Confession do not require the occurrences of submission or prosecution for obedient separation if a church do not longer fulfil the hallmarks of the true church (B.C. art. 28 and 29).

Prof. drs. D. Deddens published in his brochure "Cursus bij kaarslicht"² lectures held by Prof. dr. K. Schilder during the winter of 1944. On pages 84 and 85 of this brochure Prof. Schilder says: "Of course it is the question: how does one have to act when a church-council refuses to break the bond of churches that becomes sinful. In such a case ... the **office of all believers** has to act and according to our confession the church-members must separate themselves from those, who do not belong to the true church and join those who do. So, when time comes when the special office is corrupted and renders services to sinful practice than the believers, according to their office, state: We are brought together by the Word and submit to that alone. ... If people do not heed this, than the offices need to be re-installed". In his 'Schriftoverdenkingen'³ Schilder deals with people who have objections but stay in the church-community that deviates from Scriptures. He discusses 1 Kings. 13:11, 14a, 18,

² Woord en wereld nr. 36 1997

³ Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, Schriftoverdenkingen dl. III, 1945, p. 22

19a about the old prophet from Bethel, who tempts the prophet from Juda to have a meal with him: “But the old prophet does not convert himself. He becomes a typical example of all those people who have objections, but when placed before the choice of radical obedience they lose the courage to say yes or no. And after that, by wanting to conceal one’s uneasiness, they become the sharpest opponents. They have objections but one should not separate. They forget that unity is a matter of obedience.”

It is clear that Prof. K. Schilder would only bind himself to the Word of God. And that is also what we intended to do. In obedience to Scriptures we had to liberate ourselves from an institute that deviates from the Word of God without listening to the voice of reformation.

4. Was the call for reformation too early?

1. New situation according to the new rules for appeals.

Nearly three weeks after the General Synod of Zuidhorn closed their sessions (on January 24th 2003), on February 12th, the *Call for Reformation*, was published and distributed.

According to the new rules church-councils had 6 months after publishing the acts to file their objections against decisions made by the synod. During the synod-sessions the decisions were made public on the website of the GKv. So, at the end of January the publication on the website was completed, and all decisions were valid from then onwards. Furthermore, church-councils had to start studying the taken decisions straight away, otherwise there would be no time left to file their objections before the agreed deadline. In that situation the call for reformation was placed on time. At a later stage church-councils would not have enough time to study thoroughly all the decisions (including at least twelve disputed decisions!) made by synod.

2. Were all complaints brought in appeals to the Synod?

The deputies pointed out in *NBWIW* that nothing about the confession of the church, about new ways of preaching or about Scripture criticism was presented to this synod.

When you look at the different decisions made by the synod of Zuidhorn these are yet included.

1. Confession of the church.

The synod decisions about the rest on Sunday (see par. 6.1 of this document) and divorce (see par 6.2) include deviation from the confession (H.C. Lord’s day 34, 38; B.C. art. 3 and 7) and Scriptures. The decisions on the unity with other churches undermines clearly what the confession of the church learns about the doctrine of the true church (B.C. art. 27,28,29). That is also true for the decisions on Lord’s supper (see par. 6.6) as to the discipline learned in B.C. 29 and 30.

2. New ways of preaching.

The sermon of rev. D. Ophoff concerning the rest on Sunday, illustrates clearly the change in preaching. Furthermore, the new *Determination of direction* (see par 6.3) illustrates that these changes in the liturgy do no longer place the proclamation of the Word in the centre of the liturgy anymore.

3. Scripture criticism.

This synod maintained toleration of Scripture criticism of the false doctrines of B.J. Oosterhof, B. Loonstra in their contacts with the CGK churches, and of the false doctrines of H. de Jong in their contacts with the NGK churches (see par 6.3). They did so in spite of many letters of objection and requests for revision.

The Synod approved an inter-church course for evangelization in which own deputies participated, which characterized Gen. 1-11 as prehistoric (Emmaus).

The synod made no major objections against the new exegesis of 1 Cor. 7 in the report *Marriage and divorce*, as being in contradiction with B.C. art. 7 (see par. 6.2). In stead of that, they even ordered deputies to publish their report with remarks made at the synod to start a discussion in the churches about marriage and divorce.

It is therefore clear that the points deputies in *NBWIW* presented were really included in the appeals to synod.

3. Was the call for reformation the beginning of the liberation?

The *call for reformation* was not intended as a preparation for the liberation. This was clearly stated in the accompanying brochure *Let us repent; a call for reformation*, which also was distributed nationwide. But it would be naïve to conclude that this was not a very urgent last call to go back to Gods Word. It followed a multitude of warning articles in *Reformanda*, national public meetings of concerned church members over many years (*Society of Reformanda*), open information evenings on synodical and general developments and a series of previous brochures published by LWVKO (a national working group for information on ecclesiastical developments). These included a brochure published in 2002 entitled “To be faithful” (*Om trouw te zijn*) about the different disputed topics on which the Synod of Zuidhorn had to make their decisions. Just after the synod closed, two other publications, one about the 4th commandment (*Sabbat en zondag*) and another about keeping all Gods commandments (*Blijft in mijn liefde*) were published. During 2003 another brochure “*Conformeren of reformeren*” was published discussing 10 decisions made by the synod of Zuidhorn.

All these brochures explained the grave situation in the Reformed Churches (liberated). Like the *call for reformation*, these brochures warned church-members about the course the churches were taken. But none of these brochures, articles and meetings had the intention to start a liberation. Like them, *the call for reformation and the brochure Let us repent* were used to warn everybody in the church very urgently that Gods Word was at stake. That reformation was necessary.

5. The situation in the church.

In the brochure *NBWIW* it is not very clear that the objections against the decisions of the synod of Zuidhorn are, in fact, the results of a struggle for more than 10 years in a background of a gradual but ongoing spiritual decay. For more information about the general situation in the GKv we refer to the brochure “*Let us repent*” p. 8-32 (supplement to our letter of February 2005).

6. Different decisions by synods

6.1. Sunday

Rev. P.L. Voorberg, on behalf of the deputies Fourth Commandment and Sunday, wrote an article about Sabbath and Sunday⁴. His conclusion is that the synod of Leusden made the following pronouncements:

⁴ Appendix 2 Report Deputies to Synod Amersfoort-Centrum 26-11-2003

- a. The opinion of Rev. Ophoff, “that the Sunday as day of rest is not founded on a divine commandment” cannot be condemned (GSL art. 25 dec. 4.3)
- b. in her faithful response to the guidance of God’s Spirit, the Christian Church has accorded the Sunday a special value in line with the example of the Sabbath of Israel (GSL art 25 dec. 4 gr. 3)
- c. the Sunday as day of rest is founded on a responsible choice of the Christian Church (GSL dec. 4 gr. 3)”.

His conclusion is: ”In the churches the following opinion is permitted:

- a. the day of rest is not founded on a divine commandment.

At the same time it is emphatically maintained that:

- b. the day of rest is founded on the example of Israel’s Sabbath and thus in line with the fourth commandment;

and that

- c. the day of rest is founded on a responsible choice of the Christian Church. This implies: responsible before God. That gives this pronouncement much importance.”

This line of reasoning has been followed by the synods from Leusden onwards including GS Amersfoort 2005.

Amersfoort recommended the following ‘Recourse’ *Sunday, a Lordly, glorious day* to the churches with a view to

- a. giving it a place in the instruction of the congregation and in the testimony to neighbours and society;
- b. seeking, in prayerful looking up to God, to come to a renewed conviction with regard to the celebration of the Sunday and its place in the whole of the Christian life style.
(GS Amersfoort act 22, decision 2)

Conclusion:

Can we say that the decisions of the synod of Amersfoort regarding the Sunday as a day of rest has brought the necessary rest in the GKv by returning to the Word of God?

That the 4th commandment and its meaning has been restored?

Under point 3 of the ‘section of instruction’ of the Recourse *Sunday, a Lordly, glorious day* there is, a few times the motive of the creation (Gen. 2: 2,3) have brought up. But we have to state that speaking that the seventh day as day of rest was already established at the creation is carefully avoided. But from Scriptures (Gen.2: 2,3 and Ex. 20:8-11) it is clear that God as the Creator indicated from the beginning a day of rest in a week of seven days. The day of rest, therefore, have to be seen as an institution of creation that holds its universal value.

We can say beautiful things about “freedom of the Spirit’ (3 under section of instruction) and ‘this new aspect which came in Christ’ (4 under section of instruction) but then only within the universal character of the aspects of rest of the fourth commandment.

We have to give witness to our society of Christ’ gospel but at the same time to show the world the commandment of God to rest and His wisdom therein.

Also important is the status of this document. A recourse is a non-committal support. Under ground 2 of decision 2 the synod says:

“this Recourse does not carry the ecclesiastical authority of a confession, but intends to offer a testimony as to how the fourth commandment has impact on our situation”

Such a Recourse or witness does not have any binding character. Ministers or church members who think that the Sunday as a day of rest is not based on a Godly command, -

and there are many of them that beared testimony of that in the GKv! - will still be free to proclaim this and they are allowed to neglect this Recourse of the synod.

At the synod of Amersfoort many appeals were tabled wherein the synod was asked to withdraw the decision of Leusden 1999 that 'resting from work on a Sunday was not founded upon a commandment of God'. However, all requests to recall this decision of Leusden, were rejected!

On one of the grounds for these rejections the synod says:

'Generally it is not sensible to reformulate decisions made by previous ecclesiastical institutes.... It is better to keep these decisions as they were made. When imperfections and indistinctness are observed and by proceeding insight new decisions can be made which remove or supplement a previous decision' (Act. 70, decision 6, ground 2).

It is a fact that the synod of Amersfoort did not stipulate a new decision. This Recourse is not presented to the churches as a decision which removes or supplements an earlier decision. It can be used side by side with the decision of Leusden 1999.

We therefore have to conclude that the synod of Amersfoort with the taken decisions and despite this Recourse with all the reassuring words about the fourth commandment, has done nothing against the spirit of error which undermines the commandments of God. By upholding the decision concerning the sermon of the Rev. D. Ophoff, the GKv still maintain that it is fully legal to preach as the Word of God that He does no longer forbid work on Sundays.

6. 2. Marriage and divorce

Since 1993 subsequent deputies were involved in presenting reports on the issue of divorce. an evil of secularization which is spreading through the churches more and more. Different synods instructed deputies to study the problems concerning divorce. This was necessary because in many churches divorce occurred frequently amongst church members. The synod (Ommen 1993) was already confronted with the problems concerning divorce (art. 35). The Regional Synod of Groningen asked this synod if it is possible to develop a national policy concerning the different practices regarding marriage after divorce. Different practices occur within the local churches. Some churches perform a new marriage after divorce while other churches take disciplinary actions.

Since 1993 deputies studied this matter. In 2002 the synod of Zuidhorn received a report in which deputies gave an interpretation of 1 Cor. 7 which differs completely from the current interpretation. The main part of this report dealt with the developments related to the interpretation and practical application God's Word in our time and culture.

The report states that Scripture does not accept grounds for divorce. Deputies have objections against the current explanations of this issue since they lead to a forced analogy-reasoning.

Therefore they presented their own approach in four steps:

1. From the education of Jesus Christ they conclude that divorce and remarriage do not fit the style of the kingdom They call this the "general rule".
2. However certain questions remain unanswered in the education of Jesus Christ. For example: He does not deal with the questions of adultery and remarriage. On the one hand it does not fit the nature of the kingdom and the imitation of God and Christ to dissolve marriage by adultery. One should seek repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. On the other hand the question remains how to act when the adulterous party refuses to repent. This gives the church permission to act in accordance with the best of Christian wisdom in such situations.

3. The 'general rule' of Jesus Christ (see 1) was adapted and applied by Paul in 1 Cor. 7 as follows: in specific, new situations (in this specific case: mission and desertion because of faith) Paul discharges the believer of the general rule, because maintaining the rule in such situations leads to unacceptable and unfair consequences. So Paul's declaration 'not to be bound' by Jesus' rule teaches us that 'unforeseen situations' can happen and that in such situation this rule could have unfair consequences. There is no reason to limit the amount of unforeseen situations which occur in the Bible whether literally or by analogy.. Therefore the church must not change Paul's words of 1 Cor. 7 into a concrete ground for divorce. She must use this example for a possible way to act in unforeseen situations, and situations which lead to unjust consequences. In 1 Cor. 7 divorce remains evil, but it is preferred above the greater evil of compromises regarding faith. In specific situations, in analogy to Paul's method in 1 Cor. 7, it is understandable that the church states: in this case you are not bound by the rule.

4. To make concrete decisions it is necessary to focus on more factors from Scriptures than only on the direct moral guidelines (like the 7th commandment)..

Making such choices requires the individual believers and the congregation to understand the education of Christ about the kingdom in their own everyday situations⁵.

This report has been rewritten after Zuidhorn in a popular version and was sent to all church councils. Deputies also organised meetings with office bearers.

The synod of Zuidhorn did not condemn this new interpretation of Scriptures (esp. regarding 1 Cor. 7). They withheld their judgement yet at the same time they gave their deputies the instruction to publish a popular version of this report including the comments made by synod.

In this, Synod neglected their duty to stop the spread of false doctrine. This doctrine damaged the truth by undermining the clear seventh commandment, which was again confirmed by Jesus Christ in Matt. 19: 6. Between two synods, the churches were purposely exposed to this deviant unscriptural doctrine.

In 2005 deputies again presented a report to synod of Amersfoort-Centrum. Did they withdraw their misinterpretation of 1 Cor. 7? Not at all. Although they withdrew some formulations that caused the most criticism. Yet their approach was maintained.

After discussing the different responses to the report of Zuidhorn in which they defended their approach (cited in *NBWIW*), they again gave this explanation of 1 Cor. 7 at the Synod of Amersfoort. In this they maintain their interpretation of 1 Cor. 7, although they now omit some of the most disputable formulations. But as can be read below, they just formulated the same doctrine in a different way:

"A. Did Paul mean to write that divorce in case of wilful desertion is permitted? And that such desertion is a ground for divorce? The concept of desertion was unknown to Paul. No, he indicates: in this situation, which has arisen in Corinth (and in other churches where the Gospel was proclaimed, and where people have come to faith), this is how one should deal with marriage and divorce. From that, we may infer that we, as congregation of Christ in new situations (that is one which is unforeseen in Scripture, or at least not mentioned), may need to determine our position regarding divorce. There are, therefore, situations in which the church may accept or approve a divorce. It is possible that one is confronted with a similar choice as Paul: one must choose the best of two evils. In our view, there is no Biblical argument to suggest that a choice between two evils is limited only to adultery or desertion. The same principle can be applied to other ethical considerations.

B. Do we have the same authority in this regard as the apostles? That, after all, was one critical remark to the report of Zuidhorn: Can the churches in this regard follow

⁵ Rapport Huwelijk en echtscheiding Zuidhorn 2002 bijlage III-8

the example of Paul? It is clear that the church does not have the same authority as the apostle. But there are other matters, in which it is clear that the church can make decisions which are continued in the line of the apostles' teaching. We point, by way of example, to the rule which our Lord set: "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven..." (Matt 18:18). We very easily read "you" as if it says "the church in 2004". And yet this word was spoken to the apostles. They received this authority, and not the churches directly. Their word is authoritative, and when they bind, then God binds. But we continue this line through to our own office-bearers. From this word of Jesus, spoken to the apostles, the church has inferred that it must exercise discipline. It is the congregation which must decide about excommunication. Our confession states that the key of the discipline can close (and open) the Kingdom of heaven (HC 31). There we confess: "According to the command of Christ... they are forbidden the use of the sacraments, and are excluded from the Christian congregation, and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ." (Q&A 85). It exists by analogy (in this context, this expression is from van Bruggen, Commentary on Matthew, p351). We believe that if we (the congregation) exercise discipline in the right way, then God Himself excommunicates the sinner. In other words, the word directed to the twelve apostles is to be applied by the church today. We must continually examine how, in new situations, the sinner is to be admonished, and the sin rebuked. That judgement in this situation can only be good if it happens under the leadership of Christ, and that is "not only through His Spirit, but also through his Word". He wants to use people as His heralds, and therefore He wants His judgements to be pronounced by His church (Calvin's commentary on Matt 18:18). So the church continues in the footsteps of Jesus, but goes further than what it literally says in Matt 18.⁶

In the same way, we are allowed to work with what Paul says about separation and divorce. The church may continue in his line." (Report Marriage and Divorce, par. 2.4 (b))

They even give more examples to express their point. And their conclusion is:

"There is certainly a difference between the apostolic authority with which Paul speaks (I Cor. 1:1) and the decisions the church makes. But the church itself must consider what pleases God (Eph. 5:10). By using the Word of God, the congregation trains itself in distinguishing between good and evil (Heb 5:14), and is called to discern what is best (Phil 1:9). In new situations, the believer and the congregation must pray for the enlightenment of the Spirit (to him who knocks on God's door for that, the door will be opened – Luke 11:9-13). Everything that the congregation so decides must be tested according to the rule of *analogia fidei* (the analogy of faith). "The Holy Spirit may show us new ways, but they will always be in harmony and not in conflict with the Word of God, as we have it in Scripture". Paul provides an example. And he passes on how he deals with that as an apostle. Situations not foreseen or not mentioned in the Bible will always arise. For the Bible is not a handbook, in which every conceivable circumstance is described, and which the church today simply has to match to the situation. And then know exactly what to do. In weighing up ethical matters, we can use Scripture in different ways. We can have a word directly from Scripture, and simply apply that; we can also use Scripture as a guide to point us in a certain direction. The Bible also gives us examples for what we can or cannot do." (Report Marriage and Divorce, par. 2.4 (f))

⁶ See also Prof. De Bruijne in 'Gereformeerde theologie vandaag: oriëntatie en verantwoording' Chapter 1 Gereformeerde Theologie vandaag: page 11,12. "doordenken binnen de context van de gemeente".

So, in many words deputies have now formulated a text that should be reassuring: we do not give ‘a new evangelium’. But in fact they do! Instead of the previous words in their report of Zuidhorn, they are now using, terms as ‘application’. By this they mean ‘new ways’ in ‘new unforeseen situations’. This is really deceiving camouflage!

But what is really ‘new’? What does the bible say about what is new? There is nothing new under the sun (Eccl 1: 9)!

In case of willful desertion as concerned in 1 Cor. 7, Paul only applies the words of the Lord Jesus Christ from Matt. 10: 35-37. This is not at all a situation in which Scripture is lacking. The report of the deputies totally failed to show that in contemporary situations in which it would be plausible for our God to handle against His given rule (Matt. 19: 6). Moreover, it is forbidden to add to or to take from Holy Scripture (B.C. art. 7)!

The synod of Amersfoort-Centrum made the following decisions:

Decision 1. To express broad agreement with the thrust (hoofdlijn) of the Deputies’ approach to marriage and divorce. In this approach, the point of departure is the greatest possible dedication to God and to His will, the following of Christ, and a style of living which is in keeping with the coming Kingdom. This approach proceeds from the abundant grace of Christ and the totality of Christian living within the churches.

Grounds: 1. In the course of developing this approach, the Deputies have brought forward a great many insights (from hermeneutical, exegetical and practical perspectives), which have met with both agreement and criticism from within the churches. Agreement with the broad approach as expressed in this decision is not dependent on agreement with all these insights. In general terms, the General Synod has taken note, with appreciation, of the study of the Deputies, but leaves responsibility for the views expressed within the report with its authors. However, in order to understand the background of Synod’s decisions concerning principles and guidelines, it will of course be necessary to become familiar with the broad thrust of these reports.

2. The critique that Deputies, in many respects, find themselves in conflict with Scripture and Confession, rests on a misunderstanding of their report. In addition, Deputies, have made it clear, both verbally and in writing, that they: Do not advocate a doctrine of “continuing revelation or subjectivism within the congregation as a whole”, but intend that the application of existing revelation in concrete situations should be done, not individualistically, but within the framework of the congregation. Do not proceed, in their application of I Corinthians 7, from an a priori hermeneutical position, which lords it over Scripture, but from a genuine exegesis of Scripture itself, while acknowledging that this exegesis is open to debate. Do not present their speaking of “the style of the Kingdom” as a substitute for an appeal to the commandments of God, or to concrete words from Scripture, but as a framework around them. In their approach, concrete words of Scripture remain fully normative. Differences of view which may arise in this regard go back to differing exegeses of concrete words of Scripture. (underlining done by the writers of this document) (Acts, art. 57, decision 1)

So, the synod Amersfoort 2005 largely supported the unscriptural approach of these deputies and defended them against criticism and objections. This means that all commandments are, from now on, exposed to these new ways. The churches have to ‘apply’ (read modify) the commandments in new unforeseen situations.

The amount of applicable situations to allow for divorce depends on what a church council decides. The style of the Kingdom will become the rule, in stead of the direct commandments of God (even though synod does not want to know about this)

The practical situations already show many possibilities regarding divorce within the different churches. This interpretation of 1 Cor. 7 is used to justify these existing practices.

6.3. The liturgy and the 'Liedboek'

The Church Order exists to maintain order and peace within the churches in order to strengthen the mutual bond in our Lord Jesus Christ. The churches together accepted this Church Order thereby obliging themselves to observe it to avoid arbitrariness and unwanted independence.

However, in the so called 'Koersbepaling' (*Determination of direction*) tabled at the Synod of Zuidhorn 2002/2003, a fundamental change was introduced. This does not only apply to articles 65 and 67 but as a consequence to the binding function of the whole of the Church Order.

In this new approach only a general framework is accepted to be normative to the worship services. Binding to "the details of the orders of worship, the chosen lists of songs, liturgical forms, liturgical supplement and other materials" is no longer necessary. The orders of worship generated by the general synod are only "recommendations" and should be used as "guidelines". The church councils are responsible, and from then on they will not be bound to the strict regulations from the Church Order or Synods decisions regarding the worship service. Unfortunately, the effect of this '*Determination of direction*' has become more and more obvious during the last few years.

Here, we will point to three major effects which turned reformed worship services to 'religious events' in which false prophesy has a legalized position and "wishes and needs" of the believers are the guide for liturgy and preaching.

1. Part of this approach was the introduction of lists of hundreds of new songs, which are accepted by the last general synods and introduced to the churches after only marginal testing. One of the elements of marginal testing included a 75% positive voting rule among the Synod delegates for the songs in order to be accepted to the worship services. In case of objections the *Determination of direction* provided the following approach, as *NBWIW* quoted: "Investing in lengthy discussions about the acceptability of a hymn shall have no priority in the churches (!) If hymns are disputed, both relationships and arguments with respect to content shall be reckoned with. The songs have been selected on the basis of "the wishes and needs expressed by the churches".

First, a multitude of songs of the inter-denominational 'Liedboek voor de Kerken' (hymnal) were introduced. This was very surprising and incredible, since the churches (Synods Kampen 1975 and Heemse 1984/1985) had rejected this hymnal in the past as being unsuitable for a reformed worship of God. *NBWIW* wrote that this opinion was based on the analysis of prof. K. Deddens of only a selection of this collection of songs. However, this is not in accordance with the facts. Prof. K. Deddens did not only test a few songs from this 'Liedboek' but he addressed his criticism in a series of 8 (!) articles to all major categories of songs. He judged them generally to be songs originating from the false ecumenism. Some songs he analyzed in detail: 126, 138, 282, 284, 324, 460, but he reports also the following categories in a more general way:

- biblical songs (1-115),
- songs of the church calendar ,
- songs of the Kingdom of the Lord (But nowhere we find the Covenant of God in His promise and in His threatening.)
- ecclesiastical songs (These songs are placed under the category 'Church'. But on the one hand this is the church of the large ecumenicism and on the other hand the poor Christianity, which longs for quiet profoundness).
- other songs" (pp. 399-491): (The critic we mentioned for other songs is here also applicable).

He ended his extended series of articles with the following remarks: "We could supply more detailed criticism of other songs from this new hymnal. We will not do this now. Our

concerns regard the book as a whole. Of course you can ask the question: Are there no good songs at all in this hymnal? Must we set aside all 491 songs? With not much trouble we could easily show some beautiful ‘songs’. But the first question is are the songs suitable for the reformed worship services and secondly our opinion is that the unacceptable songs in this book are so many that what is acceptable vanishes (...). At the time of the ‘Afscheiding’ the ‘Evangelical songs’ were called ‘sirenische’ lovesongs. We could call the songs of this new hymnal ‘ecumenical lovesongs’. Because ecumenicalism is the idol of today”⁷.

As we already stated in our letter of February 2005, hundreds of letters of revision and objection were rejected by the Synod of Zuidhorn. One of the counting factors for the *Determination of Direction* was the “wishes and needs expressed by the churches”. But this factor was apparently interpreted very selectively, in light of the neglected wishes and needs of the concerned members.

NBWTW stated that prof. B. Kamphuis was right in his judgement:

“an unfounded accusation, which of course assumes that the objector is right. This is not the way to deal with each other in the church”.

What *NBWTW* did not tell is that this accusation was based on a multitude of details of objections against the vast majority of songs and substantiated in extensive reports summarized as follows:

1. The doctrine of general reconciliation⁸
2. The thought that the kingdom of peace/paradise will be expected on this earth.⁹
3. The liberation theology¹⁰
4. The omission/disguise/tone down of certain important issues :¹¹
5. Poetic license, which we consider illicit¹²
6. Magical thinking without Scriptural basis¹³
7. The omission of passages of parts of Scriptures¹⁴

All these characterizations were substantiated by detailed reports.

⁷ Reformatie in 1973 (Jg 48, nr. 37-43) en 1974 (Jg 49)

⁸ De leer van de alverzoening (alle mensen worden zalig; er is dan geen plaats meer voor Gods verkiezing en verwerping) werd ontdekt in de volgende liederen: 1,6,23,34,63,90,91,106,119,225,301,319,393,408,434

⁹ De gedachten aan een vreedrijk/paradijs dat op deze aarde wordt verwacht (i.p.v. na de jongste dag met Gods gericht, op de nieuwe hemel en de nieuwe aarde) werd teruggevonden in de tekst van de volgende liederen: 23,42,281,284,285,287,294,380,444

¹⁰ De idee van een bevrijdingstheologie (solidariteit met verdrukten i.p.v. de antithese tussen vrouwenzaad/kerk en slangenzaad/wereld) werd aangetroffen in: 9,23,28,39,43,300

¹¹ Het weglaten/verdoezelen/afzwakken van:

-het offer van Christus als verzoening door voldoening in: 75,147,148,152,203,221,225,402, 435, 460,473,481

-zonde, verbondsontrouw, antithese en goddelozen, werd teruggevonden in: 6,9,14,34,43,90, 113,115

-het oordeel als tweede dood, poel des vuurs in: 6,34,39,62,78,113,115,169,288,300

-verkiezing, verbond, leven uit de beloften in: 15,20,21,90,107,271,287,320,325,336,434

-de goede strijd van het geloof in: 78,87,188,300,335,336,429,442

¹² Dichterlijke vrijheden, die wij niet geoorloofd achten:

-mystieke taal of vreemde poëzie die niet aansluit bij Schriftuurlijke gegevens in:

6,106,114,119,122,135,189,201,221,234,252,253,368,387,442,448,473

-eigen beelden of verbanden van de dichter, die niet zijn terug te voeren op de Schrift, in:

1,6,30,34,43,92,103,114,126,147,148,169,264,290,320,382,457,459,479

-benamingen voor God, die ons niet in Zijn Woord worden aangereikt, in:

75,125,240,241,253,294,319,408,444,456,457,477

¹³ Magisch denken zonder Schriftuurlijke basis:

-magische elementen die in sacramenten worden aangewezen komen voor in:87,119,335,356,358,360

-magisch herbeleven van heilsfeiten uit het verleden in:6,122,124,126,127,135,139,140,147,189,240

¹⁴ Weglaten van passages uit Schriftgedeelten bij de berijming ervan, waardoor tekort gedaan wordt aan de boodschap van Gods Woord werd opgemerkt in: 20,21,34,39,63,78,87,92,107,113,397

NBWIW gives a single example of the “false” or “unfounded” accusation against one song: the hymn 335 often sung at baptism with the sentence “and no-one snatches it [the baby] from your power” (“en niemand rukt het uit uw macht”). *NBWIW* doubts whether the criticism is right that this is evidence of ‘covenantal automatism’. *NBWIW*: Could it not rather be an echo of John 10 : 28, where Jesus says of his sheep: “and no-one can snatch them out of my hand”?

Our response to this is that our criticism is actually based on this very text of John 10:28, but, in addition, also on the surrounding verses: Joh. 10:26, 27, 29. Then, by careful exegesis of the context of this phrase, it becomes clear that: only sheep that indeed show faith by listening and following the voice of the Shepherd are the sheep that will receive eternal life from the Father in Heaven.

By superficial citing this phrase as is done by *NBWIW* in defending the content of this hymn from the ‘Liedboek’, baptized children of believers are given the same privileges as those who are elected by God the Father. This is all the more embarrassing since this was an essential issue in the reformations of the past, especially the Liberation of 1944. Also, careful listening to the Form for baptism of the children that is still in use in the GKv, should prevent such erroneous statements. In the mean time, this hymn is now being used with great enthusiasm despite the vehemently disputed unscriptural content. This did not just occur in the one cited phrase but also in other (magic) elements against which people appealed in the letters of objection.

It is not possible to give comments on all the hundreds of objections against the hymns.

Let us restrict ourselves to the response of the Synod to objections against the first hymn indicating the manner in which the Synod of Zuidhorn dealt with them.

We first cite the literal text of the Acts (art. 86):

Against song 1¹⁵ the objection was that here the doctrine of general reconciliation was taught. They also believe it is in line with the doctrine of Karl Barth. Against this was said that one has to read this song in the light of Ps. 104. It would be a pity if this opening song of the ‘Liedboek’ was not listed. The proposal of the committee to delete this song was rejected by 8 votes.

After the influx of 117 ‘Liedboek’ hymns a new one wave followed with hundreds of other songs, among them many from evangelical origin.

2. The above mentioned “*Determination of direction*” further resulted in a total revolution of the worship services in a lot of congregations. This can be explained by the introduction of showing objects on the pulpit, the performances of choirs, musical bands, dance, mime, art objects, beamer projections of pictures, verbal interactions with congregation members, the omission of the reading of the Ten Commandments, and the deliberate removal of the pulpit from church buildings to construct a new liturgical centre, and many other things to follow.

3. All these human attributes in the meeting of the Lord take away the attention of the congregation, eventually they push away the full and faithful preaching of the Word of God, which is not anymore the *centre* of the liturgy but *part* of the liturgy.

Are these accusations unfounded? We only can invite you as a foreign sister church, to visit a random selection of these services (or proof can be supplied on video-tape). Only then,

¹⁵ “God heeft het eerste woord./ Hij heeft in den beginne het licht doen overwinnen, / Hij spreekt nog altijd voort./ God heeft het eerste woord./ Voor wij ter wereld kwamen, riep Hij ons reeds bij name./ Zijn roep wordt nog gehoord./ God heeft het laatste woord./ Wat Hij van oudsher zeide, wordt aan het eind der tijden in heel zijn rijk gehoord./ God staat aan het begin en Hij komt aan het einde./ Zijn woord is van het zijnde oorsprong en doel en zin.”

you will be able to judge for yourselves whether these changes really are the “sound content of the church services” as a result of the “main rule” of the *Determination of direction*. Which states that “the church councils are responsible for giving the church services a sound content within the general framework”.

Or whether they are an expression of religious people that no longer want to worship the Lord according to His Own rule “in Spirit and Truth” (Joh. 4: 24).

6.4. Liberal criticism of the Scripture

First, the authors of *NBWIW* suggest that our accusations of Scripture-criticism in churches with which the GKv will unite, does not do justice to the history and the facts. With that judgment they remain in line with the decision of the Synod of Zuidhorn 2002/2003 which in response to objections also judged: “there are no indications that Scripture-criticism is allowed within the CGK” (Acts art. 134 Amersfoort 2005).

However, in our letter of Febr. 2005 (pp 8, 9) we already demonstrated that the doctrines of Prof. B. Oosterhoff and Dr. B. Loonstra have been maintained up to the present day within the CGK. Although Dr. B. Loonstra has adjusted his standpoint as to the Ascension and Pentecost, his underlying unscriptural hermeneutic theories about explaining and applying Scripture are totally unaffected. What should be expected from the True Church is stated in the Belgic Confession art. 29, namely that it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, *rejecting all things contrary to it* and holding Jesus Christ as the only Head. As we have shown in our former letter, history testifies the contrary: from 1981 and onwards, these churches have refused to apply discipline to Scripture-criticism.

That the Synod of Amersfoort decided that the issue of Scripture-criticism can be taken from the table in the mutual contacts of the churches is a sign of further deterioration and blinding, instead of purification and holding to the truth (Amersfoort Acts art 134 decision 5, ground 4).

We have nothing to add to what we wrote in our letter about the contacts with the NGK. Nothing has changed.

We would wish to respond to *NBWIW* on Scripture-criticism in Kampen. Although they stated that the deputies-curators have refused formal objections to Scripture-criticism in publications from Kampen, and that the deputies-curators have repeatedly denied that there is any form of Scripture-criticism in Kampen, this is no proof that this is the case. In contrast, it illustrates how the minds of these responsible people are already influenced and blinded.

This can easily be verified by anyone who reads the publications from Kampen. Then it will become clear that the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scripture is actually attacked in Kampen. As we already stated in our letter of febr. 2005 (pp. 8-10), these attacks are especially but not exclusively, evident in the book *Woord op schrift*, in which Drs. J.J.T. Doedens and Drs. A.L.Th. de Bruijne made their contributions.

We already pointed to the fact that Drs Doedens clouds (doubts?) the text of Scripture as to the days of Creation in favor of an alternative succession of these days in order to understand scientific data. He describes Genesis 1-3 as a story in which things could have happened differently than reported.

Drs. A.L.Th de Bruijne made other attacks on the Inspiration in the same book:

- By not condemning that Genesis 1-11 can be seen as symbolic historiography instead of it being actual history of facts by sensory perception (p.189).
- By posing that “trees” in Paradise and other issues in Genesis or other historical texts in the Scripture, could be symbolic matters rather than concrete physical sensory perceptible entities (p. 155, 159,160). They could be that, even if not indicated so by Holy Scripture Itself.

- By introducing the possibilities
 - (1) that writers of the Scripture have used false information from their (false) sources,
 - (2) that they have exchanged fiction for facts and
 - (3) that they have freely used words as spoken by God in a direct form (thus saith the Lord...), not exactly writing what really was said, but just as a matter of style (p.187-190).
- By stating that “the author of the Scripture with his power of imagination has its independent contribution (p.184)”

All these hypotheses claim room for deviation and therefore damage the authority and infallibility of the Scripture as the Word of God, of Which the Holy Spirit is the primary Author.

They are in clear contrast with the synods decision of Assen 1926, which condemned dr. Geelkerken for his unscriptural ideas.

Furthermore, although in publications from Kampen regarding ethics the binding of the Law of God is not openly cancelled, the way this binding functions is that of subjectivism and relativity. Simple obedience and submission to the will of the Lord, in a way of comparing Scripture with Scripture is characterized by lecturer De Bruijne as “rationality which did not exceed the level of probability and plausibility” (p.228). Instead of that, De Bruijne gives a major position to the so called “power of human imagination”. With his “imagination” the believer should come into “an interaction” between his present world and “the world of the Scripture” (p. 220 and further). The style of Kingdom, although in itself a full Scriptural entity, has become a phrase that obscures the commandments.

As already stated, several letters of objections against the ideas on inspiration of Scripture and on ethics were rejected by the deputies-curators of Kampen.

In the mean time the Synod of Amersfoort 2005 subsequently officially approved the decisions of these Deputies-Curators (Art. 122 of the Acta), thereby taking responsibility for the above mentioned developments in Kampen.

Other never censured public statements are illustrations of the ongoing decay by Scripture-criticism:

- “It does appear sometimes that one who believes in God, should also believe that the serpent has spoken”, Drs. A.L. Th de Bruijne, *Nederlands Dagblad*, May 2nd 2003
- “I am not be shocked by the word evolution, because I believe in a process of Creation planned by God, in which plant and animal may be seen as pre-formations of the human being. In the higher developments we find back the lower: the plant in the animal, and the animal in the human being”, Prof. dr. J. Douma, *Nederlands Dagblad*, May 19th, 2004
- “In Genesis 1 we are not informed about how we should imagine the process of creation, but how we existentially are linked with God”, Prof. dr. J. Douma in *‘Genesis, Gaan in het spoor van het Oude Testament’*, Kampen, 2005, p 45.

Our sad conclusion remains, that the Reformed Churches Liberated have lost track of the Truth in many issues in which Scripture-criticism plays a fundamental role.

6.5. Ecclesiastical unity with the Christian Reformed Churches

From 1945 the Dutch Reformed Churches (liberated) wanted to start a dialogue with the Christian Reformed Churches to realise Church-unity. A difficult process with little or no results. In 1981 this process halted in a way, because at that time the case of Prof. B. Oosterhof regarding liberal criticism of the Scripture came up for discussion. The synod of

the Dutch reformed Churches liberated called for unity not only between reformed churches but also within the Christian Reformed Churches itself. Unity can only be reached in obedience to Scriptures. Choosing for the truth against Scriptural error. But the Christian Reformed Churches did not listen to this appeal. In 1990 the synod of Leeuwarden instructed deputies to urge the Christian Reformed Churches to make a clear stand against the 'Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken'. A letter from the church of Wezep (Acta art 64 Leeuwarden 1990) suggested to phase out the dialogue.

The synod of Heemse (1984) continued the line in which previous synods had been acting. Prof. J. Kamphuis stressed the importance of that line: He is concerned that two professors had rejected the decision of Assen 1926 regarding Genesis 2 and 3.

The synod of Ommen, 1993¹⁶ was disappointed because the synod of the Christian Reformed Churches did take up the complaint regarding the opinion of Prof. Oosterhof. They were also disappointed that the Christian Reformed Churches did not make a clear stand against the 'Nederlands Gereformeerde' Churches. But this synod decided too to drop the subject of liberal criticism of the Scripture regarding prof. Oosterhof and Geelkerken 1926 (decision 5, Acta art. 64).

The synod of Ommen tried to explain this deviation to state that the opinion of Prof. Oosterhof is not the opinion of the Christian Reformed Churches. That means: when someone publicly proclaim an error, objection can be set aside because that opinion is not the opinion of the church.

The synod of Ommen has with this decision resigned to abandon doctrine discipline in the church. And this tiny deviation means a great U-turn and departure of the reformed character of the church. Note how this view has been used regarding the studies in the publication 'Woord op Schrift' (see paragraph 6.4: liberal criticism of the Scripture).

At the synod of Leusden 1999 Prof. B. Kamphuis wrote a note regarding the publication of Rev. B. Loonstra 'De geloofwaardigheid van de bijbel'. With joy he observed that Rev. Loonstra with this study will stay within the space of the reformed confession. But some very penetrative questions have to be asked. Firstly does Rev. Loonstra remain faithful to his starting points regarding the principle credibility of Scriptures? Secondly his vision touches some other part of the confession (Appendix 2 Acts art 82). Although under the grounds of decision 1 the function of the authority of Scriptures is a very important issue about which more discussion is necessary the decision itself does not mention any concern about this publication. In the discussion the note of Prof. Kamphuis is mentioned. It is not surprised that we do not find more about this view of Rev. Loonstra, because it is a personal view and not the view of the Christian Reformed Churches. The decision of Ommen has already beared his fruits.

Although at the synod of Zuidhorn objections were made regarding the perforation of church borders and the authority of Scripture (in the Christian Reformed Churches) before further discussions regarding unity should be held, synod decided to carry on the discussions regarding unity. They even accepted the federative growth model.

The synod of Amersfoort took the following decision:

Decision 1: To continue in thanks for the growing rapprochement the road to church unity with the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken*.

¹⁶ 2. dankbaarheid uit te spreken voor de wijze waarop de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in een aantal concrete gevallen gekozen hebben tegen de dwaling, maar met teleurstelling kennis te nemen van het feit dat zij niet hebben willen ingaan op de concrete klacht die de Gereformeerde Kerken ten aanzien van de behandeling van de opvattingen van prof. dr. B.J. Oosterhoff sedert de Generale Synode van Arnhem 1981 aan de orde gesteld hebben;

3. met teleurstelling kennis te nemen van het feit dat de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken nog niet gekomen zijn tot een duidelijke positiekeuze ten opzichte van de Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken; (Acta Ommen 1993, art 64)

Ground: On the basis of growing rapprochement further steps can be taken in the search for church unity.

Decision 5: Not to consider the requests of the churches of Vroomshoop, Drachten-O and Spakenburg-N and various individuals (regarding also Geelkerken, 1926, Oosterhof and Loonstra).

Grounds:

1. successive synods have mandated deputies to speak with the CGK on how to deal church politically with publications touching the point of the authority of Scripture;
2. the CGK have made clear in dealing with the publications on the authority of Scripture of Dr. B. Loonstra that they take the confession concerning Holy Scripture (B C art. 2-7) seriously: their deputies have agreed with a paper of our deputies on this point, official church discussions have been held with Dr. Loonstra which have resulted in a declaration on the points in question (the clarity of Scripture and the historicity of Ascension and Pentecost) which have given further clarity;
3. GS Assen 1926 pointed merely to a concrete point of view of Dr. J. G. Geelkerken, not based on Scripture, with respect to a number of elements in describing the fall into sin in Genesis 2 and 3; the synod wanted to say no more concerning the authority of Scripture than maintain what the B.C. confesses on this point. The CGK and GKN(v) have contact on the basis of this confession;
4. private expressions of ministers and others within the CGK do not have the character of ecclesiastical fixed position and are therefore no reason for discussion with the CGK; because the CGK and GKN have discovered each other in the communal acceptance of the confession also with respect to what is said therein of Holy Scripture it is not necessary to bind each other to declarations that have been made in a specific case.

Clearly is seen that the synod of Amersfoort continued the road which earlier synods have taken. Do not look for differences but recognise the communal factors to come to unity.

During a few years the Reformed Churches (liberated) changed their warnings concerning scriptural criticism to a situation where ecumenical unity is more important. They had to do so because amidst themselves scriptural criticism was allowed (see paragraph 6.4: liberal criticism of the Scripture). This is not anymore a topic to discuss. The way both churches deal with this matters is not anymore different.

6.6. Lords Supper

6.6.1. Asylum seekers.

The synod of Zuidhorn (2002) decided regarding the admission of asylumseekers to Lords Supper: 'regading the specific situation of asylumseekers it means that they can as quests be admitted to use both sacraments when the church council is convinced:

- a) that they are admitted to Lords Supper in their own Christian congregation
- b) that they show in a verbal examination that they agree with the basic principles of the christian religion.
- c) That they must have shown evidence of a positive lifestyle, especially based on the evidence of their escort, while they visit faithful public worship to their best ability.(decision 1,Art. 36, Acta Zuidhorn)

With this they appealed to the Synod of Leeuwarden, 1920, Acts art. 25 which made arrangements for people in (mental- and general health) institutes who do not belong to the Reformed Church.

6.6.2. Soldiers in crisis areas

During the discussion of the report on "Spiritual health of soldiers" (art. 70.2, Acta Leusden 1999) the following is mentioned:

Is a military chaplain allowed to serve e.g. Lord's Supper in very exceptional situations in areas of crisis and war of which Kosovo is a good example. If the answer is yes, under which conditions? If it may not, we have to face the inevitable consequence that the chief-chaplain can no longer make use of our services in crisis areas. In a situation of peace a reformed preacher does not have to serve Lord's Supper to everybody. That taken into account, deputies indicate that every chaplain must become broad employable under these new circumstances, that means an army chaplain can be lend out to participate in a ecumenical worship service. On a warship a preacher can be confronted with the possibility to the serve Lord's Supper. (see also Report 32, additional report deputies 'Spiritual health')

That is the reason this question of administering Lord's Supper in areas of crisis or war was placed before synod.

It does not concern a reformed way of serving Lord's Supper in which members of other churches can participate. It concerns a protestant worship in which all protestant servicemen can participate. But it is clear that a chaplain himself can decide how he will interpreted this worship. If synod would decide that participation is impossible than the necessity of a reformed chaplain will expire, because such a chaplain will not be broad employable by the chief-chaplain of the army. It is even possible that no work will be left for a reformed chaplain because of his restricted employability.

6.6.3. Guests from non sister-churches at the Lord's Supper

The Regional (Particuliere) Synod of Holland-Noord requests the synod of Amersfoort 2005 to clarify article 60 of the (Dutch) Church Order which deals with the Lord's Supper. The request specifically deals with the matter of allowing guests to the Lord's Supper who are not a member of the Reformed Churches.

This request is due to the practice of the local church of Amsterdam-Zuid/West. In this church it was decided that guests can participate in the Lord's Supper when they sign a statement prior to the worship service. This statement reads as follows: "The doctrine of the Old and New Testament as summarised in the Apostles' Creed and taught in this Christian church is the true and complete doctrine of salvation". This concerns members of sister-churches without an attestation, members from some other denominations and members from oversees churches.

Via the classis this matter came to the Regional Synod which directed it to synod Amersfoort. It requested synod to investigate the scope of article 60 of the Dutch Church Order (=article 61, in use in the churches in Canada and Australia – see Book of Praise).

Synod Amersfoort decided to deal with the matter seeing as the churches together stipulated the prerequisites for Holy Supper attendance in Art. 60 C.O. (= Art. 61.) Therefore, they deemed it desirable to come to a collective stand as to how to deal with guests from outside 'their' churches.

The deputies which studied this matter proposed the following:

"As churches we have to deal with guests who present themselves to celebrate the Lord's Supper with us. This is a consequence of more openness. Up until a few years ago hardly any guests from outside our churches wanted to be admitted. Now they do come. We view those guests differently than in the past. For years it has been characteristic of our churches not to admit guests. In our churches a closed form of the Lord's Supper has been the norm. The overall opinion was that one cannot celebrate the Lord's Supper with people from churches with whom no sister-church relation exists. In this the churches do not mean to judge about the salvation of others. With this we should not forget that this is a consequence of taking the church gathering work of Christ seriously. The matter of whether guests from outside our churches can attend the Lord's Supper has a lot to do with the issue of the church. In what way do

we view people who are member of a different church? We confess that Christ gathers His Church everywhere. He does this by his Spirit and Word (H.C. q.a.21). The confession speaks about the width of the catholic church. When the confession deals with the Lord's Supper the believers are addressed: Christ commands me (believer) and all believers to celebrate the Lord's Supper and gives the promise that His body was offered for the believer on the cross (H.C. q.a. 75). These believers are first and foremost the 'own' church members. Yet, the believers, gathered by Him, are not limited to our church. Outside of our church are also Christian, believers, with whom ecclesiastical unity is lacking".

Synod Amersfoort decided (Acts art. 50) in a similar spirit:

B. To answer, regarding members of churches with which there is no sister-relationship, that a consistory can admit someone as a guest to the Lord's Supper; when the consistory is convinced that the person concerned:

a. has a plausible argument to celebrate the Lord's Supper in the congregation and that his/her participation is subservient to the upbuilding of the body of Christ

b. is admitted in his/her own church to the Lord's Supper, is not subject to church-discipline, agrees with the reformed confession and leads a godly life, as meant in art. 60 C.O. (= Art. 61).

c. in view of attending the Lord's Supper he/she is prepared to submit to the mutual encouragement of the congregation and the oversight of the consistory.

They way in which the consistory informs the guests hereof must be clear to the guests and the congregation.

In their brochure 'Important decision by the Synod of Amersfoort' the synod writes the following:

We conclude: the main point in art. 60 C.O. (=Art. 61) is *not who* may participate in Lords Supper from outside the church, but *which* members inside the church may participate.

6.6.4. Conclusion:

By the way these three decisions, regarding the admission to Lord's Supper, were taken a certain development can be seen regarding the church and the sacraments.

The reference to the synod of 1920 illustrates this view. At the synod of 1996 (Berkel en Rodenrijs) a request was denied regarding the revision of this decision of the synod of 1920 (Leeuwarden). This decision stated that in nursing-homes patients who do not belong to the reformed churches can be admitted tot Lords Supper when they do not have the opportunity to attend the Lord's Supper in the church to which they belong. This wish to attend must be placed in good time before the church council and the church council must be convinced that they are admitted to the Lord's Table in their own church, that they agree with the basic principles of the Christian religion and that they live a godly life. They must be prepared to subject themselves to the supervision of the church council as long as they are guests at the Lord's Table (Acts art 25-2). The main objection of the appealers was that this decision was based on the pluriform view of the church which is no longer accepted in the churches. They also stated that this decision could not be executed in practice because as the celebration of Lord's Supper would than be isolated from the communion of saints. Besides showing Christian charity can not be separated from a good church choice. The synod based its decision on the fact that the pluriform views are not found in the decision of Leeuwarden. And the request to be subjected to the church council contradict the pluriform views. The decision of Leeuwarden forms a exception to art. 60 C.O.(= Art. 61). To prevent the development of an 'open' Lord's Supper, synod formulated different conditions for participate. The synod also mentioned in ground 3 that the appellants have not proven that

the celebration of the Lord's Supper was isolated from the communion of saints in the decision of Leeuwarden.

In the decision of the synod of Berkel and Rodenrijs it becomes clear that the connection between Lord's Table and the church as bride of Christ is disconnected. And that synod was not prepared to clarify this view with regard to the connection between Lord's Supper and the communion of Saints. They stated in ground 1 that the appellants did not give any scriptural evidence. If we take the advice of Prof. de Ruijter into account during the discussion about Lord's Supper in crisis areas, it becomes even more obvious. In his advice he said that the condition when celebrating the Lord's Supper is not membership of the Reformed Church (liberated) but your binding to Jesus Christ, that means do you subscribe the Apostles' Creed (Leusden 1999, art 70-2).

The decision to accept non-church members to the Lord's Table, which has to function as a explanation of art. 60 C.O.(=Art.61), we also see as an embarrassing development. In fact it is a modification of art 60 C.O.(=Art.61) to adapt to existing local practices. It can also be seen as a consequence of the disputed decisions made by the Synod of Leusden 1999 and Zuidhorn 2002/3 regarding army chaplains that administer the Lord's Supper to soldiers from different denominations. It also clearly indicates a deviating view on the articles of faith regarding the true Church, resembling the false doctrine of the invisible church.

Recently rev. de Graaf wrote in his article under the heading 'Splintered Reformation' about churches that are very clearly not true churches

“At the same time we see denominations where the situation is not quite as clear, more the small orthodox denomination. And to apply than the word ‘only’ to our own church goes too far. It causes misunderstanding.”¹⁷

That is completely different to what prof. K. Schilder wrote:

“But he who accepts relativism and does not want to call his own church the only one which may exist, he shows his own reformation as an organised work of pigheadedness.”¹⁸

Even though the people in the GKV do not want to speak of an ‘open Supper table’ (ground 5) they have clearly opened it to people outside of their church (be it an exception; ground 1). As the Lord's Supper is only for Christ and His congregation allowing people from other denominations can only be seen as a deviation from Scripture, the Confessions and the Church Order. Is not the breaking of the one bread the body of Christ?! We do not believe in an invisible body. In contrast to the synodical decision of Amersfoort 2005, our confession (B.C. art 27-29) teaches in submission to God's Word that people from other denominations live in sin. They refuse to join the assembly of the redeemed outside of which there is no salvation. They do not submit themselves to its instruction and discipline, they do not bend their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ and they do not serve the edification of the brothers and sisters as **members of the same** body.

It is absolutely not understandable that a reformed church allows people from outside the church to the most intimate sign of unity given by Christ to His congregation. How can a visitor from a non-sister-church possibly add to the upbuilding of the body of Christ (other than by becoming a member)? (part a of the decision). How can such a visitor agree with the reformed doctrine and not join the true church? (part b of the decision). And how can such a visitor subject himself – honestly in the sight of the Lord and His holy congregation - to the oversight of the church council? (part c of the decision).

For this reason the Church Order clearly states that “**members of sister-churches** shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct”. Allowing people from non sister-churches is not an exception to the rule of which art. 60

¹⁷ Rev. De Graaf in the Church Magazine of the North. Sept. 15, 2006

¹⁸ K.Schilder, *De kerk* part 1 page 57.

(=Art.61) of Church Order does not explicitly speak, as the GKV synod wants people to believe (ground 1).

In fact this decision is a falsification of this Church Order article.

With this fundamental synod decision, which confirms an already established practice in a growing number of GKV churches, the table of Lord's Supper is further corrupted. The Holy Scripture teaches that the wrath of God will affect the congregation if discipline is neglected (1 Cor. 11:17-34).

Sadly, it should be concluded that these churches are moving further and further away from the basis of the Word of God, the Confession, and the Church Order.

7. Finally

The brochure 'Not beyond what is written' has not served his goal, namely to provide good and honest information about what exactly has happened in the Reformed Churches.

It also demonstrates very clearly that the schism between members of the same church already existed for many years. The spirit of strong delusion (2 Thess 2:11) had already for many years taken possession of the hearts of many believers. For many years we tried to reach them through our objections, our appeals, our warnings. In the end, we had no choice other than reformation and liberation. In that, we had to obey and follow our Lord Jesus Christ according to our and your Confession (B.C. art. 28, 29).

Our answer also shows you that the Synod of Amersfoort 2005 did not leave any basis to discuss the possibility of reconciliation. In contrast, we had to conclude that the GKV churches had moved themselves even further from the basis of Word of God and the Confession of the Church since the Synod of Zuidhorn 2002/2003. In response to their recent 'appeal' for such a discussion we had to send them our answer that such a discussion after the closure of Amersfoort would be meaningless and untruthful (*supplement 1*). Please check whether this conclusion was correct or not.

Our Synod of Mariënberg took her responsibility to review the most important disputed synod decisions before the Liberation of 2003/2004, taken by the Synods of Ommen 1993, Berkel en Rodenrijs 1996, Leusden 1999 and Zuidhorn 2002/2003. The decisions with considerations and grounds taken by Mariënberg regarding these disputed decisions are enclosed for further information (*supplement 2*).

We hope that all information we offered you now in this letter with supplements and in the past on February 4th 2005, may serve as suitable materials on which basis you can judge the lawfulness of the recent Liberation.

We therefore hope that you will accept us as the lawful continuation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and will continue the sister church relations with our churches.

We hope and pray that you will find for this all your wisdom in the Word of God under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. You and we both are totally dependent on the help and strengthening of God to maintain the Truth of His Word.

But let us do it according to the commandment of our Lord, in unity with all true churches all over the world.

We therefore hope and pray that the unity-in-the-truth be continued under the blessing of the Lord.

Let us finally refer for that to the word of the apostle Paulus:

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work” (2 Thess. 2:15-17).

Joined in Christ,

On behalf of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad of The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (restored)

P.Drijfhout (convenor)

8. Supplement 1: Answer to the letter of appeal of the Gkv (translated)

9. Supplement 2: Report committee synodical decisions of Synods Ommen 1993 to Zuidhorn 2002/2003 accepted by the Synod of Mariënberg 2005/2006.