

# REFORMED CONTINUA

Magazine of The Reformed Churches (restored) of The Netherlands

Proverbs 8:32

- Volume 17 - December 2014 -

## From the editor

December 2014

We are thankful to the Lord that we may present to you the 17th edition of the Reformed Continua.

In this edition you will find:

- **Great words, small faith** - by Rev. P. van Gulp
- **Why we liberated ourselves** - by Rev. E. Heres
- **What can the righteous do?** - by Rev. P. van Gulp

These articles were published earlier in *De Bazuin* and the first two articles were used at informative evenings that were organized by our churches to inform the concerned brothers and sisters in liberated Reformed churches about the situation in their churches.

You can also read news about our churches in the article:

- **From the churches**

Thus far the articles in this Magazine RC 17. When writing and publishing all this we may know and experience that God Himself preserves His church to the end. It is His merit that the church still exists and there are still so many possibilities to let His Word be heard.

Finally we hope and pray that also this edition will be well received and that eyes will be opened worldwide for the right vision on the Church.

*Joh. Houweling, Bleiswijk*



# Big words – small faith

by P. van Gorp

The General Synod at Ede, dealing with the place of the women in the church is not only being intensely followed by the Reformed Churches (lib.), the GKv, but, as may be expected, also by us. Especially as it does not only concern a canon law, but the question is whether there will still be a return to a life from the only comfort of the Scriptures, or whether these churches continue on the path of undermining Scripture.

Both the Reformatorisch Dagblad and the Nederlands Dagblad up to now are paying a lot of attention to the developments at the synod. This includes an hour to hour report of what is being said at the synod via a so-called *live-blog*, but also what has, among other things, been written as recommendation to the synod by a number of the professors from Kampen.

## *Objections from the sister-churches rejected*

Before the discussion on the so-called man/woman issue was started, the synod had made an extremely important decision.

That had to do with the objections that were presented by the sister-churches abroad against the course of the GKv. That was not just a difference of opinion, but was directed as an *admonition* to the GKv. It had to do with various matters that are closely related to the matter now at stake: the so-called new hermeneutics.

That is the back-ground of various developments in the churches and in studies and the education in Kampen, where there is talk of criticism of Scripture. They point this out in the reports on female office-bearers and in marriage and forms of cohabitation; also in the giving room for the Holy Spirit's speaking outside the Word of God, the 'new ethics' in which the 'style of the kingdom' is directive in the assessment of the situations concerning divorce and re-marriage; the report on female office bearers in combination with the new hermeneutics; the positive approach towards working together with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken, the NGK (Netherlands Reformed Churches); the participation in the National Synod; the introduction of new hymns and the deleting of Article 31 from the old Church Order.

This was already discussed in a closed sitting of the synod with the delegates of the sister churches,

and also now, at the beginning of the discussion, the delegates were again given the opportunity to voice their opinion on the recommendations of the deputies, to see as command of God that also sisters can be office-bearers.

These brothers contested the deputies' arguments as that they could not actually imagine what secularization means for the churches of the Netherlands. They stated clearly that also in their own surroundings abroad, the secularization had gained great influence, even much earlier than was the case in the Netherlands!

But all that didn't help. A discussion barely developed, merely 3 or 4 deputies asked a question.

The synod then decided to reject the objections! And that happened UNANIMOUSLY.

Also those brothers who criticized the attitude of the deputies and of the professors from Kampen in the following discussion all voted positively for that far-reaching decision. That was, so to speak, the starting point.

That then also casts doubts on the sometimes highly charged words. Sometimes so highly charged that the chairman felt he had to insist on moderation!

In actual fact, the course has now already been set for the coming years, where all these important matters are concerned. Then, inevitably, the issue of church members maintaining a homosexual relationship will also be dealt with later on.

## *A clear dismissive message*

On behalf of the CGK (Christian Reformed Church)-deputies for church unity, Rev. W. van 't Spijker was the first to speak. In no uncertain terms he voiced his criticism on the report of female office-bearers, the vision on Scripture that comes from that and the hermeneutical approach that the deputies choose. He spoke as minister of the CGK and is therefore bound to the decisions of the CGK, that said no to female office bearers in 1998, and concluded that *even though it is difficult we must not seek affiliation with society via the hermeneutical short cut. This synod therefore pronounced that Scripture has lasting norms, values and commandments that remain in force in every cultural context, and that what is written about the place of the women in the congregation belongs to this category.*

*And that from the whole of the Holy Scripture no other conclusion can be taken than that in the congregation of Christ women cannot hold an official position.*

In short, it is against the Holy Scripture to open the special offices for the sisters of the congregation. That was so clearly and decisively pronounced by the synod of the CGK in 1998.

The report that is based on this statement also speaks about hermeneutics, in the Scriptural Reformed spirit.

Deep down it concerns the explanation of Scripture and the authority of Scripture. And not only in this matter.

Deputies say that the authority of the Bible is not a point of discussion for them, according to Rev. van 't Spijker. But he quotes a few sections from the report from which he deduces the opposite. He even says: It is not difficult to imagine that one moves very close to or just over the border of Scripture criticism.

He concludes that, when the GKv-synod makes a decision that is in line with the deputy's report, *that you will certainly have something to explain, not only within our churches.*

These were and are big words. Because it concerns big, important matters.

It was particularly remarkable that neither the deputies nor any of the delegates responded to this!

### *A serious advice - a call to return*

At the request of the synod the emeritus New Testament scholar, Prof. J. van Bruggen also gave his advice. He did that in a detailed, well-documented argument, in which he pointed the way that is in accordance with God's Word and that culminates in an urgent appeal to return.

I will give a single citation:

*It is tempting to state, as the deputies wish, that: **The vision that alongside the men, women may also serve in the offices of the church, as is worded in the report, fits within the scope of what can be labeled as scriptural and reformed.***

*The report mentions the advantage of such a statement that the churches in this way meet the feelings of many, that problems in the contacts with the NGK are taken away and in assessing the acceptability of some missionary projects - the current stumbling block concerning the position of women in the church is thus removed.*

*Here we see what I put in the title: a small faith in the work of the Holy Spirit.*

*And thus also a denial of what our apostle (that is what Prof. van Bruggen continues to call the apostle Paul) **guided by the Holy Spirit, asks of us to take***

*into account the distinctive creation of man and woman (1 Tim. 2:13; compare the reference to the law [in this case Gen. 1-2] in 1 Corinthians 14:34b and compare 1 Corinthians 11:8-9,12) and with the reality of the history of sin in paradise (1 Timothy 2:14). So far the quotation.*

In short: What the deputies assert simply means; it is just an opinion of Paul.

In Canada, Prof. van Houwelingen said it this way: that opinion of Paul (Adam was created first etc.) does not convince me.

It is understandable that Rev. van 't Spijker characterizes this as a going very close to or just over the border of Scripture criticism. For it is not only that Paul spoke with apostolic authority, but especially that it was the Lord Himself Who said this through His servant Paul.

Prof. van Bruggen goes into that quotation from 1 Timothy 2 very extensively. And he concludes that section as follows:

*It is fortunate that the Lord puts us on the ongoing path of His own history and that His purpose is to express this in His congregation. It will, with that, share in the criticism that the gospel undergoes in the world: a folly for the Greek! Fortunately, we as Christians, on the basis of the specific marks of the congregation, can speak of the reality of Adam and Eve, of creation and the fall into sin, of love and grace.*

*Moreover, whilst writing this, I ask myself with some bewilderment whether I am writing this for a synod of Reformed Churches.*

*The history of Genesis is, so many centuries later, still normative for the congregations of the New Testament because it is **God's work and our history!***

*When the (synodical) Reformed Churches opened all offices for the women with an almost comparable reasoning as that of your deputies, they really did not have the intent to introduce criticism of Scripture or to put the Bible out of action. The indignation therefore was great when Prof. Dr. H.M. Kuitert immediately declared that his synod had now legalized criticism of Scripture. Yet he was right: what was done thoughtlessly, was regretted by many later on. This same process repeated itself in the Christian Reformed Churches. I refuse to believe that any of the deputies or members of the synod want this. But I do say: Look at this course and think again carefully! Surely this is not what you want?*

*Something that is much more difficult than making a decision, is a return to teaching the congregation about the importance of the history of creation and salvation in general and about these facts of Scripture in particular. The feeling for these realities has been worn away by the appreciation of our surroundings.*

*The decision on the report is taking place in an ecclesial reality that is adrift.*

*Therefore I pray for wisdom and courage for you all. You will not be able to make a decision that will change reality. You can however make a decision that is responsible. The LORD can, in His time and manner, make this a blessing for church and gospel, for man and woman.*

### *Deputy, br. Slump*

Br. Slump, one of the deputies, was the only one who presented a minority report. In his address he indicated very clearly that in the whole discussion it is all about the authority of the Scripture.

A call is increasingly made for the guidance of the Holy Spirit for our times. In other words: for an ongoing, additional revelation after Pentecost, separate from Scripture, even against the instructions which, among other things, are being passed on by Paul.

But Paul's letters are the fruits of the promises of Christ to His disciples/apostles, that the Spirit shall guide them in all truth (John 16:13).

That means: God still reveals Himself through His Spirit, but He does it in His Word.

Slump refers to Prof. Trimp who pointed out that *this guidance in truth* is fulfilled in the letters of the apostles and in the Revelation to John. God still reveals Himself through His Spirit, but He does that in His Word.

He also refers to Prof. van Houwelingen himself, who in his commentary on the gospel of John wrote:

*It is not about additional revelation after Pentecost, but about the remembering and understanding by the disciples of what their Master had said earlier. For He had revealed His Father completely. The Spirit has nothing new to say.*

(Dr. P.H.R. van Houwelingen, *Johannes. Het Evangelie van het Woord*, CNT, Kampen 1997, blz. 322: 323).

Mind you: it is only 17 years ago that Dr. van Houwelingen, the successor of van Prof. van Bruggen, wrote this. He also, like many ministers, has been taken along in the turnabout from Scriptural interpretation to the practice of adjusting to the culture.

They then also speak big words: the guidance of the Holy Spirit! But that comes forth from a small faith. As if the Father of the spirits, with Whom a thousand years are as one day, did not know that the attempts of the devil to mislead God's children would become increasingly intensive, and that the devil increasingly secularizes the culture of our time and encourages the apostasy further and further.

Yet He gave His servant Paul, also our apostle, the words in his mouth and in his pen - for all times!

And with all good intentions to be missionary active, for the salvation of the people, one says farewell to the clear Word of God, that is eternally sure!

That is the tragic development in the once Christian Netherlands, in the churches, that have been liberated and blessed by the Lord.

### *Finally*

It is still impossible to foresee what will happen.

The deputies want a principled pronouncement, namely that, within the scope of Scripture and confession in the church, it is legitimate to declare that women may serve in all offices.

Others seek a way out of the difficulties by starting a study about the offices. Deputies say of this : that's only putting it off. But, according to one of them: it will come nonetheless! That is certain!

In fact the GKv is caught between two fires: the NGK which has already opened all offices for women, and the CGK, which has clearly expressed that this is against Scripture. And also: how does one now go further with the cooperation in the theological training in Kampen and Apeldoorn?

But again: the decision has already been made, by rejecting the objections from the sister churches abroad.



# Why we liberated ourselves

by E. Heres

At the end of January 2010 some office-bearers and a group of congregation members at Dalfsen took a major ecclesiastical step.

They broke away, liberated themselves from the bond of the Reformed Churches (liberated), the GKv (RCN).

That is now four years ago. That move of ecclesiastical liberation is far-reaching for all concerned. These things do affect you and it gives pain on both sides.

A GKv-minister met a brother who had liberated himself, and said to him: 'It is so very painful for me that you departed.' The brother answered: 'It can hardly be so that your pain is greater than ours. For we would so much have liked to have remained one. But it was not possible, because of the substantive difference'.

The minister could not comprehend this and the conversation ended.

This was a brief contact between two separated brothers.

But it was very characteristic, because of the pain that was expressed.

But also because of the lack of understanding.

No understanding, because it is so often thought, and is still thought, that the brothers and sisters who liberated themselves, are a group of discontented church members. Malcontents, who were not able to get their own way.

Pugnacious church members, who always see a reason or look for a reason to be difficult, and who are always 'anti-' everything.

Or church members who are so traditional that they are already, in advance, against every change.

Church members that do not think highly of church unity, and who easily cause ecclesiastical rifts, say, people with a schismatic attitude.

Many sarcastic remarks have been made in response to our ecclesiastical moves, something to the effect of: 'that is a club of like-minded people, who want to impose their opinion on others.'

Or the remark: 'of course they just have to found a new church.'

It is only regrettable, if a distorted image exists of those who left the GKV.

We have regretted it, that in 2010 a rapprochement was not sought by the church councils and office-bearers, after we had sent them all our Declaration.

There have been no reactions, something to the effect of: 'We now see how big the ecclesiastical problems have become. Come, brothers, let us now have a real substantive discussion.'

When it came to a break in Dalfsen, the GKv acted resolutely to practically and juristically demarcate the positions. But until today not one attempt has been made to come to a substantive discussion about the contents of the Declaration that we issued, that is, about the cause of the ecclesiastical break.

I can then only be thankful to have an opportunity, to again give account of the ecclesiastical move which we were obliged to take at the beginning of 2010.

For it was not an urge to make headstrong moves. It was not the fighting spirit of some church people who are always against everything. It was not the founding of a new church, in stubborn pedantry.

No, it is totally different.

The bond of churches of the liberated Reformed Churches was and is dear to us.

The Lord had given us so much in that church. We were baptized there, we did our confession of faith there. We were allowed to serve there as office-bearers.

The Lord gave so much to that bond of Reformed Churches.

It was the church community that had been preserved by the LORD, along the path of church reformation and church restoration. I mention the Liberation of 1944 and the church struggles of the 1960's.

Up to a certain time the Lord was thanked in the GKv for the Liberation of 1944 and for the protective hand of the Lord in 1967 and in the years that followed.

But that thanking is now a thing of the past. A mentality of 'away-with-us' developed.

There was embarrassment about their own church history.

No longer does one say to members of other church denominations: 'Let us with one accord, go to the temple of the Lord'. No the heresy of the ecclesiastical pluriformity was again embraced. The church understanding is disappearing more and more.

The articles 28 and 29 of the Belgic Confession are still written in the church books, but the contents



are no longer considered appropriate in the church situation of today.

Our liberation from the GkV did not come out of the blue.

In a process of many years there was a growing estrangement.

Estrangement, that was not only a result of liturgical changes. It was not just about the use of modern means.

It is not so that the concerned GkV-members are not people of this era.

No, it was and is about fundamental issues.

It was about matters for which you, as office-bearer, had in faith, signed the Subscription Form. Matters where you, as Church Visitor, should ask questions about and on which you should lay a finger.

But that was and is no longer possible because the course had changed, ratified by ecclesiastical decisions.

Concerned brothers and sisters asked themselves: 'Have we then always believed wrongly?'

Have we then wrongly believed that what the fourth commandment says about 'resting', still applies for today?

Have we then always wrongly believed what the Bible says about marriage and divorce?

Have we then always wrongly believed that you should believe Genesis 1 and 2 as being a reliable historical reality?

That fundamental changes have been introduced into the bond of churches of the GkV can be seen by all, and that is generally acknowledged as well. Here I think of the letters of admonition from the sister-churches abroad.

Testimonies that, as far as I am concerned, are above suspicion, are the publications on the website 'gereformeerdekerkblijven', written, among others, by Prof. Dr. J.Douma.

The letter sent by 'gereformeerdekerkblijven.nl' to the General Synod at Ede, also states emphatically that the foundations are in dispute. And that is not just happening today. The Word of God Itself and the Scriptural confessions were and are in dispute.

With the decisions that were made concerning the fourth commandment, the universal character of the aspect of rest was at stake.

The authority of the words of Genesis 2:2,3 cannot be independent of the liberal exegesis of any minister. The clear words about the 'blessing and sanctifying' of the seventh day are affirmed by the words of the fourth commandment in Exodus 20.

The synod of Amersfoort-Centre 2005 has published

a handbook ('Handreiking') of 175 pages on the fourth commandment. However, the General Synod could have pointed to the still fully Scriptural statements of the National Synod of Dordt 1618/19 for refuting the error that had been introduced.

Unfortunately it is now so, that the opinion that the aspect of rest was really only a commandment for the people of Israel, is broadly defended, even in a new teaching method for catechism.

That is: the rest for Israel, from Sinai until the coming of Christ.

Errors concerning the fourth commandment are not being stopped anymore.

The power of Gods commandments were undermined and the Scriptural preaching and practice of admonition and discipline were robbed of power.

That is also the case where it concerns the seventh commandment. The reality is that through the synod decisions the boundaries that Scripture itself points out with regard to the admissibility of divorce and re-marriage, are being crossed. Because the so-called grounds for divorce (namely the Scriptural boundaries) have fallen away, an open possibility has in fact been created to allow divorce and re-marriage in all sorts of situations, without the clear limitations from Scripture.

The objections that were raised against Synod Amersfoort-C, 2005 were not unfounded. From the side of the Synod examples were given in which the consistories were allowed to waive church discipline. In practice that would mean that church discipline would be exercised less and less.

That seems pastoral, but it is in fact unmerciful! For the ecclesiastical censorship, applied according to the Word of God, is the very means of God's love to save the sinner!

It is not the intention to extensively mention all the grounds of Dalfsen's liberation.

They are amply mentioned in the Declaration that we published in February 2010, and this is still available.

However, what I do emphatically wish to mention, is the admission to the Lord's Supper of those who are not members of the Reformed Churches (liberated).

The decisions of Synod Amersfoort-C, 2005 and Synod Zwolle-South 2008 on this matter, have been proposed as implementing-decisions. It was, so it had been said, a compromise, thus worse could be prevented. But in reality, because of this regulation, there was no way of stopping things anymore.

That also became evident in practice: In many

congregations one no longer asked or asks for the lawful attestation for the Lord's Supper.

Members from different church denominations, such as the PKN (Protestant Church of the Netherlands), are welcomed to the Lord's Supper tables without any problems. One can in actual fact, speak of an open Lord's Supper.

Does this concern a matter of minor importance?

No, it does not. Here the being-the-Reformed-Church is being disputed.

Here the foundation of ecclesiastical unity is being disputed.

This is about the three marks of the true church. For when you speak of the Lord's Supper, then you also speak of the administration of the keys of the Kingdom of heaven. At the Holy Supper it is about the distinction of the Body of Christ. That is in the first place Christ Himself, but that is also his congregation. And what then does the church teach about the admission to the Lord's Supper? Who may be admitted to the table of the LORD, the supper of God's covenant, where you are strengthened through the grace of God!? In short: Here the pure preaching of the Word is being disputed.

Also the second mark of the church is then being disputed: the pure administration of the sacraments. And then we must say: The bond of churches of the GKv, in its major ecclesiastical assembly, has approved that in many congregations the Holy Supper is no longer being administered as Christ had meant it to be.

That is again directly connected with the third mark of the church: The true exercising of the Church discipline. At the Lord's Supper the church has to do with the command of Christ and His apostles to watch over the holiness of God's covenant and at the table of His covenant.

This was pointed out in the written objections and there were warnings. But the decision-making continued.

The decisions concerning the Table of the Lord's Supper can only be explained by the fact that the doctrine of pluriformity of the church is again being strongly defended and applied.

In practice that means that everyone who calls himself a Christian, is to be considered as belonging to the large body of Christ and is authorized to take part in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It doesn't really matter anymore to which church or denomination you belong. But those who speak and make decisions in this way, are no longer in accordance with Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

You also see in practice how crippling it works for ecclesiastical life, just think of the exercising of church discipline.

Now what is the most fundamental cause for the break with the bond of the churches of the GKv? Well, that concerns the dealing with God's Word. The manner in which the trustworthiness and authority of the Holy Scripture was affected. Concerned church members had brought forward well-founded objections against publications by theologians who were connected to the Theological University at Kampen, in which, among other things, the teaching of the creation in six days is let go of. It is considered legitimate to speak of a 'big bang', or the development of the universe and the earth (including that of human life) according to a model of evolution.

To be sure, it is then stated that it would have been an evolutionary process led by God. But with that it is permitted that results of natural science research reign over the literal text of God's revealed Word.

It came so far that the Synods spoke approvingly about such publications, and objections from within the churches were rejected.

Objections to publications from lecturers connected to the Theological University were turned down. Well-founded objections that defended the trustworthiness of God's Word. But they were turned down, turned down on formal grounds (e.g. 'presented too late').

At the same time a lecturer was appointed at the university, one who made it clear in publications, that he allows the results of religion-historical science reign over the trustworthiness and the authority of the Holy Scripture.

But must the fact that the church permits errors, then immediately lead to a break in the church? No, that is not so. Also in Dalfsen we were well aware that it is never allowed to come to a church break in a rash manner.

Even more strongly, we believe that you are only allowed to take a step like this 'to remain Church'. I have always taught my catechism pupils, that as a believing child of God you may never break with the Church of Christ!

But it is therefore our conviction that it was not us who broke with the Church of Christ, but that the bond of the GKv had fundamentally changed.

And those who followed the developments closely, also confirm this.

The foundation that Christ Himself had laid has been let go of.

But there is more, and that is of importance for the answer to the question why we (in Dalfsen) liberated ourselves, why it had to come to a break with the bond of churches.

That is that church people, who in every aspect wanted to remain reformed, were pushed into awkward positions. Their warning, their words were no longer accepted. In their standing up for the right of God and His Word they were silenced. Office-bearers and congregation members were forced into awkward situations, to cooperate in the carrying out of decisions, for which they could not carry the responsibility.

It came so far that, even with conscientious objections, there was no room for not cooperating in the carrying out of the decisions taken.

There were ministers who ran into problems because members of consistories and congregations thought their views were too reformed.

The best known example is what happened with Rev. E. Hoogendoorn, in Kampen-North. It is not without reason that in the Declaration which we issued in Dalfsen, the matter of 'Kampen-North' emphatically received a place.

What happened in Kampen-North, is undeniably a result of the fact that the attitude of a minister and his co-officebearers was thought to be too 'principled', in other words: too reformed.

And if then no justice is done by ecclesiastical meetings, up to and including the synod, then the 'peace in Jerusalem' is at stake. When also the exercising of discipline is misused, and no further appeal is possible, then the moment comes that you, just like Martin Luther, must say: 'Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise'...

We are convinced that the ecclesiastical steps that we took indeed meant a break with the course and with the many decisions taken by the bond of churches of the GKv, but not a break with the Church of Christ. We took ecclesiastical steps to remain Church of Christ.

However, let no one think that we broke with the bond of GKv in toughness and self-enhancement. No, we went as humble people, well aware of our own weakness and sin. But also with continual prayer: 'LORD, wilt Thou direct our way?'

As a personal note, I wish to say here, that I myself also continually pray: If it was not right that we took these steps of Liberation, LORD, take our hand and lead us back.

But the reality is that we have only been confirmed in it that it was indeed not possible to stay in the GKv.

And that today this is certainly not possible any more.

For us it was a sad confirmation that it was possible that a synod deputy-report could be published, countersigned by lecturers from Kampen, in which it was advised that all offices should also be opened for women in the congregation.

As a reformed person it is startling when you read of the view on Scripture that is being defended in that report.

What I do wish to emphasize is that it is not only pain that we have, because of the break that had become necessary.

There is also thankfulness. Thankfulness to the LORD that we may again be simply reformed. Thankfulness that we may again experience the brotherhood in a bond of the churches that also wants to be, and may be, simply reformed.

Thankfulness that we may again stand in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper, that is not being desecrated by synod decisions.

With all the more conviction I summon brothers and sisters in the GKv: 'Let us with one accord, go to the temple of the Lord'.

No, not because we are better people.

But to the cause of Christ and for yourself and your children and grandchildren.

Do not underestimate the temptation and the habituation for so many younger and older people in a course that leads away from the Word of the LORD and away from the reformed confession. Christ Himself says it so emphatically: 'Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown' (Rev. 3:11). Our hope is in the LORD and in our prayer we entrust you to the LORD.





# From the churches

by Joh. Houweling

## 1. Ordination and installation of Rev. M. Dijkstra

On Saturday 22nd November 2014, br. M. Dijkstra was ordained as Minister of the Word for The Reformed Churches at Mariënberg and Emmen and the ward-congregation at Assen.

## 2. The 5th Synod of The Reformed Churches, Synod Groningen, commenced on 15th November 2014.

The 5th General Synod of The Reformed Churches was opened on 15th November by the convening church of Groningen. On the evening before a prayer meeting was held in the Opstandingskerk at Groningen.

## 3. RCN Berkel & Rodenrijs/Bergschenhoek hope to start with the building of their own church building in March 2015, the Lord willing. At present the existing buildings on the location are being demolished.

## 4. On 9th May we again hope to have a League Day. This time it will be held in Zwolle.

## 5. The annual Church Day will, DV, be held on 26th September 2015.

## 6. The students society Virtute Dei meets regularly and is well attended.

## 7. At present short commentaries and study outlines are still being reprinted by the League committee for use by the Bible study clubs. New outlines are also being written and printed for the youth of 12 years and older.

## 8. There is one student following the training for the Ministry of the Word. This is br. M. Sneep. At present he is doing congregational work experience in Zwolle and Dalfsen and at the beginning of 2015 he will start with his final thesis.

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*Click on this line to find information on internet about all the local churches*

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# What can the righteous do?

by P. van Gulp

The information that we provide is not only intended for concerned members in the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands (GKV-Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt) but also for the members of the DGK- De Gereformeerde Kerken (RCN). Also for them it is good to receive information. For the call applies to us as well: Let us repent! In 2003 we publicly declared our liberation with this call - which shows that we did not look only at ecclesiastical assemblies and their decisions.

At the information meetings it was a special delight, that we as concerned members of the GKV and as church members of the DGK could be together, could sing our psalms together, and also join together in prayer.

## *The foundations torn down?*

The title of this article is taken from Psalm 11.

*If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?*

That is the first of three places in Scripture that I would like to elaborate upon.

It is about the situation that the foundations, the foundation pillars, are destroyed. And then follows: what must the righteous do?

*Firstly:* Is it really so, that the foundations have been destroyed? What are these foundations, these foundations?

Particularly in the New Testament it is made clear that the foundation of the church and thus also of our entire life is: that of apostles and prophets, that is God's Word, Eph. 2:20. And then particularly the entire word of God.

It has been repeatedly pointed out that today in the GKV all sorts of decisions and developments concern the foundations.

If a foundation is not strong, a house will sink; there are clear signals of this in several churches. People experience this in Groningen and surroundings! <sup>1)</sup> Appropriately so, everyone is concerned about this. But what about the real foundation of our entire life?

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<sup>1)</sup> With this, dr. Van Gulp points to the housing situation in Groningen, where small earth tremors - caused by gas drilling - damages many homes.

After all the deviations in the area of ethics, views on the church, the liturgy, the preaching, now there is a new concern: namely that of the place of man/woman in the church.

I am not telling you anything new when I point out to you that these developments arise from the fact that the Bible, no longer unabridged, from cover to cover, is recognized as the Word of God. All deviations stem from Scripture criticism.

In 1926 Scripture criticism was rejected by the Reformed Churches when Dr. Geelkerken's views about the speaking of the serpent and therefore many more miracles in the Bible, were denied. Although in the GKV the doctrinal statement of 1926 regarding Holy Scripture has not been officially withdrawn as is the case in the synodical churches, it is however openly criticized, even by teachers at the Theological University in Kampen. And Scripture criticism is increasingly being broadly applied to all kinds of contents of Scripture. It continues to work its way through and then as a final product we hear that the offices in the church must be opened to women; what the Bible says about this is not the Word of God in our time, but only flows from views of the past, that have long been outdated. That's the motto: we must keep up with the times! Again and again we hear that we must adjust to modern culture. And that works its way into the church in all areas.

This is defended by striving not to put any obstacles on the path to the church, which would happen by holding on to the validity of Scriptural commandments precisely in our time. Due to broad changes in culture it is believed the commandments need to be adjusted to the culture of our time.

In fact this means that two clear truths are no longer considered: firstly that the Lord already knew about our time and cultural changes long in advance before they came to realization and yet gave His commandments for all ages.

Secondly that the Lord also in advance has said that the gospel of the Lord would not only be an offense and foolishness in the time of the apostles, but especially so towards the end of time. The Lord Jesus Christ has said Himself that if that time would not be cut short no one would be saved.

On the other hand the influence of the evangelical movement is becoming increasingly stronger in the GKV.

This is partly due to speaking about one's own choice for Jesus: I have accepted Jesus in my heart.

I have chosen Him and have a personal relationship with Him.

Thereby the covenant that the Lord established with believers and their children is totally neglected. It means that those who think this way, no longer live out of the strength of God's promise. He was and is the First in our lives. He Himself has said: before they call, I will answer.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, He seals in the baptism what we have in Christ.

This then naturally leads to the rejection of infant baptism and leads to the so-called rebaptism. This is taking place more and more often. But what is disturbing is: this is being tolerated more and more within the GKV.

If the church no longer confesses the truth of God's Word, but adjusts its interpretation and effect to the culture of today, then the foundations become unstable. Yes, they are even torn down. And that not only for the church members, but also for entire society.

The tragedy is that precisely this unfaithfulness of the church and its heresy has its effect in culture. For the church has a message for the world.

The reversal of all values in society, in politics, is the result of the lie in the church. That culture becomes more and more secular, more and more unchristian, yes even becomes anti-Christ, is the church's fault, since it does not banish the deadly poison of scripture criticism.

This is what Psalm 11 says: the foundations are destroyed.

We see so much false prophecy, that destroys the church. Also the churches that were dear to us, brothers and sisters that we love, we see them fall prey to the forces of deformation.

We grieve because of this, precisely because of our love for them.

Our warnings stem from that love.

It is good to emphasize this once more. Indeed, we repeatedly receive the accusation that the love for those who are straying is lacking and that we only rigidly defend the doctrine under the motto: it's all or nothing.

But our Lord Jesus Christ wills that we love Him and therefore also love each other, and that must show, says the Saviour, in the fact that we keep his commandments!

### What can the righteous do?

But now that second piece of Scripture in Psalm 11:

*What can the righteous do?*

Is this question in Psalm 11 applicable to the situation of today?

Firstly, does that really apply to us? Can we call ourselves righteous? Is this not arrogant?

Righteous people are often spoken of in the psalms. And yes, we may apply that to ourselves. Not in the sense that we are satisfied with our own piety, but in the sense of Lord's Day 23 of the Catechism, namely that we are righteous through faith, insofar as we accept all the benefits of Christ with a believing heart.

What can the righteous do? In the Hebrew language there are only two words for this: 'what - do'. This can be translated in several ways: what can the righteous do, what shall he do, what must he do? A nice translation is this: what can the righteous *otherwise* do? And that points back to verse 1: In the LORD I put my trust.

That is a short summary of what we all must do: put our trust in the LORD. In anxiety and distress I lift up my soul to you.

When you are called to liberate yourself - then that is the effect of what Psalm 11 says about the command of the Lord to sanctify His name.

And in the same time to keep yourself from straying.

This brings me to the *second text*: 2 Tim. 2:19.

This comes from the second epistle of the apostle Paul to Timothy, Paul's spiritual son. First Timothy is warned which sad developments he should expect. The false prophecy will multiply; the attempts of the devil, the father of lies, by which he especially aims at the believers, will be more and more crafty; unless those days were shortened, nobody would be saved. This applies even more so for our time.

But then Timothy is comforted and we as well: *Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal:*

That is a seal with the inscription:

*'The Lord knows those who are His'.*

This 'knowing' means that He will take care that we are preserved from all the errors. This comfort may lead you when you think about this promise: The Lord cares.



### *Depart from the iniquity*

But then you also need to think about the second part of that seal ( 2 Tim. 2:19b):

*'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'*

This is a word we find in various places in the Bible and each time it means: leave, no longer go along, Acts 12:10, 15:38, 19:9!

There we hear the deepest motive for coming to liberation. It is about the name of the Lord; His honour; in remembrance of His great deeds.

Because it is our calling to make mention of the name of the Lord! The Lord wants us to remember His deeds; the wonders that He has done and still does; to live out of this and to speak about this and thereby make mention of His name, Is. 26:13. In our entire life, our thoughts, words and actions, we must hallow His name. That is the first petition in the prayer Christ Himself taught us.

But we can only do that if we also listen, if the Lord tells us to break with iniquity, yes He even once said to His people: Depart! Depart! Go out from there, touch no unclean thing, Is. 52:11

That is the first and foremost motive for liberation. Would it not be burdensome, despite your protests, to take part in those sins of departure of Scripture? And to be guilty as well of the dishonoring of the holy Name of our God?

### *Flee these things*

And now the third piece of Scripture: 1 Tim. 6:11.

*But you, O man of God, flee these things.*

There we hear that the Lord calls us to the obedience of faith, to preserve us. To pluck you from the fire! Perhaps you may ask yourself: am I acting responsibly if I liberate myself? Should I not continue to fight and in that way try to turn back the deformation and achieve restoration?

But then you must especially consider that you may call for a partial return to Scripture, but it is precisely about the basis: the Scripture criticism. It is about the foundation!

Therefore we must recognize: the past has clearly taught us that continually calling for revision has led to a path that is impassable. Also a path that is dangerous. Think about the youth! Yes, think about yourself! It is a real danger to become accustomed to the deformation of the church. If you are honest and think back to the past, must you not come to the conclusion that you went further down the path of deformation than you ever thought possible and

that you weren't planning on? That is the danger of becoming accustomed to sin.

This applies to you today as well: for the sake of your lives, come out of her!

Fleeing from those temptations is not cowardly but rather the path that the Lord Himself has directed.

This is not because we would like to grow, small as we are. But because we desire to share in the riches and the security and the joy and the safety, for you and your children, in the church of Christ. That you also may enjoy, each Sunday and every day, the sanctifying work of the great Shepherd of the sheep, Christ- through His servants, the undershepherds, in the communion of saints.

No, we are not a perfect church. We also must wholly live out of grace.

Far be it from us to take pride in our church obedience.

We profess that it is the Lord who set us free and brought us to obedience. We continually need the Lord to preserve us by His Word; and to allow ourselves to be built up on that foundation alone.

In the exile in Babylon, Zephaniah says they were far away from the festive gatherings, far from Jerusalem. But the Lord brought back His people. As a meek and humble people, Zeph. 3:12, 18. After Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, he lists the names of those who returned - oh, what a paltry number! So many chose to stay behind. But then Ezra professes: As many whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the LORD. Ezra 1:5.

This is the way we profess our liberation as well : it was not our work, but the work of the Lord.

This is what you need to pray the Lord for; to also work this in your heart.

The complaint in Psalm 102 (vs 1 and 13) is very applicable:

*Hear my prayer, O Lord,*

*And let my cry come to You.*

*You will arise and have mercy on Zion;*

*For the time to favor her,*

*Yes, the set time, has come.*

Lastly I would like to impress upon your heart that you can only come to such a decision when you know for certain: 'This is what the Lord asks of me.

This is the way the Lord is directing me.' How can you come to such certainty? Well, you know the answer: He desires your prayers (Ps. 25:2, rhymed version):

*Show Thou unto me, Thy servant,  
All Thy ways and teach Thou me,  
So that, by Thy Spirit guided,  
Clearly I Thy paths may see.  
In Thy truth wilt Thou me guide.*

If you pray this uprightly, peace will dwell in your heart.

Because you also know: The Lord is a hearer of prayers.

What joy does the Lord then give! About the brothers and sisters that returned from Babylon to Jerusalem, to a city in ruins, to their properties that strangers had taken possession of, to devastated cities, about those the Lord says beforehand:

*So the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness; sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Is. 51:11.*

*Everlasting joy* - it is about the future of the church. It is about your future and that of your children. Gladness despite hardship and sadness- because liberation comes with that as well, we know that already beforehand. It is a narrow path. But it is the path following Christ, He goes ahead of us.

The Lord says: you must weep as though you do not weep. Because we may now already enjoy the marriage feast of the Lamb. The joy that fills our lives and will remain.

Cling to His promises.

Yes the Lord comes to liberate and the redeemed shall return home, praising the name of the Lord.

Yes, God's people shall safely live and the future generations shall always enjoy His peace.

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