

REFORMED CONTINUA

Magazine of The Reformed Churches (restored) of The Netherlands

Proverbs 8:32

- Volume 18 - November 2015 -

From the editor

November 2015

Dear readers,

It is with great thankfulness to the Lord, Who gave and gives us the strength, that we may present you to the 18th edition of the magazine 'Reformed Continua'. Due to the busyness of preparation for, and the synod itself, we were not able to bring out this edition earlier.

In the next edition we hope to give you information about our last synod Groningen 2014/2015.

We are thankful to the Lord that the magazine is well-received at home and abroad and that information about our Churches can be given, information in the English language, of which there is a great shortage.

We hope and pray that this edition of our magazine first of all is to the honour of God and to the up-building of the Churches world-wide.

Joh. Houweling, Bleiswijk

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The heart of the gospel - rediscovered or lost?

by S. de Marie

In 2012 the well-known Anglican theologian N.T. (Tom) Wright wrote a book titled *How God became King*, with as subtitle 'The core of the gospel rediscovered.'¹⁾

This title make us frown: what does it mean?

We would not be in a hurry to pay much attention to it if this author were not currently one of the world's most influential theologians. Also at the Theological University in Kampen, where last year he presented a lecture to a large audience, he has his enthusiastic admirers. His books are in great demand, also in the Netherlands.

His influence is not only partly due to his accessible style of writing, but he also gained a good name among 'orthodox' Christians because of his defence of the historicity of Jesus and his resurrection. Yet, it has not gone unnoticed that Wright takes a deviating approach to a number of doctrinal truths.

Neglected?

In his introduction Wright says: 'At the core of the Christian faith and religious practice lies a fundamental problem: Everyone has forgotten what the four Gospels are about. Yes, they write about Jesus, but what exactly are they saying about Him?'

This sounds rather provocative. Wright suggests that we have actually always read the Gospels wrongly, or at least explained or understood them wrongly. We have failed to take important things about Jesus into account. Consequently, even the core of the gospel has escaped us! The 'we' and 'us' are then in particular those Christians who abide by confessional documents! We would, through these Confessions, not only have overlooked things in the Bible but also have read things 'into' the Bible that are not there.

Let's have a look at it.

Wright compares the Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed) with the four Gospels. He then comes to the conclusion that these Creeds do not really deal with Jesus' life on earth. They make, according to Wright, a direct jump from Jesus' birth to the suffering on the cross and his resurrection. This, says Wright, can be explained by the rejection

of errors during the early years of the Christian church. That's why there would be far too much emphasis placed on the fact that Jesus is God, while the Gospels primarily speak more about the Kingdom of God on earth. Nicea would only mention the kingdom of Christ after His return.

In the Reformed Confessions, according to Wright, the gospel is shown through the eyes of Paul, with too much attention given to the cross as the place where sins were reconciled. Wright says that if there would have been more careful listening to the Gospels themselves, there would be much more attention given to Jesus' exaltation, to his Kingdom that came with his coming to earth with the cross of Calvary as climax. That cross and the kingdom belong together.

A kingdom not-of-this-world

According to Wright the issue at the cross is the war between the kingdom of this world ruled by the emperor, and a not-of-this-world kingdom with Jesus. The latter 'stands entirely separate from the empire or a simple, old-fashioned violent revolution. That Kingdom is universal, omnipresent and omnipotent.' (161).

Wright opposes the general idea about reconciliation, which is no more than 'the forgiveness of sins' which allows 'people to go to heaven.' As a result, according to him, the problem of evil is not being dealt with.

According to Wright all four Gospels regard the history of Jesus not only as a confrontation between God's realm and the empire, but as the victory of the first over the latter. We find this theme throughout the New Testament, he says. The violent death of the Lamb meant that the monsters and their terrible kingdoms are finally defeated, and that the old dragon, Satan himself, has been conquered (210). 'The cross in the gospel of John on which, as we know, God's love and Jesus' love become completely visible (Jn. 13:1), is the moment when God seizes the power and rules over the emperor. From now on the ruler of the world will be judged.' (157).

Wright explains Col. 2:15: *Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it* [NKJV] like this: 'When Jesus died on the cross he overcame the 'principalities and powers' who had divided up the world in their own violent and destructive way. The

coming of God's Kingdom means that the earthly kingdoms are dethroned, not for the purpose of replacing them by a similar regime (that imposes its will with superior weapons), but by a realm in which power is the power of the servant and strength is the strength of love.' (211).

Wright assigns the church and its testimony a place in the building up of the Kingdom. That testimony ought to bear witness through suffering and serving in this world. It ought to express itself in a way different from just throwing bombs on Muslim countries in retaliation for 11 September 2001. (p. 169).

As examples of good Christian action he mentions William Wilberforce (the abolition of slavery), Desmond Tutu (the warrior against apartheid) and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (the church is there for the world).

Cross and Kingdom

Wright asks himself the question: How can the suffering and death of Israel's Messiah contribute to the establishment of his worldwide government? This he calls the main theme of his book.

First he relates this to the people of Israel. The gospel writers all saw in Jesus the embodiment of Israel's God, who came back after the exile to live with his people and save them from the curse. And what happens then through the suffering and death on the cross? God becomes king!

Wright mentions various texts relating to the atoning death of Christ, but explains them such that the most important thing is that his suffering leads to the kingship.

Thus he connects the suffering of Jesus with the suffering of Israel. In the cross Israel's history reaches its climax: the kingdom of God is established. According to him Isaiah 40-55 about the suffering servant of the Lord must be read so that 'the servant is the one through whose representative work Israel's God will accomplish his goal with Israel and the whole world.' (196).

Wright again and again establishes a direct connection between suffering and kingship. But there is no place in this for atonement through satisfaction! Wright pays no attention to Jesus' substitutional suffering as bearing the wrath of God, but for a people-representing suffering as the way to become king. It was suffering by which the evil of wicked forces was overcome.

This is therefore really something quite different from what our Confessions teach in echoing the Bible.

Wright seeks to justify this by referring to Luke 24:25-27, 'Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? ...'. Wright says: 'The suffering of Israel's representative takes the sting out of the evil of the world; Luke makes clear that the betrayal, the arrest and the death of Jesus formed the climax of the evil of the wicked powers.' (191).

Church and suffering

Wright wants to abolish the idea that Jesus came 'to save us out of the world.' No, he says, God has come in Jesus 'to claim his dominion over the world.' In this process Jesus has transformed Israel into a new community. This new community will, like the Israel of old, have to endure suffering. But that suffering of Jesus' followers is, like Jesus' own suffering, not only inseparably connected with the divine goal, but partly also the means to achieve that goal (205).

Wright does not see the suffering of the church as suffering for Christ's sake. According to him, it also has 'a positive result whereby the redemptive effect of Jesus' death is passed on, not by adding anything to it but by sharing in it.' (207). They [the members of the church] must be messengers of the Kingdom, first on the basis of Jesus' suffering, and thereafter by means of their own suffering (209).

The slain and glorified Lamb of Revelation 5 is not only the shepherd of his people, he is also their example (209). The cross puts the church into motion [with] a new missiology embracing a political theology (247). In other words, the church must show service and love to the world, and thereby provide substance to the Kingdom of Christ.

Kingdom without reconciliation through satisfaction?

This claim of a completely new explanation of the gospel must make us wary. Wright's reasoning contains many quotations from Scripture, as well as ideas that are familiar to us. But apart from that there is also much that we find strange.

Let us say first what we find 'appealing'. It is the thought that the kingdom of God in Christ is actually being exercised on earth. That Christ through His death and resurrection has received the name above all names, specifically to exercise His power on this earth. The Kingdom of God is indeed not something that manifests itself only after the Second Coming, although it will by then be perfectly established.

Here it is incorrect to blame the Confessions for having no eye for this. The words: 'and sits at the right

hand of God the Father' follow immediately after Christ's Ascension, showing an active government also prior to the Second Coming. Wright completely overlooks that the Heidelberg Catechism develops this further in Lord's Days 18 and 19!

While we recognise something in the theme, it strikes us that a picture is being presented of Christ's work that is completely different from what we know from Scripture. We see Christ [in Wright's work] not as the Priest-King who offered Himself for his people on the cross; who each day pleads for them. We also do not see Him as the one who preserves his church in the world and protects it in all dangers. In other words, [Wright] has also not taken the content of HC Lord's Days 18 and 19 into account.

Wright's defence is that he wanted to listen only to the Gospel writers, not to Paul. But is that allowed? Should we not take all of Scripture into account when it comes to the gospel? There is after all only *the* one Author, God Himself! There are moreover plenty of texts in the Gospels themselves that identify Jesus as the one who suffered for the sins of his people (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; 14:24; John 1:29; John 3:16). I am thinking also of the references in the Gospels to the Servant of the Lord (Matthew 8:17; 12:17; Luke 4:18). Why does Wright make extensive references to Daniel 7 and parts of Isaiah to strengthen his argumentation, and why does he reject the atoning sacrifice as something that belongs to Paul and not to the cross?

Wright presents us in this way with a distorted picture of the work of Christ - a picture that is not in accordance with the whole of Scripture, but also not in accordance with the Gospels themselves.

The question is: how is this possible? Does Wright not impose here his own view on Scripture? If he does all he can to explain away Christ's sacrifice of atonement through satisfaction and Christ bearing God's wrath on the cross, the question arises whether he perhaps does not believe it. How does he see sin, God's wrath and the final judgment? What is his view on the atonement and justification through faith?

Wright has written about the justification through faith in several books. We hope to write about this in another article.

Evil and suffering

What Wright regards as the most important work of Christ on the cross is the victory over 'evil.' He associates that 'evil' in particular with the rulers of the world - such as the Roman emperor.

Now God's Word does say that Jesus disarmed principalities and powers (Col. 2:15). But there we will have to think of the powers of darkness (Luke 22:53; Col. 1:13, Eph. 6:12), of the rulers of the realm of sin and death, of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). It is true that these powers can also influence earthly kings. But that is here not the first point at issue. The denial of Christ's bearing God's wrath against sin by which Satan was cast out of heaven (Rev. 12:10) results also in a wrong interpretation of the effect of Christ's victory. Wright focuses primarily on the evil government of earthly kings. But Eph. 6:12 says: *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world rulers of this darkness.*

Wright also fills the suffering of the church with a content we do not know from Scripture. In Romans 8:18 we read: *The sufferings of this present time do not outweigh the glory that will be revealed in us;* and in 1 Peter 4:13, *The suffering which [believers] must undergo may give joy if it is a suffering for Christ's sake.* But it sounds strange when we read in Wright's writings that the exalted Lamb that stands as though it had been slain is [our] example to now suffer as church and in that way propagate his Kingdom in the world.

In this Wright misunderstands on the one hand the High-priestly function of the Lamb, while on the other hand the suffering itself does not represent propagating the Kingdom. It is true that our obedience to Christ goes with his Kingdom, also when it leads to suffering. The question is whether Wright means to say this. Moreover, the suffering of the church does invoke the curse of God's judgments upon the world (Rev. 6:10; 16:5-7). We do not find these elements of Christ's kingship with Wright.

The Kingdom and we

We missed in Wright's book a lot of scriptural content about the Kingdom of God and our task in that Kingdom. Scripture teaches us to seek the Kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33), to acknowledge God and Christ as king, to love Him with all our heart. And therefore sacrifice everything for the service to the Lord, serve God and honour Him according to His Word, repent from evil ways, fight against sin, and maintain the antithesis in our life.

In the service of his Kingdom we will pray for the coming of His Kingdom in perfection and look longingly for his return. We will build his church and participate in the meeting of the church as the people of the Kingdom.

Entering into the Kingdom of God means to us a

spiritual war. And in this struggle we shall have to firmly uphold God's Word in a lawless world. We shall, furthermore, have to bear witness of the Lord Jesus to this world in our conduct and talk, as the only name by which there is salvation. And also call people back from sinful ways. This includes warning against the approaching judgment (Acts 17; Rev. 11).

Do we then have no other task with regard to the world without God than to witness? Yes, we have. We still have a task under Christ the King to live and work in this world to God's honour. But that does not mean that our main task here is to transform this world into the Kingdom of God. We expect according to his promise new heavens and a new earth.

Conclusion

If we consider all this, the conclusion is that this book of N.T. Wright clashes with Scripture and Confession. Does he not teach a different gospel and a different Christ? This book takes the reader away from God's Word. It has lost the heart of the gospel.

This article appeared in Dutch as 'De kern van het evangelie herondekt of kwijt?' in *De Bazuin*, Vol 9/18, 9 September 2015, and was translated by J. Eikelboom.

¹⁾ The book has also been published in English with slightly different subtitles, e.g. 'The forgotten Story of the Gospels' and 'Getting to the Heart of the Gospels' and 'Why we've all misunderstood the Gospels'.

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'Holy and canonical, perfect and complete'

by T.L. Bruinius

*The text of a lecture on the binding to the Confessions and the letting go of this in the Reformed Church in the Netherlands (GKv).**

The church has one foundation. That is the Bible. God's own Word. Besides this we also speak of the Three Forms of Unity as foundation of the Church. Sometimes a distinction can be made between the Scriptural foundation, the Bible, and the historical foundation, the Confessions that were adopted by the Church in the course of church history. One could also say: the foundation of the church is primarily formed by Scripture, and besides this, the Three Forms of Unity also as part of this powerful foundation.

This does not contradict each other. Because the Three Forms of Unity echo God's Word, in a straightforward way. The things that we confess in the Belgic Confession, in the Heidelberg Catechism and in the Canons of Dort are very simple to find in God's Word. The adopted Confessions echo what the LORD has said in His Word. Or, putting it differently, echoes the *doctrine* of the Bible.

Significance

Much can be said about the meaning and purpose of our reformed Confessions.

One of the purposes of the Confessions is to preserve the pure doctrine of the Church and to fence off all kinds of heresy. That is why office-bearers are asked to agree with these Confessions, as you know.

That consent can and may be asked. Because those Confessions indeed echo God's Word. That can be seen on every page of the Confessions. They are, as it were, steeped with quotations from the Bible and numerous references to Scripture.

Therefore the Forms of Unity also have authority. Indeed, a derived authority, derived from the Bible, but that is precisely why it has authority. What the Church confesses in those writings is truth. That is what we believe. Deviations from this truth cannot and may not occur. That is reformed.

Putting it differently, one could say: the Reformed Confessions give expression to our binding, unconditionally, to God's Word.

All those in the Church are bound to them, unless it

is proved from God's Word that an article does not echo that Word.

Two issues

However, currently something is going on with this Confession, also in the GKv . We can distinguish two issues.

The first issue is that the position of the Confessions - in their totality as Confession of the Church - as authoritative, are being done away with - are being put aside.

The second issue is that room has come in the Church to deviate on points of the Confession and to go directly against it.

These two issues have everything to do with each other.

The foundation of the Church, about which we are all so concerned, is being, and will be attacked and undermined in the developments in the GKv. And that has very serious consequences. This is what I would like to speak about with you this evening.

Doxology?

To make clear the deterioration of the historical foundation of the churches, I will take you back to 2006 and 2007. In those years Prof. B. Kamphuis held lectures and later wrote in *De Reformatie* about the 'dealing with the Confessions in the Church'. (Earlier already, in 2000, he unfolded his ideas on dealing with the Confessions in a collection of articles *Geloven in zekerheid*). In his lecture he expresses his opinion that we must primarily view the Confessions as 'doxology', as the Church's answers to God's gospel. He believes that that is the first and most important function of the Confessions. We must view them in that light.

The response of the Church. That then is a human response. And yes, nobody shall deny that the Confessions were written by people. Well then, says Kamphuis, that then means that they have their limitations. They are indeed human responses. He emphasizes that human aspect very strongly. And they are written in a specific time in history, in a certain context, in a certain period of struggles. Against the background of that time and by the people of that time. When we look at the Confessions then we must keep in mind: doxology, human response, in a certain context. And thus restricted.

Don't these words sound a bit familiar?
The conclusion may then be that the Three Forms of Unity must be used and explained in that way.

Context?

Do you perhaps think that this actually sounds quite good? That there isn't too much wrong with this? That it is acceptable to explain and apply the Confessions against the background of in the knowledge, circumstances and intentions of the original authors? A product of its time? Such as, for example, professors at the Theological college in Kampen literally write?

Reformed ministers from the past have, throughout the centuries, always taught us otherwise. Of course it is good to know how the Confessions came about, in which period of church struggles and under which circumstances. If we know much about this, then we can understand the Confessions better. That context, however, is not determinative for the explanation and application of the content! The Confessions should be read and explained in the light of the Bible. In accordance with the doctrine of Scripture and which is echoed. Then we deal with the Confessions correctly and that is a very different approach.

To regard the Confession primarily as a human response to God's gospel in a certain historical context, it gives room for all sorts of interpretations. Kamphuis then also argues that the Confessions are too restricted for our time. They no longer give the needed answers to our questions... But that doesn't matter, according to Kamphuis' reasoning, so we conclude, for they must, after all, primarily be seen as doxology and homage...

That many people in the churches still view it differently, that they see the Three Forms of Unity particularly as a summary of the doctrine of the Church and as rejection of heresy, as protection of the Church against unbiblical doctrine, that is not correct anymore. That certainly should not come first in our dealing with the Confessions. That would stand in the way of a correct dealing with the Confessions.

Authority

Prof. Kamphuis says even more about this when he speaks about the authority of the Confessions. Yes, certainly, office-bearers are bound to the Three Forms of Unity. They must subscribe to the doctrine of the Confessions. However, and here comes the point, they are not bound to the letter of the Confessions. To the content, yes, but not to

the letter. No 'literalism'. Do you see where this leads to?

We believe that in this manner the Three Forms of Unity receive a very different position - no longer authoritative. The emphasis is shifting: from echoing God's Word in everything to human doxology in an historical content, even though Kamphuis says that the Confession is indispensable for the Church and certainly has authority. That authority, however, has received a very different meaning. The binding to the Confessions becomes very different. Being unconditionally bound to God's Word, by subscribing to the Three Forms of Unity, disappears from sight and becomes much less important. Once again, it is because the emphasis no longer lies upon faithfully and obediently echoing God's Word, but on the human and temporary aspect. And these aspects are not normative. In this way the foundation is and becomes hollowed out.

Actuality

In these developments it is evident that this opinion is shared by many at the Theological University and in the Churches; perhaps not verbally, but then at least in practice. There is no longer an accountability to the Confessions. If that were the case, discipline would definitely be exercised upon various theologians and ministers. Then all sorts of ecclesiastical decisions in recent years would not have been taken.

We refer you to the actuality of these developments. At the General Synod Ede, in the continued sessions of January 15 and 16 this year, a new subscription form was definitively adopted, instead of the one used up until now. It is now called the 'form of binding'. However, the new name is misleading. Because office-bearers are now much less bound to Scripture and Confession than with the old subscription form. Ministers, for example, now have much more room to present different or personal teachings to the congregation without a direct threat of church discipline.

It is also evident in the appointment that this same synod made for the subject of Dogmatics. Dr. R.T. te Velde and Dr. J.M. Burger were appointed as professors, and the appointment of the latter is a serious matter. Because Dr. Burger denies aspects of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. He thinks that the atonement lies not so much in Christ's sacrifice on the cross, in the ultimate shedding of blood. Nowadays you cannot bring such an imagery to the people. No, the sacrifice of Christ lies in His complete devotion to God, even until death, if

necessary. Thus something very different. The heart of our redemption is affected, adapted to present day opinions. But doesn't Article 21 of the Belgic Confessions say: '*... offering Himself on the tree of the cross, where He poured out His precious blood to purge away our sins*'?

Again, another professor who, like Prof. Paas, openly deviates from the Confessions and apparently receives all the room to do so. To also teach this to future ministers.

No doubt you are also aware of the withdrawal of Prof. Douma from the GKv. In his book 'Afscheid' (Departure) in which he defends his withdrawal, he also confirms, with several concrete examples, how the binding to the Confessions is maintained less and less.

The line that Prof. Kamphuis described is simply being extended.

Direct deviation

Now the second point. In the GKv we saw and see that not only the place and value of the Confessions are changing, but we also notice teachings that are going directly in against the Confessions. We refer to what we just mentioned. That is logical. That is connected with each other. If you want to see the Confession primarily as a human, historically bound document, to which you are not literally bound (whatever that may mean exactly) then the protective function of the Confession disappears. Then you indeed make room to deviate from the Confession.

And - we must see this clearly - to be able to deviate from God's Word.

New Hermeneutics

In the past, at the time of the liberations of 2003/2004 and 2010 this was already pointed out. On several points, as you know. It was about the seventh commandment, the fourth commandment, the sacraments, the liturgy and church discipline. For many of us that was the reason that we knew we were called to liberate. God's Word was being abandoned on many points.

Today this is still very relevant. We allude to the discussion regarding women in office and the very unsatisfactory decision made on this at General Synod Ede. (This is a complicated and vague decision of which it can at least be determined that the norm whether to have female office-bearers or not, is apparently not clearly given in the Bible. The

foundation of the majority report is rejected; but only the foundation. The view that the office should be open to women has the right to exist, so long as it is argued from Scripture. Do you hear this? That is different from arguing according to Scripture. It depends on how you consider the Scriptures... In any case, women in office is not a hindrance for unity with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK)). And we refer to the underlying influence of the so-called new hermeneutics. However, when we speak about the Confessions then we must determine that the commitment of this new hermeneutics and the conclusions it leads to (and the demand for women in office is a clear and disturbing example of this) are simply in direct conflict with the Confessions.

Holy and canonical, perfect and complete

The title of this lecture is 'Holy and canonical, perfect and complete'. These words are borrowed from Articles 5 and 7 of the Belgic Confession. In these articles we confess that God's Word is true. That God's Word is holy and canonical. Nothing may be added to or taken away from that. We confess in these articles that God's Word is perfect. And complete. We do not need more. This, as it is written in the Bible, is sufficient for us. In Article 2 we also confess the clarity of God's Word. What the LORD has given to us in His Word, so say the Confessions, is sufficient for our salvation.

No, that does not mean that every person shall immediately fully understand every word, every sentence, every text. That is not necessary. And I say it deliberately in this way. But it does mean that the Bible is clear in what is the will of the LORD. Not only for certain people, in a certain period of history, but for church people of all centuries.

Many ministers in the GKv will deny this. Last year, you probably remember this as well, a few professors went to Canada to meet and discuss with concerned Canadian colleagues. It became evident there that Prof. Kamphuis, and his colleagues with him, are of the opinion that the Bible is not clear! The Bible is not adequate. Adequate means: satisfactory, fitting, applicable, suitable for its purpose. And that's not what the Bible is, they think. The Bible is very difficult. Unclear. 'Yes' and 'no' at the same time. God's will is not clear. That is because all of God's Word comes to us in metaphors, in imagery. And those metaphors are not easy to interpret. The Bible as we know it, so we may conclude from those words, is not enough for us. God has apparently not made Himself - and we don't mean that

disrespectfully - clearly and fully known. The Bible reader cannot find everything that is necessary for his salvation. In this present time. More is needed. Interpretation. Explanation whereby the text is made applicable and acceptable for our context. So that it says something very different than we always thought.

Yes, we cannot conclude otherwise. And that is in direct conflict with Articles 2, 5 and 7 of the Belgic Confession.

Yet...

Yet all these things can be said. Yet it may be propagated.

We have already determined that earlier. With regard to the publications of Prof. De Bruijne, Rev. Doedens and Dr. Van Bekkum. But today it is being put forth very bluntly.

From the reports about the discussions at Synod Ede you would be able to conclude that it is not all that bad. After all, the majority of the delegates seem to be of opinion that the report on man/woman in the church, through straightforward reasoning starting from the new hermeneutics, is not a good starting point for a decision on this issue.

Sounds good, doesn't it?

But is it not so that many still want women in office on other grounds? Is it not so that of all advisors only one, Prof. Van Bruggen, rejected the case? And didn't all the others only come up with practical objections? Is it not so that in fact, the commission to the deputies, and the commission to the new deputies, suggests that possibly the Church, throughout the centuries, has wrongly interpreted the Biblical instruction regarding the position of man and woman in the church? And that the Bible, that God's commandments on this point are not clear?

That God's Word has a very different meaning today than in the days of the bible authors?

Whoever thinks and proclaims in this way, is in direct conflict with the Confessions.

Seriousness

We will summarize. The position of the Confessions has changed. They have no authority anymore. There is room to deal with them differently. Where necessary they are put aside. For isn't it necessary, to be able to function in these times? For those Confessions are a hindrance, an impediment to modern theology. Room has been created for deviant teachings. In direct conflict with the Confessions. And, because that is what it is all about, in direct conflict with Scripture itself.

Brothers and sisters, that is the situation in the Reformed Churches (GKv). Such thinking has become commonplace. It is evident everywhere. The foundation has been rejected - the historic foundation and, inseparably intertwined, the Scriptural foundation. And when the Church lets go of its foundation and rejects it, then that church is no longer Church of Christ.

That is the deep seriousness of letting go of the Confessions.

Rest

Brothers and sisters of the Reformed Churches (GKv), you should know that the developments in the Reformed Churches (GKv) do not leave us unmoved. On the contrary. We notice the deterioration with deep sorrow, concern and sadness. Please never think that we let go of you and of the brothers and sisters there. Every Sunday in the churches and in many homes, we remember you in our prayers. It is not without reason that we hold these evenings for concerned members. Many of us maintain contacts within the family circles and with friends and acquaintances.

We desire to help you to find the way out of these concerns.

At a previous information evening for concerned members, Rev. Van Gulp pointed out from the Bible that there is now only one way to go: break away from the iniquity. Otherwise you yourself will become part of it.

We sincerely call upon you to join us. Before it is too late. It is no longer five to twelve - it is already five past twelve.

Breaking away from the iniquity of abandoning the foundations, the sin of abandoning Scripture - for that is what we are talking about: the putting aside the binding to the Confessions - breaking away from this means: liberation. That is now the call of the LORD. Of this we are deeply convinced. And this we wish to impress on your minds

Follow this call. You will find rest. No, that does not mean that there will never be any struggles anymore. However, you will receive the rest of Matthew 11:28: 'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'. The rest of again living in obedience to the Word of our God.

'Come, let us go with one accord'.

**) Lecture held at an information evening for concerned members of the GKv, held in Zwolle, Leusden, Pijnacker and Grootegast, by DGK.*

From the churches

by Joh. Houweling

1. On 12 September 2015 br. M.A. Sneep graduated and received his diploma for Minister of the Word from the training for the Ministry. He passed cum laude. On 3 October he passed the preparatory examination by classis and became eligible for calling. Very soon he received a call from DGK Groningen and has, in the meantime, accepted this call.

2. The 5th synod of DGK, Synod Groningen, officially closed on 13 June 2015.

The General Synod Groningen 2014-2015 officially closed on Saturday 13 June 2015. The deputies for preparing the next synod are now working on the Acts for publication. The Acts of GS Groningen 2014-2015 will be published as soon as possible, both in book form and digitally on the internet.

Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad:

Joh. Houweling, Rev. C. Koster, Rev. S. de Marie, A. van der Net

Secretary: Rev. C. Koster: dsckoster@gmail.com

The next General Synod will be held in the spring of 2018, the church of DGK Berkel en Rodenrijs/Bergschenhoek being the convening church.

Secretary: scriba@gereformeerde-kerk.nl

3. On 21 May 2016 we again hope to have a League Day, this time in Dalfsen.

4. The Students society Virtute Dei meets regularly and is well-attended.

5. Recently published: the brochure 'Marriage in the Lord' by dr. S. de Marie v.d.m. This is a translation of his brochure 'Het huwelijk in de Here' and is based on a series of articles that were published in *De Bazuin*, the magazine of The Reformed Churches (DGK) in the Netherlands in 2008. They emanated from a marriage course that was given by the author in Zwolle.

6. At present a second outline on church history is being written titled 'Terug naar het Woord' ('Back to the Word') by br. T.L. Bruinius. In these outlines the church history from 1944 to 2003 is discussed. Recent church history that is educational for our younger youth but also for ourselves.

New outlines on Bible books such as **Luke** and **Acts** are also being written for the youth of 12 years old and above.

7. DGK Berkel en Rodenrijs / Bergschenhoek commenced with the building of an own church building at Bleiswijk in June 2015.



Br. J. VanTil and br. G. Kruyswijk from the LRC Abbotsford at the table of Synod Groningen 2014-2015 during the session held on 28 February at Hasselt.