

REFORMED CONTINUA

Magazine of The Reformed Churches (restored) of The Netherlands

Proverbs 8:32

- Volume 7 - October 2011 -

From the editor

October 2011

It is with thankfulness to the Lord that we, for the 7th time, may publish a Magazine.

This issue comes earlier and it is also less voluminous than number 6. The reason for this is to increase the readability.

In future we hope to make it a quarterly magazine, instead of a bi-annual one.

The Magazine is being well-read and it clearly shows that it fills a need.

At the moment we have 442 digital subscriptions from all over the world. There are 150 in Canada, 104 in Australia, 47 in the United States of America, 29 in The Netherlands, 3 in Korea, 2 in New Zealand, 2 in the United Kingdom and one in Germany. There is only one subscription in South Africa, so some work has to be done there and we hope our magazine will be read more there. There are 103 unknown subscriptions, these are gmails and hotmails etc.

In this edition we begin with an article by Rev. P. van

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Gorp on the 'Refutation' (a summary of articles published earlier in De Bazuin), then an article by dr. K. Schilder and an article by Rev. S. de Marie

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titled: Too early or too late?, also published in De Bazuin.

This time you are introduced to Ermelo, a ward of De Gereformeerde Kerk, Zwolle.

Noteworthy is the fact that we had a national presentation of "our" training for the Ministry of the Word. It became clear that it was necessary that a large part of the training had to be done by our own ministers and lecturers. We have 3 students doing this training, and for this we are thankful to the Lord. The first student has already begun with catechism work-experience. He started with this in Berkel & Rodenrijs/Bergschenhoek, where 37 pupils, divided into 4 groups, are receiving catechism lessons. At the end of the year he will also commence work-experience in pastoral work in the same congregation, and at the beginning of next year he hopes to finish off his studies. Every reason for great thankfulness to the Lord.

We are also thankful that on the 17th September 2011, we were able to have our 2nd Church (contact) Day. It was well-attended and we were all

encouraged by a number of speeches with topics such as: "Together in the covenant" and "Believing together". Also the community singing was enjoyed by all.

On the 26th November, the Lord willing, the 4th Synod will start. This time it will be held in Hasselt. The evening before there will be a prayer meeting, also in Hasselt.

Lastly, for now, we hope to have our next annual League Day on the 12th May, 2012.

In all this we may know that God Himself protects His church to the end and that there are still so many possibilities.

Finally, we hope and pray that this issue also may be well-received and that it may be an instrument in the Lord's hands to open eyes world-wide to the right view on the church and so may participate in God's church-gathering work, to the honour of His holy Name.

Joh. Houweling, Bleiswijk



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The life and struggle of The Reformed Churches (restored)

The editors of REFORMED CONTINUA want to make known the circumstances under which The Reformed Churches (restored) live. As may be known the churches came under the attack of the Father of the Lies, when in some local congregations several church members tried to introduce false teachings.

We experience the fulfilment of what the apostle Paul told the elders of the church of Ephesus on his journey to Jerusalem where he would be taken prisoner:

I know that after my departure....from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Acts 20:29, 30 (RSV)

This is what happened some time ago in several congregations - brothers and sisters following elders and withdrawing from the oversight of the Church council and organising their own church services and although being schismatic, pretending to form a church. They even united to form what they call a provisional federation of so called churches over against the real federation of the Reformed Churches (restored) .

But the Lord, according to His promise, defended and preserved His church for Himself by His Spirit and Word in the unity of true faith (Catechism Lord's Day 21), so that now the peace and the security of Jerusalem have returned!

Schisms

We grieve because these people tore a rent not just in our church but in effect in the body of Christ!

What was the reason to separate from the Church, which according to Article 28 of the Belgic Confession only then is legal when the people from which you separate must be called 'those who do not belong to the Church'?

How could this happen in so short a time after our Liberation in 2003, after years of a blessed and joyful serving of the Lord and experiencing the communion of saints in all the local congregations and in the federation of churches?

Without going into the local developments we will, in this article, explain what the real causes are of these sad happenings.

Causes

The church history teaches us that almost always the causes for schism are to be found in the matters of the doctrine and of the church government. That is also the case now.

As to the doctrine, the separatists maintain a false doctrine of the church, of sanctification and of the office in the church.

Concerning the church government they do not accept the authority of the major ecclesiastical assemblies and refuse to consider her decisions according to Article 31 of the Church Order as settled and binding in case they do not agree with them, without executing the duty to appeal in the ecclesiastical way as described in the Church Order. In short they deny the jurisdiction of the major assemblies as expressed in Article 37 of the Church Order.

So it all started with the rejection of certain decisions of the General Synod concerning the setting up of the offices in a certain place. From there this disobedience spread to other congregations.

And from this particular deviation from the right path of church government it came to aberrations in the reformed doctrine. Or rather, as it came to light afterwards, all this originated from the wrong conception of the reformation of the church, as if the doctrine of salvation by grace alone is the only valid mark of the legality of the church as a true church.

Doctrine - Church

To explain what the false teachings of these groups concerning the church are, we will cite from a brochure in which they try to justify their decision to part from the church. They called it The reformation of the Church and the Gospel of free grace.

In it they stressed their conviction that in the matter of the reformation of the Church its legality always is determined by the practice that the gospel of free grace is recognized and taught. That is, according to them, the only governing motive for the reformation of the church.

They profess this on the authority of Dr. H.F. Kohlbrugge, a well known theologian of the nineteenth century. His background was Lutheran and in his theology we find several typical Lutheran

convictions on the church and on sanctification. Luther so much emphasized the salvation *sola gratia*, by grace alone, that he did not care much about the church government, let alone about a Church Order. According to him Christ governs His church through the office of the preachers only, that is if the gospel of free grace can be preached without hindrance. So in his opinion the church is everywhere where the gospel of free grace is proclaimed. By the way, that also is the conviction of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, up till now one of the obstacles against unification with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

The people who explained their breaking away from the church defended their sin with the assertion that the Reformed Churches (restored) had a false doctrine concerning the church in claiming that every believer was obliged to join the church. They were of the opinion that there were more true churches in one place or region and that stressing the point of joining the true church narrowed the path of salvation. They rejected the idea that the address of the true church could be pointed out, as that, according to them, is against the gospel of true grace.

But the truth is that the call to join the church implies pointing to the address of the church and stressing the calling of the Lord to join His church where He gathers her in the unity of true faith.

That is why we like to sing with the words of Psalm 122:

Let us with one accord

Go to the temple of the Lord...

Jerusalem, where blessing waits

Our feet are standing in thy gates.

As it is God's commandment to join the Church, then it stands to reason that this church should have an address. And we believe that it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to join the assembly where the Lord Jesus Christ gathers His sheep, as we confess in Article 28 Belgic Confession

Doctrine - Sanctification

Moreover this priority of the gospel of grace, that is the justification by faith alone, over other points of faith, meant that Luther did not have much place for the sanctification. Neither did the, by the separatists in their brochure revered, Rev. Kohlbrugge.

It is in this line of reasoning that, in the brochure

of the separatists, in which the reformation of the Church was limited to the preaching of the gospel of grace, time and again they opposed the Scriptural preaching of the obedience to the demands of the covenant.

They accused the preacher of the call to obedience to God's command that this leads to self justification and a certain own righteousness. And they did not adhere to the Scripture in which the Lord tells us that it is Christ Who by His grace renews us and conforms us to His image.

Doctrine - The offices in the church

We are being accused of maintaining a false doctrine concerning the offices in the church, viz. concerning the calling of the office bearers.

Contrary to what Scripture teaches us about the offices in the church they are of the opinion that this is a matter of democracy: a brother is appointed to his office by way of voting by the congregation for the brother of their choice. That is final and the church council has no say in that process.

For this opinion they refer to the question put to the future office bearer in the church service when he is going to be installed as office bearer. For then he has to answer a.o. this question:

Do you believe in your heart that God Himself, through His congregation has called you to this office?

There you are, they say. It is clear that it is the congregation which decides who is to be their next elder/deacon and the church council has no say in it - let alone a major church assembly!

The sole task of the church council is the organisation of the election.

Our answer to these outspoken erroneous convictions was and is as follows;

We have to realise that there is more than the election by the congregation.. It is the church council which according to the result of the election appoints the office bearers. This is definitely not just a formality. The church council can decide not to appoint the brother chosen by the congregation, for instance because new reasons that came to light afterwards or objections brought forward by members of the church are, by the council, deemed lawful or because the brother concerned asked to be relieved from his appointment.

This pertains to the authority of the church council. Christ Himself gives His congregation the office

bearers according to His will through the existing office bearers who govern the congregation.

In the congregation of Jerusalem the deacons were chosen by the congregation, but they were appointed by the apostles, Acts 6:3. We find the same term in Acts 14:23. And the apostle Paul orders Titus to appoint elders, Titus 1:5.

So there was a certain authority which directed the whole process of receiving office bearers. In the course of the history of the church this authority went to the church council.

This Scriptural way of appointing office bearers proved in the first years after the Liberation in 2003, to be an obstacle for a group of brothers and sisters who had liberated themselves from the deformation of the so-called Reformed Churches (liberated).

They claimed to be a local church which had the right to install office bearers. But still, as the Church Order states that in a case like this they have to ask the classis for permission to institute the church, they lodged such a request with the classis..

When the classis judged that the time was not yet ripe for the installation of the offices in their group, they were of the opinion that they were wronged by this decision and appealed to synod. When synod did not uphold their appeal they decided not to join the federation of Reformed Churches (restored) and to go their own way.

That meant that for several years they had their own independent congregation apart from the other churches.

But when in 2010 the so-called provisional federation was formed they were accepted as a true church, although their origin was contrary to the Scriptural rules of the Church Order, as set out above.

In the course of time this method of self willingness and independentism remained a source of discontent among several church members which led to schisms. For it spread through some congregations where even office bearers time and again condemned the decisions of synods, but at the same time refused to abide by them or lodge an appeal. When they caused divisions in their local church and had to be deposed, again they refused to follow the path as proscribed in the Church Order but immediately called the congregation away from following their own office bearers and started their own church services.

Church government

The Church Order maintains that the major assemblies have a certain jurisdiction over the

minor assemblies, the church councils included. Now hear what the separatists in their brochure claim:

Let us be very clear about this: a major assembly has no authority at all over a minor assembly, let alone over a church council (underlined by the authors of the brochure).

We agree with the assertion that the authority of a major assembly is restricted in a certain way. A major assembly for instance has no authority to suspend an office bearer or to suspend a person from the Holy Supper. But the Church Order still speaks of the authority of major assemblies over minor assemblies, church councils included. This authority is a derived authority. It means that the church councils delegate brothers to major assemblies and authorize them to take decisions according to God's Word and the Church Order and promise to keep these decisions as settled and binding, provided they are not in conflict with God's Word or with the Church Order (Art. 31 CO). In case a church council or a church member is convinced that a certain decision is in conflict with God's Word or the Church Order, he is duty bound to lodge a petition to the next assembly to revoke the wrong decision. That is his responsibility for the well being of all the churches and for the obedience to God's commandments and the order of the church.

Now what happened when the separatists came to the conclusion that in their opinion the Synod or classis had erred in making her decisions? Instead of appealing to the next meeting of the assembly concerned they just rejected that decision and that was it. They repeatedly spoke against it and acted accordingly, but refused steadfastly to lodge an appeal.

When admonished of this disorderly conduct, by which the peace of the church was broken and the right and Scriptural authority of the church council was being destroyed, they still persevered in their own way and self willingness.

This led to great tensions in the church council. At last these brothers accused the council of disobedience to God's Word and of false teachings and called them to repentance.

The council started to discuss these accusations and asked from its members the promise not to divulge anything about these troubles to the congregation, which all the elders gave.

Still, it did not last a week before the opposing

brothers had the audacity to present the council with another pamphlet in which they stuck to their accusations. When they did not reach their goal they broke their promise to keep the discussions in the council confidential and informed the whole congregation of the proceedings in the church council and their accusations against their brothers office bearers.

The church council had to take measures because this was no less than originating a schism. So these brothers were provisionally suspended from the exercise of their office in order to discuss the whole matter in a combined meeting of this church council together with the council of the church which by classis was assigned for this purpose.

But instead of waiting for this opportunity to defend themselves, they called the congregation to gather the next Sunday in their own church service. They instantly and definitely broke away from the church and tried to 'draw away the disciples after them' as the apostle centuries ago had warned.

And when, after their suspension, they had to be deposed, they still went their own way without going the right way to appeal to the major assembly.

This was the way the separatist groups were organised as if they were real churches.

We have to say that all this is a matter of going against their solemn promises, first of not disclosing to the congregation the discussions in the meetings of the church council, but what is more important of their solemn promise when installed as an office bearer to submit to the discipline of the church (Form for the ordination of elders and deacons).

It is no less than a blatant going against the law of the Lord Who warns us that our yes be yes and our no no!

The provisional federation of so called reformed churches decided to accept the schismatic groups as true churches, thereby practicing their own manner of worshipping the Lord Who forbade in the second commandment to worship Him in any other manner than He has commanded in His Word (Lord's Day 35).

It is common knowledge that these sad developments occurred time and again in the history of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. We think of the time after the Secession in 1834 when the federation of the seceded churches broke into two because of the refusal of several congregations to accept the authority of the major assemblies according to the Church Order.

It happened again in the sixties of the last century when the sin of independentism destroyed the peace in the church federation and the so called Netherlands Reformed churches were instituted. Again we are confronted with this sin of self willingness and independentism.

Conclusion

Although we are sorely saddened by the departure of church members, we are still comforted by the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ through His apostle to the congregation in Ephesus where there were divisions:

There must be divisions (schisms) among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognised, 1 Corinthians 11:19.

So in full confidence in the promises of the Lord to preserve and gather His church we go forward in the restored peace of Jerusalem. And we continue to try to bring the brothers and sisters back home in the church, those who lost their way in following their leaders speaking bad things.

dr. P. van Gorp



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Introducing you to ...

Ermelo, ward of De Gereformeerde Kerk, Zwolle

Prior to our existence, a number of families had already liberated from the Reformed Church liberated (GKV). Church services were first held in Veenendaal, where, since September 2003, there had been a congregation in formation.

In April 2004 it was decided to commence services, separate from Veenendaal, on 2nd May 2004 in Ermelo. A suitable venue had been found in the society building "Ons Huis", situated at Zeeweg 10 in Ermelo.

We started with 15 brothers and sisters. This may seem very few in the eyes of the people, but we experienced very rich Sundays. In the beginning we met regularly to discuss how the tasks should be divided and how we were to carry on.

At one of those meetings a proposal was tabled to investigate if it was possible to seek contact with the church in Zwolle and environs (a.e.), and to see if we could become a ward of DGK Zwolle a.e.

This was considered a good solution by



the majority. In this way it would be possible to have official church services instead of gatherings.

The response of the consistory of DGK Zwolle was positive. It was decided to elect one elder and one deacon in the ward for the pastoral work. These office bearers are full members of the consistory of DGK Zwolle. When Rev. S. de Marie was ordained as minister of the congregation in Zwolle in January 2006, we, in him, also received our own minister of the Word.

In the meantime there has been some growth and we now have 20 members.

When an infant was born, the first worship service in which the sacrament of Holy Baptism was to be administered could take place. For this occasion a baptismal font was purchased.

After the sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered here, there was a proposal that Holy Supper could also be celebrated locally. The consistory answered positively to this request. After the purchase of a Holy Supper set, a spontaneous gift was received to cover the costs.

In this also we see God's goodness and care. On Sunday 21st May 2006, in the afternoon service, we were able to celebrate the Lord's Supper for the first time in this ward.

The ward also has two Bible study societies.

We are thankful to our heavenly God and Father that we have received the possibilities from Him to be able to have worship services in Ermelo, where the preaching of God's Word has the central place. May He continue to preserve, protect and build His Church.

Ermelo, 10th August, 2011

J. Bruijn



The concerned, who could not come to obedience

Now there lived in Bethel an old prophet whose sons told him all that took place, which the man of God performed that day in Bethel...

And he went after the man of God...

And he said to him: I also am a prophet as thou art, and an angel through the inspiration of the Lord has thus spoken to me: Let him return with thee to thine house and let him eat bread and drink water. Thus he lied to him. Thereupon he returned with him.

*1 Kings 13:11,14a, 18, 19a.
(Version Dr. C. v. Gelderen)*

Bethel.

This name means: house of God.

However, it had become Beth-aven (Hosea 4:15 etc.) which means house of idols.

King Jeroboam had instituted a hierarchy, mainly to protect his position of power, a power-apparatus which enslaved the sons of Abraham. He had established at Bethel a steer-calf worship service in total violation of the Lord's clear commandments; he had blown the revelation of the Lord regarding worship service to the winds; he had pulled the people away from Jerusalem, in other words, from the right church orderly way; and thus elevated the self-willed worship to a new high.

Things were terribly amiss.

He, Jeroboam, sinned and made Israel sin also. Everyone had to comply de facto; the will demanded it.

Thousands understood that things were terribly wrong. They were concerned.

No wonder: they had been raised up totally different. They had learned otherwise a hundred times; and had also expressed it differently.

But between 'being-concerned' and 'being-obedient'

there is often a large gap. The concerned were tolerated in Jeroboam's church-formation: the king was much too clever to oppose 'being-concerned' without a great deal of "understanding". And although there was room for the concerned in "his" church-formation, there was no room for the obedient: a command was a command. Will was will. The fact was that nobody was allowed to go against the established "order", not even if he thought that the order of Yahweh commanded otherwise than the order of the king. The hierarchy operated the power-apparatus. The king let everyone feel that he meant business with that power. The king himself ordered that a great feast was to be held, a feast of the NSW, the National Self-willed Worship. His Majesty himself would ascend the altar which means he would make his appearance as the NSW high priest, as the pontifex maximus (The Great High Priest).

Did Jeroboam immediately convince the concerned?

Oh, no. Many of the concerned remained. Initially, for the NSW, he had to make do with priests "which he had made"; naturally he would rather have had Levites, like Micah the Ephraimite (Judges 17). "But the more faithful amongst them would have nothing to do with the calf-worship of Jeroboam" (vG 39). Now "especially at Bethel, Jeroboam had to make do with non-Levitical priests" (vG 36).

The concerned had even been organized. They had even publicly protested. Brave? Yes. They did so with a vengeance. They had given some home truths about that hierarchy; sometimes they even came into action.

"From out of all Israel the priests and Levites moved to Judah; apparently they did not want to serve in the sanctuaries of Jeroboam (except for a few)" (vG 36).

But not all the concerned became obedient. This-continued protesting- will come to an end by itself, as will - leaving it to protesting only.

So it was also with that man who, although a "man of God", still lived in Bethel. Most likely

he “originated out of the circles of the prophets which had greatly increased since the days of Samuel... and to which Ahijah the Shilonite also belonged. However, not all the prophets remained faithful to the true service of the Lord like Ahijah.... Degeneration had set in through which preparation was made for the appearance of a movement which we can in short name “false prophesy.”

A degeneration that revealed itself in laxity towards Jeroboam’s image worship!

The old Bethelite is just such a degenerated prophet. His only protest against the steer-cult is this that he himself refuses to go there. Furthermore, he would have probably left everything for what it was if the man from Judah had not appeared” (vG 52).

“The man from Judah”?

Yes.

At that very moment, which means, right on that very day that His Majesty is publicly going to parade as the High Priest of the NSW, as the first member of the Imperial Board of the Hierarchical Cult, all of a sudden there comes storming into Bethel, which is festively decorated for the occasion, a prophet from Judah.

From Judah, not from the ten tribes of Jeroboam but from the two tribes, of which Jerusalem is the center of the lawful worship service. This prophet hurls his ban-curse against the altar of the NSW of Jeroboam’s political greatness. And immediately after having carried out his commission, he leaves; without lodging anywhere, without walking into a restaurant, he departs from the ungodly environment. After all, that also is part of his preaching. On command of the Lord he has to depart hastily.

This symbolical action is also part of his commission; he has to preach with words, but also with the illustrated deed.

This departure in great haste, expresses in the most powerful terms that: a good concerned person cannot bear to stay here any longer; from being concerned, it must come to showing obedience.

A faithful servant of the Lord may not associate himself with this hierarchy; he cannot have

communion with it. He, who discontinues communion with those who, like Jeroboam himself, broke the communion with the faithful, restores the communion with the obedient faithful. In other words: Jeroboam, you are schismatic; you have broken up the true communion; you have rejected the commandments of the Lord; you have broken the arrangements. If I, as prophet from Judah, therefore can have no communion with you and your city and your NSW service, then it is not me who has broken the communion, then it is not me who is schismatic, but my refusal of communion with you is a positive deed of church unity with those who faithfully keep the commandments of the Lord.

Of course this whiplash was felt by the old man from Bethel. This colleague-man-of-God from Judah openly cuts off all compromise; although the old man himself has practically lived from the compromise.... Yes, he feels the whiplash.

But he does not repent.

He becomes the typical example of all those concerned, who, when once faced with the choice of radical obedience with a deed: yes or no, lacking the courage to say yes, they afterwards -- in order to maintain a position -- become the most fanatical opponents. They are very much concerned, but: “one should not break.”

They mean: don’t break with the community. And in order to maintain this unscriptural advice, they soon also say: don’t break with sin. Being concerned, but, when all is said and done, not coming to the deed of obedience.

In order to maintain that unscriptural advice they soon reason this way: radically-breaking-with-sin is in itself disobedience, it is: breaking-with-the-commandment, the commandment of unity. They forget that the unity is a matter obedience, but they act as if God prefers the greater numbers of those who live together somewhere more than immediate obedience.

And so Satan kindles the fire of the false prophesy in the heart of the old Bethelite and he prepares and mounts his donkey to ride after his colleague from Judah and says to him: you can safely come with me and still stay in Bethel overnight, for the Lord has informed me that He has changed His once given word to you regarding the ban of staying in

Bethel. The anti-fraternization ban has been lifted: come along!

And so, the prophet of Judah, the man of God, is persuaded. He goes along. Together they have supper. And then the Spirit of God hurls His flames against him: Because you have done this and made your great sermon powerless; and because of your disobedience you have made your protests invalid, therefore you shall not be buried with your fathers.

Soon this judgment is also executed. On the way home a lion attacks and kills him but does not devour his body. The Lord publicly displays the corpse, for everyone must know that God can even get sermon-topic material out of dead prophets, something the living have disregarded, but the Lord took His anti-fraternization ban very seriously.

After this episode, the bones of the prophet of Judah are again spoken of in the days of Josiah's

reformation (2 Kings 23:18). Here it shows that the Lord had rescued his anti-fraternization ban from the equalization attempts of his weak servants. And after many years He still repeats it and emphasizes it.

This is then one of the many Biblical records with regard to the concerned who do not proceed to obedience; protesters who do not come to liberation from sin which drags them along; who, in order to maintain the numbers, also maintain the sin. May this compulsion not be necessary for you! Liberation creates the true unity and rescues the bond among God's people.

dr. K. Schilder

This article is a translation from the Dutch article named "De bezwaarde, die maar niet gehoorzaam werd". It appeared in the Dutch church magazine "DE REFORMATIE" of August 3, 1945.



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Too early or too late?

Voices from the past

Discussion

At present, in Holland as well as in Canada, the moment and therewith the legitimacy of liberation from an apostate church, is a point of discussion. Was this moment too early?

Meanwhile, the General Synod of Emmen 2010 has made its pronouncements on 2003 with reference to the discussion with the Gereformeerde Kerk (dolerend = dissenting) of Dalfsen.

In Canada some concerned people within the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) consider the liberation of the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford as being "too early", and therefore the sister-church relations of DGK in Holland with this congregation as premature. It is remarkable that with that, it must sometimes be concluded that the ecclesiastical way of appeal and revision requests against fundamental unscriptural deviation from Gods Word, according to Art. 33 Church Order, has come to an end. Nevertheless they are of the opinion that they are to continue in their own bond of churches. For there could still be so much that is good, or there could still be a way that is to be followed.

On the grounds of that opinion, in Holland, one comes to the rejection of the Liberation of Sept. 2003 from the GKv (Reformed Churches liberated), as being "too early", and in Canada one is of the same opinion about the Liberation of Dec. 2007 from the Canadian Reformed Churches.

For the benefit of a pure Scriptural consideration of the "moment" of both the liberation in Holland and in Canada, I will pass on two voices from the past. That of Prof. Dr. K. Schilder in his assessment in 1934 on the Separation of 1834, and that of Prof. Dr. S. Greijdanus shortly after the Liberation of 1944. What both professors brought forward at the time, once again appears to be very topical for all those who have to call and for all those who are being called according to Art. 28, Belgic Confession.

1834 or 1816?

Prof. dr. K. Schilder: Beginsel, recht en betekenis van de Afscheiding, in De Kerk II; pages 106-108 (http://dbnl.org/tekst/schi008kerk04_01/schi008kerk04_01_0004.php):

"So whilst the leaders of the church intentionally

failed to do what 'was of the church', it were the 'separatists' in those days, who served their office - the office of all believers- according to the demands of the confession of the church. On this point, the earlier mentioned plea of Micah, the prophet, then receives a new method of application in relation to the Secession. For one of the finer points in Micah's prophetic sermon (SdM: meant here is the sermon in Micah 6) against the unfaithful covenant people is this: the people do complain about its God, but do not make it a *contention*, - even though this is a direct demand of the covenant, that, in advance, placed everything in the strictest legal context. The people, according to Micah, do complain, that Jahwe tires them out, and inflicts damage to their life, but do *not* bring this complaint within the full light of the investigatory circle of the judgment seat of the covenant. And now the prophet officially brings forward that *concealed* point, corresponding to the nature of the covenant, as point of issue. 'O my people, in what have I wearied you? What have I done to you? *Testify against Me!*' And in that last call: *Testify against Me*, the Lord, through His prophet, *saves the covenant*: the *legal nature* of the covenant is again placed in full light. It is a direct sin against the covenant, if they - as Micah's contemporaries did - leave their gravamina (grievances) against the other party of the covenant for what it is. Covenant is not an idleness. Covenant does not allow an impassiveness toward justice. On the contrary, - the covenant sets the strongest legal norm and therefore applies the sharpest legal incentive that one can ever have or feel. Covenant is the most extreme *legal proceeding*, especially whilst it derives its *legal norms*, not from creation, but from re-creation.

So as Micah now forces the people to publically bring into discussion, in the presence of God, namely in the Church federation, the *concealed* covenantal conflicts of justice according to the covenantal demand, so it was also done in 1834 by those who made a stand for the return to Dordrecht, and for cutting away the cancer of contradiction and ambiguity in the body of the church. Even though the synod did not listen to De Cock's apology, - the *presentation* and the *maintaining* of it, was nevertheless, in itself a simple act of obedience. Let us face the difficulties of the synod and the government as unbiased as possible, and therefore

acknowledge that the introduction of regulations and the new ordinand-formula, without at the same time the putting aside of the old confessions, had created a so-called *collision* of obligations, as well as of opinions, and that this was 'cause of the difficulty' for them, - must one then not acknowledge that this so-called '*collision of obligation*' should have made them all the more eager to do justice to De Cock's apology, to refute it or to accept it, but in no way to hush up this cardinal point of the *collisio officiorum* of the church leaders themselves? A 'collision of obligations' must hurt everyone, but mostly the church; after all, *the church* confesses that God is **one** in His will and command, and that therefore *from His side a true* obligation can never *collide* with another **true** obligation: He *has* made known unto you, o man, what is right. If therefore a collision indeed occurs in what *people call* obligation, then there must be a man-made regulation present, that has made God's law powerless. Whoever then, having had this pointed out to him, and *doesn't even listen*, but with special care withdraws that point from attention, through that, falls away from the style of the church, ignores the climate of the church, fails to do what is of the church. **And he who then does do it, simply performs church work in the church. When he brings the matter to synod, and the synod does not listen, then he cannot continue in that church federation. But let him not, through findings of man, hinder himself to obey Gods law** (bold type, SdM).

For this reason it is incorrect to assert, as is done by *De Heraut* of 13 October 1871, (cf. C. Mulder, *proeve van inleiding op de geschiedenis der Afscheiding*, Kampen, Zalsman, 1874), that the Separation *came too early for the inertness of our national spirit*. Over against this we mention the norm-giving statement - that has obedience as its goal - of the then still Reformed (Dutch State Church) Dr. A. Kuyper: that *much too late* the inertness of our national spirit is again startled by the preaching on the view of the covenant, according to which Jahwe, especially *for the benefit of*, and also *from the origins* of His covenant, pleads a cause with His people. **That should have happened immediately after 1816** (bold type, SdM).

Because it *did not happen immediately*, they must confess their guilt about this, that is - those who could have spoken earlier, but did not, or those who began to speak, but did not persevere. **About this** the Molenaars and the Van Hogendorps, Bilderdijk,

and Da Costa, and the classis of Amsterdam must confess their guilt. **This** guilt must also be confessed by the 'fathers' of the Separation, in so far they maybe should have spoken earlier than they did, supposing that this had been possible. Which we doubt anyway.

But to the actual raising of the matter of the '*contention* of the Lord' itself, we *may* not confess guilt, no matter how persistent some are in demanding a 'joint confession of guilt', but attempt to evade the actual matter at issue. For the proclamation of the '*contention* of the Lord' is the calling of the church, and according to her confession itself, a concrete mandate of the office of all believers. These have been liberated in Christ *to* the instituting of the church, according to His command."

Forthwith

Prof. Dr. S. Greijdanus in: *Schriftbeginselen van Kerkrecht inzake meerdere vergaderingen*. Publisher: J. Boersma - Enschede, [1945], p 42, 43. Also on www.kerkrecht.nl:

"The good shepherd is known by his sheep. They know his voice, and he calls them by name, and leads them out. And when he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers, John. 10:3-5 (RSV).

That also applies when a synod acts as shepherd. What counts then is the question whether the voice of the good shepherd from that synod is heard, that is, the voice of God's Word, the conformity in word and deed with God's ordinance or revelation in the Holy Scripture. If that is lacking, there is conflict with what the Lord has made known in the Holy Scripture about His Church and her faith and her conduct, then the sheep flee, because then from such a synod, the voice of the good shepherd is not heard, but the voice of the disturber of the flock, regardless of which shepherds garment he may have dressed himself with, or how flatteringly and softly he lisps, or how terribly he may roar.

Those sheep had better not, even for the time being, entrust themselves to such a shepherd, in the hope that later, soon, they will free themselves and be freed from his pernicious care. That is too dangerous. Then it is possible that such a deliverance is already cut off and perdition has progressed too far.

The apostle Paul did not write to the Galatians that they should entrust themselves to the teachers of heresies and their preaching for the time being, until maybe later he himself would come and set all things straight again. But without any palliation, without any compromise or delay, he spoke as sharply as possible: But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed, Gal. 1:8.

When? Soon? After a while? After this and that? May and must this continue for the time being? No, now, forthwith. As we have said before, so now I say again: if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed, vs. 9. The apostle knows of no temporary toleration and compliance with what opposes God's Word, until

with you, others will also see and will admit that one or other sermon, this or that synod decision is contrary to God's Gospel or the Holy Scripture.

Everyone has his own responsibility, and cannot pass it onto others. And each must judge for himself and decide, now, what is not according to God's Word, to reject it and to break with it, without continuing with that which is wrong in fellowship with others. No synod, no bond of churches can serve here as your excuse. Not the people are the lords of the church. Christ is her absolute Owner and Master. And that today you would hearken to His voice! Harden not your hearts. Ps. 95:7-8."

S. de Marie
(from *De Bazuin* Vol. 4, no. 42, 24 Nov. 2010)

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