

REFORMED CONTINUA

Magazine of The Reformed Churches (restored) of The Netherlands

Proverbs 8:32

- Volume 5 - January 2011 -

From the editor

January 2011

We are thankful that the Lord gave and gives the strength and the gifts so that we may present a magazine for the fifth time.

Also this time, there is a lot to read about our churches.

In all things we see that the church-gathering work is in the Lord's hand and that He will protect His church until the end. All honor and glory be to Him that the church remains.

In the previous issue we mentioned, with great thankfulness, that the Liberated Church of Abbotsford is recognized by us as a sister church.

In the meantime, Rev. De Marie has visited this church and has led the worship services there. He was also able to administer both of the sacraments.

What a joy for these brothers and sisters! After many years, baptism could be administered again - and also Holy Supper could be celebrated.

During his stay in Canada, Rev. De Marie was also able to hold a speech in Attercliffe. You can find his speech in this issue of Reformed Continua.

The Liberated Church of Abbotsford has written a refutation in response to an article that condemns their reformation to be based on grounds that are not truthful. This refutation has the title 'Do or Die', and is included in this issue.

Also included is a speech from A. van Egmond. That speech was presented at our Church (contact) day (September 18, 2010).

From the editor

Joh. Houweling

page 1

Thankfulness for a new season

A. van Egmond

page 3

Letter to the RC (liberated)

General Synod of TRC (restored)

page 8

Introducing the LRC at Abbotsford

Mary Thalen

page 19

Unity in Truth

Rev. P. van Gorp

page 22

We read...

P. Drijfhout

page 24

God's Case against His Church

Rev. S. de Marie

page 25

Introducing you to ...

Ha. Folkers

page 34

Do or Die

Richard Vanlaar

page 36

Also the extensive letter that our Synod Emmen (2009) sent to the Reformed Churches liberated, is included.

As well as an item about the OPC.

We highlight the fifth congregation, namely Emmen.

The Reformed Church of Abbotsford is introduced to us.

Also the speech from Dr. Van Gulp that he held at the closing session of Synod Emmen on November 20, 2010, is included.

So much about the articles that you can find in this Magazine.

On our website you can find the reports of the deputies - translated in English.

These reports deal with the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford and what was presented to Synod Emmen that led to the decision to accept them as a sister church.

This issue has been brightened up with several pictures. The observant reader will be sure to notice that some pictures from abroad have also been included.

Lastly, we hope and pray that this issue may be well received and that worldwide the eyes may be opened for the true view of the Church and that this may contribute to the church-gathering work of God and to the honor of His great Name.

Joh. Houweling, Bleiswijk

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

REFORMED CONTINUA

Magazine of The Reformed Churches (restored) of The Netherlands

Magazine details

Editor in Chief:

Joh. Houweling, *Bleiswijk*

Translators:

R. Antonides-Beijes, *Leek*

C.W. Bijsterveld-Terpstra, *Ten Boer*

S.C. Franschman-Terpstra, *Enschede*

H. van der Net-Visser, *Hasselt*

Layout:

J. Bos, *Rotterdam*

Items for the editorial board:

c/o Hoefweg 202

2665 LE Bleiswijk

The Netherlands

Subscription is free of charge, and can be obtained by adding your e-mail-address to our mail-list on the following website:

www.reformedcontinua.nl

Via this website you can also unsubscribe.

Webmaster:

C. van Egmond, *Schiedam*

© 2011 Joh. Houweling

This magazine is issued by the 'Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad' and is distributed automatically via the website:

www.reformedcontinua.nl

Deputies Contact Churches Abroad:

P. Drijfhout

dr. P. van Gulp

Joh. Houweling

A. van der Net

Contact deputies:

Deputaten BBK

c/o mr. P. Drijfhout

Anwending 4

7861 BE Oosterhesselen

The Netherlands

or via e-mail:

pdrijfhout@hetnet.nl

Thankfulness for a new season

Brothers and sisters, young and old,

For this Church Contact Day, a beautiful initiative by the way, I was asked to deliver a speech about the thankfulness that we may have for a new season. A new season of work and meetings.

At the same time this Church Contact Day is meant for looking back in thankfulness. Looking back to the year 2003, when the Liberation took effect. I emphasize these last words. For, like all other reformations of the Church of Christ, the Liberation of 2003 did not come out of the blue. This cannot and is not allowed! No one in the Church of Christ is allowed to secede or liberate then and there because of one wrong decision. No, this develops over a longer period of time. A time of struggle to hold fast the brothers and sisters, to hold fast the ecclesiastical gatherings. To abide together by the trustworthy Word of God. Above all, a time of struggle of the Spirit of the Lord who is active keeping the dearly bought Church of Christ abiding by the Word of Christ. And only when it becomes apparent that one doesn't want it any other way, only when one is placed before the decision whether to remain faithful and to abide by the Word of God, and when one still says no, then and only then, comes the moment when it may be said, with fear and trembling: there is no other way. We must now liberate ourselves from the decisions that are contrary to the Word of God.

In this way, by the grace of God, there was, once again, a Liberation. A liberation from decisions that were against God's Word. Decisions that we were not allowed to consider as being binding, according to Art. 31 of the Church Order. A liberation where it concerns, as always in the Reformations of the Church, God's Word and the Church. This has been pointed out several times in the magazines *Reformanda* and *De Bazuin*.

I will now elaborate on this with a view to the thankfulness that is asked of us.

Concerning the Word

In the Liberation of 2003 it again concerned the Word of God. At the time, it was pointed out that Scripture criticism was gaining a foothold at the Theological University at Kampen. There, where students were being trained for the ministry, they came with human opinions which were brought up for discussion, for instance whether that what is revealed to us in Genesis 1-3 is really fully historical.

We saw this undermining of the authority of Scripture appear again in, among other things, the synod decisions regarding the 4th and the 7th commandments and in various other decisions. It has all been elaborated on in the brochure: '*Laten wij ons bekeren, een oproep tot reformatie*' ('*Let us repent, a call to reformation*'), that was issued early in 2003. This call to reformation was, however, broadly rejected in the churches. It was apparently out of the question that there was an undermining of authority of Scripture. At the most there were some queries here and there.

The continuation of the history within the GKv (Reformed Churches liberated) has shown that in the depth of it all, it definitely did concern criticism of Scripture. Also of undermining that what God has written as His true testimony about how this world originated. It became more and more obvious in these churches that sections from God's Word were not taken literally anymore, whilst these things are revealed to us as such. For instance, the historiography at the beginning of the Bible and the so-called miracle of the sun in Joshua 10.

In the July/August issue of *Wegwijs*, the periodical of the Bible Study League in the Reformed Churches (lib.), a summary of a speech delivered by Rev. A. Verbree at the Bible Study League Day, was published which, as far as that goes, speaks very clearly.

According to this summary Rev. Verbree is of the opinion, we quote:

"I believe that God almightily created the world from nothing. I do not believe that Genesis 1 and 2 give us a literal commentary of this process. Taking the texts of these chapters literally, leads to all sorts of nonsense."

A little further on he writes:

"To cling to the literal text of Genesis 1 and 2 like grim death, we achieve the opposite of what we intend: we make a ridiculous story of the Biblical testimony of creation whilst we only want to hold fast to the Word of God. Fear is a bad counsellor."

In connection with what Rev. Verbree states, I would like to quote a small part from a sermon on Genesis 1, written by the late Rev. J.R. Wiskerke.

I quote the following:

"Beloved, it is becoming fashionable today to pull and pluck at the first pages of God's Word.

Genesis 1 is a hymn, says one, but he really means: don't believe this testimony literally.

Another says: here you have the presentation in a nice outline of six days with a Sabbath at the end. But whether it really took place in that way? Of course not, I can't accept that.

A third adds: I think Genesis 1 is a legend, an old and lovely story, but they are not real facts!

God's Church has to turn a deaf ear to all these voices. For its life's sake. The congregational life and faith is at stake when God's testimony is not eternally sure. God does not dish up fairy-tales.

God does not say: I created the world in this and that way once, and now it's up to you, pedantic human being, to decide how much of it is true.

God is not a human being that He should lie about it. Everything He says about His deeds stands firm on faithfulness and truth.

Blessed is he who hears the words from Genesis 1, who preserves them... and believes.

For these are no small things that God has written down here. He makes His Name be known in the great works of His hands. He says truly who He is.

There is no other place where you can meet Him, get acquainted with Him, see in His heart than through the Scriptures."

We do not have to add much to this. These words were spoken in a time when warnings were issued from the pulpit of the Reformed Church (lib.) for the increasing insolent Scripture-criticism in other church communities. Scripture-criticism that will, if the Lord does not forbid it, have its destructive effects in those very same churches where at first the prophetic warning sounded.

No, we must not look on this with any form of malicious delight. Often we still have relatives that have stayed behind in those churches. These, whether concerned or not, are in danger of drifting along with the tide. That is cause for great concern and gives sorrow. Therefore, no malicious delight, but continuous prayer for those who stayed behind so that they too will recognize the dangers to which they are exposed and continue to expose themselves to these dangers.

What we must do besides that, and what we must especially do today is to give thanks for the grace

of our God, who wanted to preserve us by His Word through this new liberation. Yes, we give thanks for the grace of our God, for do we not believe that it was He who preserved His Church in abiding by His Word? If we do not believe that, if it was our liberation because there was so much that we did not like, then the liberation must be condemned as work of man, who, maybe in good faith, ultimately did desecrate the temple of God. Then the liberation of 2003 was not reformation but revolution.

Concerning the Church

With every reformation it concerns God's Word and the Church. The latter must definitely be included: the Church. Not that we should boast in the sense that: "we are the only true Church, nothing can break us".

The example from Scripture where the people of Israel felt they were safe, in spite of their sins, because they were 'the temple of the Lord', speaks volumes. Whoever says that with a view to boasting, as though it is not simply and solely the grace of the LORD, that we are allowed to be His Church, will be deceived. For the LORD will destroy all that we, in our triumph, think we have built up.

Our attention, when it concerns the Church, is therefore not directed at ourselves but at the work of the LORD and at the benefits that He gives to His Church here on earth. Benefits and blessings that come to us from His Fatherly hand.

And we have enjoyed those blessings of the LORD in abundance in the past. Our young people know of this only from hearsay, unfortunately, but the elderly people in particular know a thing or two about that. They themselves may have given the best of themselves to help in the starting up and maintaining of Reformed organizations.

How richly blessed we were with an own Reformed Newspaper that, in its given place, gave information and advice in many areas.

An own political party, the Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond (GPV), in which one testified of the hope that is in us, also for political life. And not leaving it at that but also wanted to constructively assist in the up-building of the nation and the people, whereby God's Word and the Confession that is based on God's Word was the only criterion for one's doings.

Also in the area of social interaction between employees and employers we were pleased to

have an own association, the GMV (Gereformeerd Maatschappelijk Verbond), in which employers and employees were united.

There were also the Reformed schools of which the aim was to educate the children in accordance with the doctrine of the Church.

Much more could still be mentioned.

The LORD made us rich with these blessings and benefits. In this way, the Church of Christ, with its pure preaching of the Word was allowed to be the 'power plant' in which the broad Reformed life could flourish under the grace of God. Reformed organizations were formed, not as aim in itself but so that members of Christ's Church would be well-equipped to testify of their Saviour in all kinds of circumstances.

However, there came a change in the 1980's. No, not because the LORD withheld His blessings but because the blessings of the LORD were no longer appreciated at their value. Even though Psalm 103 emphatically states: *"Bless the LORD, o my soul, and forget not all His benefits."*

In self-willfulness interdenominational co-operation was sought in various areas.

This co-operation was sought to form a front against the growing secularization. They did not wish to see that the secularization starts there, where one refuses to unconditionally bow to God's Word. Because of this co-operation, the reformed organizations were slowly but surely being undermined and in the end broken down completely, for the sake of the strength in numbers. And the Reformed newspaper became the colourless 'news-hatch' of today.

We currently see the effects of this in the Reformed Churches (lib.), where in many congregations the Lord's Supper table has been opened to anyone who comes with a personal testimony, no matter from which church. The advances towards the Netherlands Reformed Church is taking shape more and more. A professor of the Theological University at Kampen supports and fully participates in the realization of the so-called National Synod. This National Synod has the aim of becoming a demonstration of the one church of Jesus Christ in the Netherlands.

It is not necessary to mention more today. After all, we have not come together here to describe the deformation in the Reformed Churches (lib.). No, we have come together to express our thankfulness

and to sing to our faithful covenant God. For surely we believe that He, in His unspeakable grace has so richly blessed His Church here in the Netherlands since the Liberation of 1944 and has preserved it by His Word! Surely we believe that by that same grace we are and may remain members of His Church here on earth? Surely we believe that the LORD God has liberated us from the decisions and dealings that were against His Word, and thereby keeps us by His Word and in His Church?

If we look to ourselves, we would lose all courage. For what is left of the churches that underwent such a turbulent growth after the Liberation of 1944?

A small congregation here, an even smaller one there. Several schisms in the churches over the last 7 years where many people left us. Cases that sadden us and make us humble.

Worship services are held with at the most, 200 people. And some congregations have to make do with a lot less. Reading services are held frequently, due to lack of own shepherds and teachers. And you hear outsiders scornfully remark that the sermons are so old, they are mouldy.

And yet be thankful and start a new season in good spirits? Can that be done, brothers and sisters?

Yes, it can! Through undeserved grace. For if the most recent liberation was all about God's Word and the Church, then we are of good courage. When we have been safely kept by this, then we know that in the depth of it all, we have been safely kept in Christ, our Saviour, through His Word and Spirit. He, as the only Head of His Church, lives in the midst of the congregation! The congregation, that was kept by His Word and in turn keeps that Word, can be sure of that. That is the Saviour's promise. Let us consider that promise and the richness of it in the light of the Scripture.

The letter to the Ephesians tells us that the new-testament church, made up of Jews and Gentiles, is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). The church is built on the Gospel of Reconciliation through Atonement and so becomes a dwelling place of God in the Spirit, verse 22.

And within that church, that is built on the Word of God, Christ is present. The apostle Paul writes that emphatically to the Colossians in chapter 1:27, where he says:

“To them (the saints) God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Christ has come as the Lord of glory. Since Pentecost, the church is being gathered out of Jews and Gentiles by this Christ.

Yes, this is the mystery among the Gentiles. That in the midst of those Gentiles a Christian congregation is manifested, in which Christ lives and works. It is a mystery for the Gentiles, for those who do not repent to God. But this mystery is revealed in the Bible and to be known through faith.

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Therefore it is of vital importance that, at the start of a new season of work and meetings, we continuously concentrate on the Word of God. In the letter to the Colossians the apostle Paul calls us to this when he writes in chapter 3:16: *“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.”*

For Christ lives and works in the midst of His congregation through His Word and Spirit. The congregation, however, must not be passive, no, the congregation is being given responsibility. The Word of Christ must dwell in her richly. That means that also today, we are called to be diligent with the Scriptures to preserve the bond with Christ. At home, at meetings and in all situations in which the LORD has given us to each other. Not scantily, not sparingly, not reluctantly. No, the Word of Christ must dwell in us richly. So that in this manner Christ is in us, the hope of glory.

We do not experience the presence of Christ in and among us in a mysterious way. We do not have to dig deeply within ourselves to find out if Christ does live in us. No, Christ, through Scripture, comes to us with all His riches and gifts. With seemingly ordinary means such as the Sunday preaching and the personal and communal Bible study. And now He asks us to be faithful in that. For in that manner He will continue to live and work in us.

At the same time this means that we have to completely submit ourselves to His Word. Nothing may be added and nothing may be taken away from it. This means: keep God’s Word, unspoiled and in the way it comes to us. This also means: That what is revealed to us as history, we must accept as history. Think of the first chapters of Genesis. We must accept in faith that what God reveals to us about the creation of heaven and earth and not put

our human ideas into it. For we know God in all His Omnipotence and His adorable majesty through the way He reveals Himself and through His works. And we must learn to trust in Him alone.

We also learn to know Christ in the creation of heaven and earth, for through the Word, through Christ Jesus our Lord, all things were made, John 1:3. Whoever then disputes the facts regarding the creation of heaven and earth as it is written in Genesis 1 and 2, trifles with his faith and with his life, because Christ, the hope of glory, comes to us in this way.

Summary for the children

This morning, children, you sang the song: *“’k Stel mijn vertrouwen op de Heer mijn God.”* (*“I will put my trust in the Lord my God.”*)

That is a beautiful song. Once you have learnt it you will never forget it. And you must never forget it. Do you know why we can put our trust in the LORD our God? The answer is really very simple. Because of everything that is written in the Bible. In it the LORD God tells us that He made everything that you can see, and also everything that you can’t see, but is there. How? Only by speaking. The LORD is so mighty that He only has to say a word and it is made by Him. And when your mother or father reads to you from Bible or the Children’s Bible, or you read it yourself, then you see that the LORD has done lots more. That He cared for His people of Israel. That He performed miracles to save His people. Miracles that we do not understand how they happen, even us grown-ups don’t understand them. But we do believe that it all happened this way because the LORD says so. In the Bible!

And the biggest miracle of course, is that Jesus Christ died for us. That is why we, if we believe in Him, are allowed to call Him our Father again. Even though we did not deserve it. For we were disobedient.

Now let me go back to the beginning. You, children, and us grown-ups just the same, we put our trust in the LORD God because we get to know Him by reading the Bible. That is why we know that He cares for us. That is what He promised. And He showed it when you were baptized. By reading the Bible we know that nothing is impossible for the Lord. Nothing at all! He can do everything He wants to do.

Then it’s not very hard to trust Him, is it? If He can do everything He wants to do, then He can also care for you and me. So, to keep on trusting the Lord, we must read our Bible often. That is what

the LORD wants us to do. For then we get to know Him even better. And do you know what happens then? Then you yourself will also think and speak bigger of the LORD God and of the Lord Jesus.

Encouragement

And we, brothers and sisters, the Lord willing, we may also start this new season of work and meetings. Being busy as “legible letters” of Christ, for so long as the LORD finds it necessary for us to be here on earth. With the possibilities and talents that He has given us. In subjection to His Word. In deep thankfulness. For it is God who has kept us by His Word and in His Church and through the Liberation of 2003. We must therefore turn a deaf ear to all attacks on His Word. For our life’s sake. Christ lives among us, in and through His Word. Therefore it is our task to be busy with that Word in this new season. Not sparingly, not every now and then, when it suits us, but abundantly. For that Word teaches us the amazement and deep joy of the great mercies God has given us in our lives. *“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

This Christ, then, not only works in the midst of His congregation, but is also our Advocate with the Father in heaven. This is so very necessary for us sinful people. Again and again there are sins in our lives. However, the apostle John, to our comfort,

could write: *“We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world,”* 1 John 2:1 and 2.

Isn’t this, when we go home again, a tremendous encouragement? Christ as our Advocate with the Father in heaven! Christ in us, the hope of glory! Living and working in the midst of His congregation. No matter how small. According to His promise: *“For where two or three are gathered in My Name, I am there in the midst of them.”* Matthew 18:20. Think of this when you go to church tomorrow. Maybe you gather in a sports-hall or in a cheerless meeting room that does not even look like a church building. And maybe you may think despairingly: what will become of us? So few people, so few ministers.

But remember then that, when you count the members who are present, and there may be only 15, that you must continue counting, for, if you gather in the Name of Christ, you can always count ONE more. *“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

A. van Egmond

NB: Bible quotations are from the New King James Version



© www.freefoto.com

Letter to the Reformed Churches (lib.)

Emmen, 21 May 2010

To the General Synod of the Reformed Churches (liberated)
Postbus 770
3900 AL Amersfoort

Subject: **An appeal and a wish**

Respected brothers,

1. Introduction: Longing for unity in the true faith

The General Synod of The Reformed Church (restored) in the Netherlands, held in Emmen, discussed your letter dated 24 October 2008 at its meeting on 8 May 2010.

We are pleased to read that your love continues to reach out to us. As one of the reasons for that, regardless of the church-separating factors, is that the Christian calling continues to exist to seek healing of the break and the unity on the grounds of God's Word and the Reformed Confession. In your prayer to our God and Father, you asked for coming together again, for reconciliation and dialogue, trusting in God who knows and works in our hearts.

These are beautiful words in which we like to hear your heartbeat.

We will gladly give you an answer. Our heart also goes out to you, to our many relatives, friends and acquaintances with whom we miss the spiritual bond since the separation. For so many years now.

We noticed in your letter that you did not respond to the contents of the appeal we sent to you in an answering letter, dated 15 April 2006. The contents were well-meant, and came forth from our concern about you. Concern, that you as churches, continue to stray away from the only foundation on which true unity must be founded: God's Word and its authority.

We read in your letter that you have called upon God's greatness and that you have prayed for dialogue. The question is then: a dialogue about what, for you do not mention a single topic. With this letter we wish to give you a helping hand. Because of our love for you and our sympathy towards you, we ask attention for the following:

1. Introduction: Longing for unity in the true faith.
2. Scripture criticism takes away the foundation from under the church.
3. The New Bible Translation leads astray.
4. The fourth commandments of our God: Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
5. The seventh commandment of our God: You shall not commit adultery.
6. The Lord's Supper is for members of the church.
7. Ecclesiastical unity at the expense of God's Word is wrong.
8. Appeal: Return to faithfulness to the Almighty.
9. Wish: To together serve our God and Father in unity of the true faith.

2. Scripture criticism takes away the foundation from under the church

2.1. Scripture criticism is self-willed explanation of God's Word

The first thing we want to mention is the central theme in our letter. That is the Scripture criticism that you are letting into your churches. This means that you openly allow an explanation of the Word of God that deviates from what the Bible itself says. In this you wrong the trustworthiness of God's Word. That saddens us. Among the decisions of GS Zuidhorn, which we had to reject as unscriptural in our liberation of 2003, was the acceptance of the new hermeneutics (exegesis = interpretation of Scripture). Because of that, many Bible passages are no longer accepted the way God's Word gives them to us in all clarity and obviousness. In your churches it is acceptable to teach that Bible texts were influenced in form and content by the world of that time. They are therefore texts that in our day must be re-interpreted by and for the congregation of Christ, because it is assumed that Bible passages today do not necessarily have that validity, as they are written in the Scriptures.

We have in mind, for instance, the historical passages from Genesis (1-11), Jonah, Joshua and the decisions about the new-testament Sabbath as a possible human ordinance, and also the new views on marriage and divorce. These are the views that led to God's Word not having any commandments anymore, but are to be seen as instructions and guidelines that must continually be applied to the own situation in the own time.

2.2. Six examples of Scripture criticism that you allow in your churches

Over the past years our churches have often seen this unfaithfulness in various publications. We come across deviating explanation of the Bible in your synod decisions and in publications in your churches. We would like to mention some striking examples in which the actual and historical trustworthiness of Scripture is being disputed:

1. The approving and recommending of the Emmaus-course (GS Zuidhorn, art. 109, decision 2i, GS Amersfoort, art. 114, decision 5). This adopted interdenominational evangelization course contains passages of extreme Scripture criticism with regard to Genesis 1-11, chapters that are indicated as being "pre-historic". That the approach of the Emmaus-course originated from the "mainstream of the historical-critical view", is emphatically recognized by the editors, as is also mentioned in the course itself. You, as churches - against your own confession (Art. 7, Art. 29 Belgic Confession) - have not opposed the use of this course, but instead promoted it as the successor of the Alpha-course, because, according to you, it is a "reliable and usable course to be able to get acquainted with the Word of God and the congregation of Jesus Christ in a Reformed manner and in a Reformed setting."
2. The denial of the historicity of God's Word about the days in Genesis 1 (Rev. J.J. Doedens in the book 'Woord op Schrift', 2002).
3. The giving of more room to see many Bible stories as metaphor and not as historical (Prof. dr. A.L.Th. de Bruijne in the book 'Woord op Schrift', 2002).
4. To consider it legitimate to speak of the Big Bang and an evolutionary development of the universe and the earth and also letting go of the literalism of the days in Genesis (Prof. dr. J. Douma in 'Genesis', 2004).
5. The speaking about the exodus from Egypt and the origins of the people of Israel in a very Scripture-critical manner and the denial of the historicity of Genesis 1-3 (Rev. S. Paas, in his thesis, 1998 and in the magazine 'Wapenveld', 2001; after this he was appointed as lecturer at your Theological University at Kampen).
6. The Lord's fighting for his people by letting sun and moon stand still, as written in Joshua 10:12 is disposed of as an eastern narrative tradition (Dr. K. van Bekkum in his thesis, March 2010).

2.3. The foundation of the church is being increasingly undermined

The sad and most damaging thing is that criticism of Scripture in your churches is being given plenty of room and is not being opposed by church meetings. The few faithful brothers who still stand up for the authority of God's Word receive no response and their objections are constantly rejected (see e.g. GS Zwolle-Zuid, art. 104, 105).

In this way you are in fact disassociating yourself from the Art's. 2-5 & 7 of the Belgic Confession that are based on God's Word itself and you undermine the foundation of the church (Art. 29 B.C.) more and more.

We are convinced that the topics which we put before you in the rest of this letter cohere with the criticism of Scripture and the letting go of the authority of God's Word.

3. The New Bible Translation (NBV) leads astray

3.1. We have concerns about you

It is already five years ago that you made the decision to heartily recommend the use of the New Bible Translation (NBV) in your worship services. Your GS said at the time that it was thankful for the gift of the NBV because, according to you, this translation conveys the Holy Scriptures carefully and in a reliable and modern Dutch language.

And two years later your GS again voiced its trust in the NBV and declared furthermore that you had not received any arguments by which the trustworthiness of the NBV could be doubted.

These remarks give cause for great concern and they sadden us.

For we have found that the NBV is a translation that proclaims the message of forgiveness of sins brought about in man also through self-activation. The NBV is a translation that does not do justice to Jesus Christ, for it is only He that saves His people from their sins.

We would like to make that clear to you by giving a short deliberation of the NBV. This includes a specification of the introductions on the Bible books, three examples of incorrectly translated texts and a conclusion with an incitement.

3.2. The introductions on the Bible books are governed by Bible criticism

The NBV gives a short introduction at the beginning of each Bible book. In it something is said in short about the contents and the origins of the Bible book. These introductions are open to various interpretations, but often an approach of Scripture criticism dominates.

We would like to show you by using two examples.

3.2.1. *God reveals that all people descend from Adam*

On page 4 of the introduction on the book of Genesis we read the following: "By means of a number of genealogical registers in Genesis 4, 5, 10 & 11 a view is expressed that all people have Adam as a common forefather".

The NBV reader is being misled here. For the Lord has given us genealogical registers in the Bible and these registers show Adam as the first man and the forefather of all people who came after him. That is the reality. We must not do away these teachings of the Lord as a view.

For the Bible is the Word of God, the LORD. He tells us everything we need to know for our salvation. In that He is perfect, He does not make mistakes. That is why He says elsewhere through the mouth of the apostle Peter that "no prophesy of Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20).

3.2.2. Paul himself wrote the letters to Timothy

In the introduction on the Bible-book of 1 Timothy we read: "According to some the letters were written by Paul himself at the end of his life. Others think that, on the grounds of style and content, they were not from Paul's hand, but were written at the end of the first or the beginning of the 2nd century by an unknown author who wanted to give authority to his letters by using Paul's name." The contents of this quotation from the NBV is in contradiction with the teachings from the Holy Scriptures itself. For in 1 Timothy 1:1&2 we read that the apostle Paul does write the letter to Timothy. To us it is therefore beyond question that Paul is the author. That is confirmed through the word in 2 Peter 1:21 where the Lord tells us that "prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of Gods spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit".

3.3. The NBV does harm to the redemption through Christ only

In this part of the letter we wish to give you three examples that the NBV is a translation that alters the fact that we can only and exclusively receive redemption from our sins through Jesus Christ.

3.3.1. Genesis 3:15

Translation NBG - 1951 (comparable with RSV): "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise (crush) your head and you shall bruise (crush) his heel."

Translation NBV: "I will set up enmity between you and the woman, between your descendants and hers, they shatter your head, you will bite in their heel."

Assessment:

- The word 'he' (NBG - 1951) refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of a virgin. He shall crushingly defeat the devil (Col. 2:15).
The word 'they' (NBV) refers to the descendants of the woman; because of the plurality of the verb 'shatter' it refers to the believers.
- Biting in the heel is not life-threatening, crushing the heel is; this expression means that the devil will pursue Christ strongly, and that Christ shall triumph through death.
- This text is a Christ-prophecy, it indicates that the victory over sin comes about by Christ only. This does not become evident in the NBV.

3.3.2. Luke 1:27b

Translation NBG - 1951: "The virgin's name was Mary."

Translation NBV: "The girl was called Mary."

Assessment:

- The miracle of the virgin birth of Christ is gone here in the NBV.
- Therefore the new beginning that God Himself began is also gone.
- The redemption of our sins is the work of the Lord God only, through his Son: Jesus is the Christ.

3.3.3. Ephesians 2:8a

Translation NBG - 1951: "For by grace you have been saved through faith."

Translation NBV: "By His grace you are now saved, thanks to your faith."

Assessment:

- We receive justification from Christ through faith.
- Here 'through' has the meaning 'by means of' (indicating the way). This is totally different from the 'thanks to' which means 'giving a positive contribution'.

c. The NBV alleges that I am saved, thanks to my faith. This is not true, because I am saved, thanks only to Jesus Christ. I can only belong to Him through faith.

3.4. Conclusion, with an incitement to return to a trustworthy translation

By presenting God's Word in a human way, there is a big chance that the gospel of free grace will disappear, and through that the true faith (Lord's Day 7, Q. and A. 21).

The NBV is to be characterized as a liberal, unreliable translation that re-introduces the remonstrant error. The error of the Remonstrants is that the salvation of the believers is partly dependant on the self-activation of man. This error were rejected on Scriptural grounds by the Synod of Dordt in 1618/1619. It is thanks to that, that we have our beautiful confession of the Canons of Dordt.

A document about which, according to you, you can be approached.

We confess: The believer receives salvation only through Jesus Christ through faith, which is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8b).

You present the NBV as a reliable Bible. We can, on many more grounds than the ones mentioned above, do nothing but reject this translation.

The first thing we wish to mention is that the NBV is a proclaimer of a gospel of self-activation of man for his salvation.

Secondly, the NBV can be purchased in two different versions: one with and one without apocryphal books (also called: deuterocanonical books). There are also issues where there is no mention that the apocryphal books are included. In public libraries and in bookshops (May 2010), two orange-coloured versions stand side by side, barely distinguishable from each other, one without and the other with apocryphal books. In the introduction on the Bible in the one edition, the New Testament is called the second part of the Bible. In the introduction in the other edition (with the apocryphal books), the apocryphal books are mentioned as the second part of the Bible and the books of the New Testament the third part.

It is true, the introduction mentions that in the early church the word 'apocryphal' was used for the books that were not considered authoritative, but at the same time the pronouncement was upheld that these books belong to the Bible.

This manner of editing means that each buyer determines for himself what is or what isn't the Word of God by the choice he makes when buying. That is wrong. For only the Lord Himself indicates which is His Word. A sinful person cannot do that of his own accord.

Thirdly, we see that with each Bible book an introduction has been added that is in conflict with the Bible and in this way violates the truth.

By presenting the NBV as a reliable Bible you are giving divine authority to all the errors in this translation. And by using the NBV you are exposing the members in your bond of churches to the possibilities of severe damage to their faith. The possibility that this can even lead to loss of faith is unfortunately a reality.

We hope that you will return to fully holding on to all that God has given you: His glorious Word, so that no one may take your crown (Rev. 3:11).

Your eternal life and that of the sheep entrusted to you, is at stake.

4. The fourth commandment of our God: Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy

4.1. God gave us the commandment that the Sunday is to be a day of rest

In your churches you allow the preaching that the Sunday, as a day of rest, is not based on a divine command.

This pronouncement of your synod is against Scripture and is therefore condemnable. Sadly your synods, up till now, have upheld this pronouncement. Yet it is really wrong that you permit this

doctrine. For the word 'sabbath' means a day of rest. This was instituted by God Himself at the time of creation (Gen. 2:2,3; Ex. 20:8-11).

After the fall into sin, this day of rest remained valid (Ex. 16:23-30).

In the New Testament the Sabbath on the Saturday is moved to the Sunday. For the Lord Jesus arose on the first day of the week (John 20:19; Acts 2:1; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 1:10).

The actual day of rest remains the same, it is a gift of creation to the honour of God for His great deeds. It is not written literally in this way. This is because the commandment is so obvious that it is taken for granted that everyone adheres to it, therefore it is not necessary for it to be explicitly written down.

"Not one jot or one tittle will pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18).

That was, in the past, summarized and defended by the church in her confessions and decisions at many synods.

The General Synod of Dordt 1618/1619, which so clearly laid down the foundation for the church, gave a number of rules with regard to observing the Sabbath. From those we can draw the following conclusions:

- one day a week is dedicated to religion;
- the day of rest is the Sunday;
- on Sunday man must rest from his daily work and the recreational activities that is unbecoming for the service to the Lord.

The last conclusion mentioned implies that only works of mercy and necessity are permitted (Matt. 12:9-14; Luke 14:1-6).

4.2. Enervation of God's commandments makes the preaching powerless

The observance of the Sunday as the day of rest on the grounds of the fourth commandment, that was given to us by God, is put on the same level by your synods as a human opinion.

Therefore, it is possible that a minister will preach a human opinion from the pulpit. Your synod also stated that an opinion in the church may not be considered binding (GS Zuidhorn, Acts art. 52, decision 3). Because of that, the doctrine of the Sunday as day of rest cannot be preached with divine authority in your churches anymore.

That has huge consequences, not only for the fourth commandment, but because of your decision, the whole law of God is affected. "For whoever stumbles over one commandment, is guilty of all" (James 2:10; see also Matt. 5:17-19).

Because of this the Word of God is robbed of its power and a calling with divine authority to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord cannot be made.

Your church denomination is no longer "a pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

The publication of the brochure "Zondag HEERlijke dag" (Sunday LORDly day) changes nothing of that. For in that publication the Divine Word and a human opinion have equal rights. But in this way your preaching lacks the power of our God. And you persistently mislead your sheep. That is extremely bad.

4.3. Resting on the Sunday is to the honour of God and it is good for man

It is arrogant to think that we ourselves are allowed to decide what we are allowed to do with the Sunday and do whatever we want. God lays down what should or should not be done (Mark 2:28).

The day of rest is a commandment of God and also a gift from God, and by this we know that this day is very good for the people. Yes, our good God gives His people good gifts.

The day of rest: we must adhere to this, to the honour of God and for the well-being of all people and the whole creation.

5. The seventh commandment of our God: You shall not commit adultery

5.1. The Lord hates all divorce

We call your attention to the fact that God hates all divorce, see e.g. Mal. 2:16; Matt. 5:31-32; Mark 10:6-9; Heb.13:4.

Scripture however, does recognize a situation in which divorce is allowed and that is the case of sexual immorality outside of wedlock. (see for this Matt. 5:31-32.)

Here Scripture rejects all opinions that stretch the concept of "sexual immorality" to other situations. Divorce is allowed by God only in the case of adultery, where marriage is already broken by the adulterous party (Matt. 19:9). For it is then an accomplished fact: the marriage is broken. One must, of course, always point out the road to reconciliation, but it is not an obligation that the stricken party must always come to restoration of a marital relationship.

Scripture reveals one other situation where divorce is possibly permitted. That is the situation of desertion because of the faith of the man or the woman. In that case, the partner who has been deserted, is no longer bound to the unbeliever who has deserted him or her (see 1 Cor. 7:15-16).

It is, however, debatable whether remarriage in this case is allowed (1 Cor. 7:10). We attach importance to the fact that the apostle Paul does not introduce a new rule here, but that he, in an exceptional situation, implements the words of Christ in Matt. 10: 35-37:

"For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household'. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

Brothers, every other ground for divorce than the above-mentioned is, according to God's Word, unlawful.

5.2. Own criteria when allowing divorce affects God's Word

Your most recent synod stated that in the case of remarriage after divorce, the consistory must see to it that this must be solemnized in a worship service in the same manner as a first marriage. That is if the consistory approves of the next marriage. This decision indicates that divorce in further defined situations is tolerated. In that, you, as churches, apply your own criteria to the situation in which the persons in question find themselves. This own criteria is not written in God's Word. That leads to harming the authority of the Word of God because in this way the Bible is not its own interpreter anymore.

6. The Lord's Supper is for members of the congregation

6.1. Participation of the Lord's Supper asks for unity in faith in doctrine and conduct

On the grounds of God's Word, the Reformed Churches have always agreed that participation of the Lord's Supper is open only to confessing members of a Reformed Church or to members of a sister-church who have an attestation issued to them by their own consistory.

This is the Reformed rule that is laid down in Art. 61 of the Church Order (Art. 60 of the Dutch Church Order). There it says that: "The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister-churches shall be admitted on the ground of good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct."

Also, on the grounds of God's Word, we have also agreed in Art. 61 of the Dutch Church Order that: "*the Lord's Supper shall be celebrated in a public worship service, according to the ecclesiastical order in the churches, under the supervision of the elders.*" (note: these words - in italic - have not been included in the English (Book of Praise) version of the Church Order).

6.2. The presumption of unity in faith outside the church goes in against our confession

You synod has stated that a consistory can admit, as guest to the Lord's Supper, a member of a church with which there is no sister-church relationship, after the consistory has convinced itself that the person involved is admitted to the Lord's Supper in his/her own church, not be under Christian discipline, acknowledges the Reformed Confession and lives a godly life, such as is referred to in Art. 61 of the Church Order (Art. 60, Dutch Church Order).

When asked if one acknowledges the Reformed doctrine, nothing more or nothing less is asked than that they acknowledge the 'doctrine of the Old and the New Testament', as summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian Church'. That is the same question that is asked when one publicly professes his/her faith.

We believe that the Church, God's Word and the Lord's Supper are connected.

The celebration of the Lord's Supper is a sign and a sealing of God's promises as is preached and given in the administration of God's Word in the church.

The open contradictory dealing with the confession of the Church is to be an impediment to participate in the communion of Christ at the table of the Lord's Supper.

Moreover, in our opinion, it is not possible that someone, who is disobedient with regard to Art. 27-29 of the Belgic Confession, can sincerely and with a clear conscience, before God and His people, acknowledge the Reformed Confession.

By allowing someone to participate who is not a member of a Reformed Church or a sister-church, it gives an assumption of a unity of faith outside the church. This is the acceptance of a multiplicity in the Church that is in conflict with the Belgic Confession, Art.'s 27-29. For participation of the Lord's Supper cannot be taken as detached from the Sunday worship service.

In Art. 35 of the Belgic Confession we confess that the church receives "this holy sacrament in the congregation of the people of God".

We are of the opinion also, that it is not possible that a consistory can keep a watch over the sacredness of the Lord's Supper if guests, who do not fall under the admonition and discipline of the consistory or of a sister-church, participate.

7. Ecclesiastical unity, at the expense of preserving God's Word is wrong

7.1. Ecclesiastical unity is only permitted when the full Word of God is kept

Your most recent synod thankfully took note of the deputies' reports of your churches and of the Netherlands Reformed Churches (Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken) with regard to the dialogue about the binding to the Confession, even though this has not yet been rounded off.

Your synod has also thankfully ascertained that an agreement was reached about the necessity of endorsing the Confession, even though that has not yet been done by all the churches involved.

Your synod has pronounced that this agreement gives confidence that other obstacles concerning the binding to the confession, can also be overcome.

As motive for these pronouncements, you bring forward that from the agreement about the necessity to endorse the Confession, it has been found that the Netherlands Reformed Churches have the intention to take the binding to the Confession seriously.

Your synod also expressed that by consent, note was taken of the manner in which the pronouncements of the Netherlands Reformed Churches regarding the opening of the office to women in the congregation, was discussed.

Likewise, your synod thankfully took note of the advancement that became apparent concerning the understanding and interpretation (exegesis) of Scripture.

The reason given for this was that, among other things, it was mentioned that there was recognition

and/or clarification on the point of dealing with Scripture.

7.2. Do you really remain faithful to the Word of God and the Reformed Confession?

The above-mentioned pronouncements of your synod fill us with great concern.

We wish to draw your attention to the pronouncements of your and our synod, who, in 1967, were of the opinion that the Open Letter of 31 October 1966 cast doubt upon the contents and general character of the Reformed Confession. The Reformed Confession is the summarization of the true and complete doctrine of salvation.

The contents of the Open Letter, at that time, fitted in the framework of the so-called ecumenical movement, but the Reformed Churches have always rejected the wrong ecumenism and preserved the Reformed Confession. The scriptural-confessional foundation of our churches in the articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession were not found in the Open Letter

In 1967 your and our synod expressed that an unacceptable contradiction (antithesis) existed between expressing agreement with the confession for the church on the one hand, and on the other hand the endorsing the Open Letter, because with this endorsement, the responsibility for its contents was accepted. These pronouncements of 1967 were confirmed by your and our synod of Hoogetveen 1969/1970.

We wish to remind you of these pronouncements of your and our synod because the Netherlands Reformed Churches came into being through the work of those that supported the contents of the Open Letter. Even today, that still influences the 'Akkoord van Kerkelijke Samenleving' (Accord for Ecclesiastical community) of these churches. In that, among other things, it says that: "The churches request all congregations that have objections against the acceptance of the/an ecclesiastical accord, focus as much as possible to that which is approved of by major votes. We find that through this, every church can decide and do what is good in its own eyes.

The Scriptural calling to form one bond of churches is being ignored here (see Eph. 3:17,18).

We draw your attention to the fact that since 1995, ministers in the churches are not compelled to sign the Subscription to the Confession and in this way a minister is not officially bound to Scripture and to the Scripture-based Confession. It is stated however, that a "future minister shall place his signature under...", but this is not made explicitly compulsory. This rule also counts for other office bearers, see for this Art. 17 of the Accord.

The binding to Scripture and the Confession is very much in the air, and because of this, self-willed religion is permitted. This is against our Church Order. (see Art. 26 (Art. 53 & 54, Dutch Church Order)).

7.3. Without binding to Scripture and Confession, straying away will occur in ecclesiastical life

in practice it appears that straying away from the Word of God occurs when one lets go of the binding to the Confession. We wish to give two concrete examples for this, and in the next chapter we will show what Scripture teaches regarding the dealing with errors and what our attitude towards that must be.

7.3.1. *The soul of a deceased believer immediately goes to Christ*

Firstly the error that believers, between the time of their death and the Second coming of Christ, remain in a type of interim state and are oblivious of everything. This error is still accepted by the churches and has not been rejected.

We confess in Lord's Day 22 of the Heidelberg Catechism that the soul of a deceased believer is immediately taken up to Christ. Christ is the Head of the believer. The body of the deceased believer will one day be raised from the dead, be united with its soul and be identical to the glorified body of Christ.

7.3.2. *The special office has been allotted by Christ to the men only*

The second example of unfaithfulness to Scripture is that the offices have been set open to sisters of the congregation in the Netherlands Reformed Churches.

The opening of the special offices in the church to sisters of the congregation is in flat contradiction with the Word of God. In 1 Timothy 2:11-15 we read: "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, fell into transgression".

The Holy Spirit says with this that women who profess godliness adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, with good works; they shall be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

7.4. The LORD says: Do not be deceived, be faithful

Whatever happens, we are always allowed to trust in the Word of the Lord. He has promised that at our baptism. If we sometimes through weakness fall into sins, we must not despair of God's mercy nor continue in sin, for baptism is a seal and trustworthy testimony that we have an eternal covenant with God.

7.4.1. *No working together where there is unfaithfulness to the Word of God*

For this reason we speak frankly when we ask you not to work together or continue to work together where unfaithfulness to the Word of God is tolerated.

For working together with an association that will not bend to the authority of God's Word and the Scripture-based Confession is against the will of the Lord. Scripture certainly rejects this attitude in 1 Kings 12:33-13:34 and in 2 John verse 10.

The Belgic Confession rejects this attitude in Art. 7.

With the words from Scripture written in James 1:16 we ask you: 'Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers'.

7.4.2. *The LORD asks faithfulness to His Word*

The LORD commands us to keep His full Word

The LORD

- teaches us that there is only one church and the office bearers must give good council and supervision (Eph. 4:1-6; B.C. Art. 27-29);
- abhors the permissive use of His Word (1 Kings 13:2);
- indicates that there is deliverance only when one binds oneself to God's Word (Joel 2:32);
- wants us to listen to Him (Luke 16:27-31);
- teaches us that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of Scripture (Prov. 1:7; Prov. 9:10; Prov. 15:33; Psalm 111:10);
- calls us not to despise the prophecies (1 Thess. 5:20);
- instructs us to test all things and hold fast what is good (1 Thess. 5:21);
- admonishes us, in spite of everything, to love the Lord entirely (Rev. 2:4);
- tells us not to follow a crowd to do evil, nor to testify in a dispute to pervert justice (Ex. 23:2).

8. An appeal: return to faithfulness to the Almighty

We have seen that the decisions of your last synod, held in Zwolle- Zuid, are completely in line with

the decisions of the general synod of Zuidhorn.

The decisions of that synod were the cause for the Liberation in 2003 and 2004. You continue to follow the wrong path that was chosen in Zuidhorn.

In this letter we therefore urgently appeal to you to return to the Scriptural path, the path that you had followed before and for which your and our synod of Amersfoort-West in 1967 so clearly chose.

You wrote to us that you in your prayers have asked our God and Father for coming together again, for reconciliation and dialogue, trusting in God, the knower and the worker of our hearts.

You write that you want to commit yourselves to His will.

Therefore we feel free to ask you to reconsider the path that you are now following and to take away from within your churches the decisions that are against Scripture and Confession. That will be cause for great blessings and shall give much joy and happiness on earth and in heaven.

We can inform you that our prayer for the repentance of our brothers and sisters in the Reformed Churches Liberated is regularly sent up to the throne of our Almighty God, who is our Father through Christ and who hears and answers the prayers of His children.

We write this letter to you because our heart goes out towards you. With many of you, until some years ago, we have sat together at the one Holy Supper table. May the Lord still grant restoration of these damaged relations in the way of true faith, because Christ calls us to do the will of our Father who is in heaven

9. A wish: Serving our God and Father in the unity of true faith

We wish that the prayer of Psalm 25:4,5 will also be your prayer and will become reality, so that we and the sheep entrusted into your care will again be able to sing together to our Almighty Father with the words:

“Show me your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day.”

We know and believe that:

“No one who waits on You shall be ashamed, those who deal treacherously and without cause shall be ashamed.” (Psalm 25:3)

We hope and pray that the Lord will grant you repentance, so that we can again look up together, stand before God’s countenance together, together serve Him again in unity and together receive His blessing.

With sincere and warm greetings,

On behalf of the General Synod of The Reformed Churches (restored)

A. Admiraal, chairman

C. Baan, 2nd clerk

(NOTE: The quotations from Scripture have been taken from the New King James Version)

Introducing the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford

The Liberated Reformed Church (LRC) is located in the heart of Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada, known as the city in the country. We are in the center of the Fraser Valley which spreads from the magnificent mountains on the East and North, to the Strait of Georgia, off the Pacific Ocean, to the West and the USA border to the South. Abbotsford is also known as the berry capital of the world. There are fields of blueberries, raspberries and strawberries. Every year in the month of July, they celebrate the berry festival. There are also many vegetable farms in the valley, growing anything from potatoes to endive to brussel sprouts to carrots and many other varieties of vegetables. Beautiful dairy farms are also spread out throughout the valley. It is beautiful; we are truly blessed to live in such a place. We praise God for the freedom of worship here in Abbotsford also.

A Brief History

We are a small congregation of eight families, who are spread throughout the Fraser Valley. Some are from Chilliwack to the East, others from Aldergrove to the West and some even from across the border from Lynden, U.S.A. to the South.

On July 17, 2007, the brothers J. van Laar, R. van Laar, J. Vantil and M. Thalen, as members of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford, together signed a letter of secession, calling on the members of the congregation to join us in liberating themselves from wrong decisions of General Synods over the past years.

Since 2001 these men had been struggling for the truth of the Church. Decisions had been made at Synod Neerlandia 2001 entering into a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the OPC,



acknowledging them as sister churches. This decision was taken despite the fact that certain concerns regarding confessional membership and attendance at the Lord's Table had not been dealt with properly in accordance with Scripture, the confessions and the church order. Previously these concerns were considered to be "serious divergences" but, as a result of this decision, although nothing has changed they are no longer considered serious divergences but simply differences that can be worked on within the EF relationship.

Three of these brothers, who were elders in Abbotsford at that time, together with the rest of

the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford, appealed this decision to General Synod Chatham 2004. Synod 2004, however, denied this appeal. The three brothers who were by this time, former elders, wrote to the consistory with their concerns and requested that consistory appeal the decision of Synod Chatham 2004 to Synod Smithers 2007. The consistory at Abbotsford refused to appeal further, but instead decided to now agree with these decisions, even though nothing had changed. The same divergences existed.

These men then continued to appeal to the consistory and they explained in various letters, using Scripture, the confessions and church order, how these decisions were unscriptural. They also received assistance and support for this from three brothers from Lynden, including Rev. B. Hofford. It was this same Rev. Hofford who had previously written a pamphlet entitled "Open Communion in the OPC," and, who together with his congregation, was accepted into the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches in 1987 after seceding from the OPC.

Despite all these efforts, the consistory in Abbotsford refused to adhere to the warnings they received. Once it became clear that the appeals were no longer admissible, a call for secession had to be made.

For those who are interested, further information can be found on the website: www.calltoreform.com.

Restoration through secession and liberation

The Liberated Reformed Church came together for their first gathering for worship on July 22, 2007 at 10:00 AM, at the premises of the Coast Hotel in Abbotsford. This first Sunday, there were 4 families who had seceded from the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford, a total of 15 souls, plus others who had come from the surrounding area, men, women and children, who gathered together. We came together in unity of faith to worship God as one. It was a Sunday of both joy and sadness. Joy that we could all come together as one in the joy of faith and sadness because there were so many who stayed behind, even though there was

much concern and some had even agreed with this struggle for the truth. We continue to pray that God may gather all His children together in true worship, that we may serve Him in true unity of faith, based on the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the Three Forms of Unity.

Soon after the secession in Abbotsford it became clear that we did not have the unity that we thought we had with the brothers who had seceded from the American Reformed Church at Lynden a year earlier. These brothers raised personal issues, but sadly refused to continue the discussion of these issues in a Christian manner, which resulted in their breaking off the contact.

In spite of this the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford was instituted on December 9, 2007 with 8 confessing members and 7 baptized members. Over time the Lord has blessed us with



new members, both from within and without. On March 14, 2008 the Lord granted a healthy baby daughter to one of the families in the congregation. Also in 2008, two elderly couples who were concerned, who had worshipped with us from the beginning, also became members of the church. A short while later, one of the brothers who just become a member, was taken by the Lord to his heavenly dwelling. We are thankful that his widow is able to share in the communion of saints at this time and that we can be a hand and foot to one another. As congregation we are thankful that she is comforted by the promises of our Lord as we confess in Lord's Day 1.

In 2009 a third elderly couple became members of the church. This couple, who lives in Lynden, U.S.A., had started visiting the worship services since the summer of 2008. In early 2010 a family of seven, including two professing adults, four baptized children and one unbaptized child also became members of the church. More recently the Lord again granted a healthy baby daughter to one of the families in the congregation. As at August 31, 2010 the congregation consists of 15 communicant members and 14 non-communicant members. There is also one more family with 8 children, also from Lynden, who have been worshipping with us since 2007 as visitors.

We praise God for the increase he has given, whether by admission of concerned people or by granting new life. We thank Him for making all things well with mothers and babies, all girls. We hope and pray that we may soon witness the baptism of three covenant children that God has entrusted to believing parents. As a congregation we also look with longing for the day when we may together celebrate the Lord's supper, at the table of the Lord as He commands us.

There are also Bible Study groups who come together to study the Word of God.

The men of the congregation come together once every two weeks on Thursday evenings as Men's Society. The women come together every Tuesday morning for Bible Study. We have recently started a Bible Study for the young people which hopes to meet every second Sunday. The youth of the church also need to come together to study God's Word. Catechism instruction is currently being held for five students in two separate classes. We hope and pray, the Lord willing, to have more as the children become older or as other families become members. We look forward to and pray for the Lord's blessing that others too may hear the call and return "to what they had received at first" (Revelation 2).

Our ecumenical task

After seeking contact with De Gereformeerde Kerken (Hersteld), in the Netherlands, we were grateful to the Lord for sending us, through General Synod 2010, held in Nieuw Amsterdam, two delegates from the

Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld), this past April. We are grateful that these brothers were able to worship with us and to visit with us all in our homes. It was amazing that we could all share with them our joys and struggles. That we could discuss freely with them all that had come to pass. It is amazing how great the Lord is and how wondrous His works, to be able to share in the same faith with those who are so many miles away. We may know that we are one in heart and soul, that we share in the same struggle for the Church of Christ our Lord and Head, for she is His bride and He is the Bridegroom.

We, the congregation here in Abbotsford, were filled with joy and thankfulness that we could receive the news from the General Synod Emmen of De Gereformeerde Kerken (Hersteld), that we have been recognized as a sister church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray that the Lord will hold fast to us all,



continuing to work in and through us with His Holy Spirit by His grace and mercy, that we may build each other up in true faith, in the fear of His Holy Name as His covenant children. That we together may proclaim His praises with our mouth so that others too may come. That we together may hold fast to the promise that He will gather, defend and preserve His Church here on this earth until Christ's return on the clouds of heaven, when all the congregations will praise Him on His Great Day at the Banquet Feast of the Lamb.

*Mary Thalen
(photo's: A. van der Net)*

Unity in Truth

Closing speech General Synod Emmen 16th October 2010

Brother Chairman, delegates, brothers and sisters.

Brother Chairman, first of all I wish to express my thanks for the ample possibility that was continually given to me to give my advice in the discussions. Looking back on the synod it is clear that a tremendous amount of work has been done. The Acts that are to appear in due time, shall give evidence of this. They will be more voluminous than the previous Acts. Reports from various deputies, proposals, draft-outgoing correspondence, draft-synod decisions, all these things were received by delegates via email, and they could, if necessary, again respond, also via email. Also of course, in the discussions at the next synod, whereby it was clear that all the brothers were active. That is an advantage of a small synod. We are thankful for all this, where especially the synod-board had to lead in the preparation of the meetings and co-ordination of the work and implementation of the decisions.

All that was able to take place in a very relaxed and brotherly atmosphere, where everyone listened to each other, and practically all the decisions could be made unanimously.

The brothers delegates did not only have to sacrifice many free Saturdays for the synod sessions, but also had to work through the volumes of work on the other days of the week. In all that we see the good care of the Lord Jesus Christ for the gathering of His congregation.

What can be said about the contents of such divers work?

I will summarize this under the topic:

Unity in Truth

Under that title the concerned members have, for many years, been actively seeking unity by propagating the truth, via internet, especially in opposition to the deformation of the Gereformeerde Kerken vrijgemaakt (Reformed Churches (lib.)). However, the unity that will possibly be achieved, remains a virtual unity, behind the computer, so long as the obedience demanded by the Lord is not carried out, as is confessed in Art. 28 of the Belgic Confession, *“to maintain the unity of the Church by joining it and uniting with it.”*

On the other hand, the unity that De Gereformeerde

Kerken (The Reformed Church (restored)) have sought and practiced in the last Synod, is the unity confessed in Art.27 about the “holy church”, namely *“it is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world. However, it is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith.”*

Various important decisions have been made in view of that unity. We mention the contacts with the Hersteld Hervormde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church, restored), the Reformed Churches (lib.), the committee for the National Synod, the recently liberated churches in Dalfsen and Kampen. And further the contacts with churches abroad, those in Canada, South Africa and Australia.

Where it concerns the remaining in the truth, mention can be made of the detailed regulations of the own training for the Ministry, the testing of the Herzene Statenvertaling (Revised Dutch Authorized Bible Version), the progress made in the return to the Scriptural government of the church by the reviewing or abolition of various old synod decisions. Various decisions, that are of great importance for the future of the churches to remain in the truth and hold fast on to what we have received from the Lord in the earlier reformations, namely those of 1944 and 2003.

It is a cause of great sorrow that we need to mention the breaking of the unity in 2 congregations. It was a remarkable fact that the brothers, who were of the opinion to have been unjustly suspended and dismissed, despite being urged to follow the ecclesiastical way, continually refused to do so. The synod therefore was not able to judge on these matters directly. The causes of this separation lie in the spirit of independentism, which led to the setting up of a temporary church federation outside The Reformed Churches (restored).

It is important here to learn from the past of the Reformed Churches. For, after the Separation of 1834, there was a development that arose from the same error of independentism.

It is not possible to go into detail now, but later I hope to write a number of articles on the matter in *De Bazuin*. But I do wish to pass on something from the Acts of the synods of the Separated Churches of 1834 to 1854.

A retrospective on the synod by the chairman, Rev. S. van Velzen can be found in the Acts of the Synod of the Separated Churches held in Amsterdam in

1849. Two church federations existed then. In 1843, that was therefore 9 years after the Separation, it came to a break. Not only did a few leading ministers (among them Brummelkamp and Van Raalte), leave the constitutional meeting before the synod, but also various congregations followed and formed an own church federation. Despite many attempts in the following synods to heal the break, it continued to exist until 1854, when, also because of the establishing of the Theological College, both church federations were re-united. That then took 11 years.

What was the essence of the cause of the separation? That was very clearly the independentism. That showed in the fact that the brothers who left did not want to acknowledge the power and authority of the major assemblies.

At the most they would acknowledge only common assemblies and interpreted the exception-clause of art. 31 Church Order, (the well-known 'unless') in such a way that only the pronouncement of own thinking (conscientious objection) was sufficient to reject lawful decisions. *"They rejected the reformed principle that a minor assembly should subject itself to a major assembly"* - this can be read in the report of the Synod of the Separated Churches, held in Amsterdam in 1849, p.8. They broke away with an appeal on their conscience. The Synod judged that they deviated from what Christ, our only Master ordained, and sinned against the principle commandment - the commandment of love. p.11.

In all the discussions for coming to unity, it always came to a deadlock in the refusal of the departed brothers to accept Art. 31.

In the previously mentioned concluding words of Rev. Van Velzen, he pointed out that this was clearly the spirit of independentism. That results in separation and it is sin against the body of the Lord to break up the true church, p. 59. True peace cannot exist with denial of truth, p. 64.

After he had expressed his thankfulness *'to Him Who does not only gather, but also defends and preserves His Church,'* he had to add that the joy was a mixed feeling of joy. He spoke about some who had stood up in their midst, who caused quarrels, division and separation, p. 59. Finally he strongly urged the departed brothers to return from their erroneous ways.

Thus far the lesson from history, which shows us the way, now that we also have to deal with the independentism and rejection of authority of major assemblies, and the ignoring of the implied calling in

Art. 31, whereby now a so called temporary church federation has been established. The history of the church teaches us that they are the same errors that always return. That was also the case in the sixties, when likewise, the independentism invaded the church and worked devastatingly. It remains a danger to which we must remain armed.

We conclude with the last words of Van Velzen about that call to unity: *'May the Lord work this to the richness of His mercy! But if such salvation is not yet to be, then let us follow the behavior of Moses, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure in Egypt; for he looked to the reward."* Hebr. 11:25,26. (NKJV)

Finally: We call upon the blessing of the Lord over all the work of the synod, with forgiveness not only of sin, but also of many shortcomings. May He, through this work, strengthen the Church federation, continue to give the peace of Jerusalem to the local churches under her office-bearers and share these blessings with all her members.

P. van Gorp



© www.freefoto.com

We read...

OPC and GKv (Reformed Churches liberated)

The 77th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church met at the Martin and Janet Ozinga Chapel, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois, July 7-14, 2010.

On July 9th 2010 the General Assembly decided:

Based on recommendation 5 of the Committee on Ecumenicity, the General Assembly declined to enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the *the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt)*, in view of concerns regarding its full commitment to a Reformed understanding of the sufficiency, interpretation and authority of Scripture.

RECOMMENDATION 5 of the Committee on Ecumenicity:

That the Assembly express its thankfulness to the Lord for the gracious invitation of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt) (GKNv) to enter into an official sister church relationship (i.e., Ecclesiastical Fellowship) and the Assembly's ongoing desire (without presuming on our GKNv brothers) to work towards the day when it will be able to accept their invitation without reservation.

However, the Assembly believes that, given the serious nature of the obligations undertaken in the sister church relationship, such relationships should not be entered into in situations where the Assembly finds itself unable to affirm, without reservation, that the other church is indeed Reformed in its confessional standards, church order, or life.

It is our prayer that the Lord would be merciful to our GKNv brothers and grant them grace to work through the weighty issues facing them - particularly those touching upon the sufficiency (WCF 1.6), interpretation (WCF 1.9), and authority (WCF 1.10) of Scripture, that seem to be currently troubling the GKNv - in a manner that is in full obedience to and accord with Scripture (Article VII of the Belgic Confession). Accordingly, the Assembly determines to continue the relationship of Corresponding Relations with the GKNv, and to request its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to persevere in addressing matters of mutual concern with the appropriate deputies of the GKNv, with a view towards taking up the matter of entering into full Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GKNv at a future assembly.

Grounds:

1. Our Rules for Ecclesiastical Relationships define Ecclesiastical Fellowship, as follows:

"Ecclesiastical Fellowship is a relationship in which the churches involved are Reformed in their confessional standards, church order, and life, though there may be such differences between them that union is not possible at this time and there might be considerable need for mutual concern and admonition ..." (adopted in 1978 (Minutes of the 45th [1978] General Assembly, pages 116-117), and amended in 2000 (Minutes of the 67th [2000] General Assembly, Articles 149 and 151, pages 36-38), and in 2006 (Minutes of the 73rd [2006] General Assembly, Articles 159-161, pages 41-43)).

Note:

J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937) was the principal figure in the founding of the OPC if for no other reason than that the Presbyterian controversy in which he played a crucial role provided the backdrop for the denomination begun in 1936. A distinguished New Testament scholar at Princeton Seminary from 1906 to 1929, Machen defended the historical reliability of the Bible in such works as *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (1921) and *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (1930). He emerged as the chief spokesman for Presbyterian conservatives by issuing a devastating critique of Protestant modernism in the popular books *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923) and *What is Faith?* (1925). When the northern Presbyterian church (PCUSA) rejected his arguments during the mid-1920s and decided to reorganize Princeton Seminary to create a moderate school, Machen took the lead in founding Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia (1929) where he taught New Testament until his death. His continued opposition during the 1930s to liberalism in his denomination's foreign missions agencies led to the creation of a new organization, The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (1933). The trial, conviction and suspension from the ministry of Independent Board members, including Machen, in 1935 and 1936 provided the rationale for the formation in 1936 of the OPC. Only six months after the new denomination's beginning, Machen died in Bismarck, North Dakota while trying to rally support for the OPC.

He was arguably the most important conservative Protestant thinker of the first half of the twentieth century and the guiding light for the first generation of Orthodox Presbyterians.

P. Drijfhout

God's Case against His Church in His Way to Reformation*

A speech held in Attercliffe, Ontario, Canada, on November 3rd 2010, for members of the Canadian Reformed Churches

Introduction

In 2003, there was a Liberation of the church in the Netherlands. A liberation from synod decisions, and therefore a liberation from the bond or federation of churches of the Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt (RCN liberated). A liberation also from the councils of their churches, in order to continue the church outside the instituted Reformed Churches liberated, resulting in the formation of De Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld) or The Reformed Churches (restored).

Was that Liberation of 2003 legitimate? Was it necessary and was it inevitable? Is it defensible today? Was it and is it the correct way to proceed, and is it therefore a call for everyone in the RCN liberated who wishes to be a member of the true church of Christ?

A liberation should always be judged on the basis of two criteria:

The *first* deals with the Confession and the Doctrine of the Church, forming her foundation, and including her marks; this issue therefore has to do with the truth.

The *other* deals with the Church order and law, that has to do with the unity.

Because Truth and Unity should both be involved. So on both of these issues the legitimacy of the deed of Liberation seven years ago, should be assessed.

You should even approach the Liberation with a deeper, a *cardinal* question: *was it from God; or was it not from God, but from man?*

That crucial question is also relevant to those who must judge this Liberation. Their judgment will also have consequences for their relationship with God Himself.

You can read that in Scripture, when it deals with the judgement on the Liberation from the House of sin by Jesus Christ, in Acts 5. When the apostle Peter was arrested by the Sanhedrin for teaching in the name of Jesus, Peter had a clear and determined answer about the Liberation by Christ and His followers:

We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

Additionally, by this, Peter pointed not only to God as the originator of this Liberation, but also to the consequences of it, the calling: We must obey God by following Jesus in the way we have done. Gamaliël on the other hand pretended uncertainty in the same Liberation. He summarized the problem of judgement and the attitude towards the Liberation of the Church by Jesus and His disciples, by saying: *Was their purpose and activities of human origin? Or were they from God? Acts 5:38, 39*

But he too, like Peter, pointed to the consequences: *If human, then it will fail; but if from God, then God is with them and against us.*

So again, was the Liberation of 2003 the work of The Lord Jesus Christ or not? Was it done in obedience to the Lord or not? Was it in co-operation with His work of gathering and building up His Church or was it a work of Church discord and scattering?

That is the essential question. The answer to that question has consequences not only for those who have followed this Liberation, but also for all those who have judged and refuted it. These consequences even impact their own relationship with God.

So it is very important to have an answer to that particular question, not only for the actual Liberation in the Netherlands in 2003 but for all Liberations that took place in the past, all that are taking place presently or may take place in the future. To answer that, we must first go back to Scripture.

God's case in Micah

Micah 6, the scripture portion we read at the opening of the meeting, deals with a case, a lawsuit of God against His own people. What was this case? Well, in Micah's days God's people turned away from Him. That was a process of ongoing decay, of wrong tolerance and compromise, of disobedience, self-willingness, and injustice. The service of the idols of the surrounding peoples, the selfishness and deviation from God and His covenant, the neglect of God's commandments and the corruption of His worship services, were all included in a recurrent and worsening process; a process that was deceptively masked by false religiosity and false piety.

Now Micah had to tell God's people how they had

broken the covenant, but they refused to hear God's accusation. Israel had ears but did not hear. Therefore Micah had to challenge the people with the mountains as witnesses. These mountains had no ears, but from their Creator they would hear the case of God against His own people. On behalf of God, Micah formulated God's accusation and charge. What was that case? That they had broken the covenant; that they had continued to sin in the way I mentioned previously.

God from His side had fulfilled all His covenant promises to them. He had led them righteously from the House of slavery and bondage to sin. Through the leading of His prophets He had led them through temptation and attacks, into the land of the promise. He had led them from, Shittim to Gilgal, into Canaan. So God had shown His loving kindness and righteousness in His covenant.

But what had they done? They had continued with revolting against God and rebelling against Him. So they provoked Him continually without showing any repentance. What God now was doing through Micah, was an ultimate act to bring them to repentance. Even now, they were not listening. Thus Lord challenged His people. He told them and the mountains, all the things He had done for them. But why had they treated Him so badly? What was the reason for that? Could they blame Him for anything? Had He burdened them (verse 3)? Were His commandments too difficult? Was His doctrine too hard? Were His requirements of His service too demanding?

In fact, these are not merely oratorical questions but they especially are *challenging* questions. To which only one answer is possible. No! No! God Himself had pleased His people in every respect. *He* had from His side liberated and saved them. *He* had generously provided for them and *He* had cared for them with utmost love. But what had *they* done to Him? Why had they dishonoured Him and treated Him with injustice? What was the reason for that? The answer should be: There was and is no reason at all for that, and therefore they did not have a single valid excuse.

The way to go out of misery

But how then to repent? How to please God Who is really righteousness and justice and therefore requires righteousness? How should they do that? Not by performing all kinds of outward acts of self-willed religiosity. Not by exploiting various forms of worship, that were perhaps intended to

please God; but were nevertheless not pleasing to Him. Is outward religiosity pleasing to God? Is that righteousness in the eye of God? Or is this rather worshipping to give good feelings to man, and therefore an abomination before God?

No, the Lord requires a totally different way of repentance. There is really only one thing He requires of man to do for Him as his Creator and Redeemer, and that is giving your heart in love to Him by showing the God of the covenant, your obedience to the covenant, with all your love, understanding and strength. And by asking God for mercy, in the way of humility and self-denial. For obedience and love are better than sacrifices, says the Lord.

There is only one way to resolve the case the Lord has with His people. This is the way of upright repentance. In repentance; living out of the forgiveness of sins in God's way. Micah 6:8:

To act justly, that requires the willingness to perform all His commandments with self-denial. And to reject all that is against these.

To love mercy, that begins with detecting and confessing sins by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and then to act accordingly.

To walk humbly with your Lord, that is to follow His commandments in awe and reverence; to follow Jesus Christ as Leader, as Head of His church, wherever He goes. Going the way of the Lord, that is the small road that leads to eternal life, and not the broad way that leads to destruction.

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

That is doing all that the LORD requires from you and me. Not self-willed religiosity.

The case, the lawsuit of God that Micah has proclaimed against His Church is repeated every time, when the Church leaves the path of the covenant, in rebellion and revolt. Reformation is required each time in the way of repentance and conversion by all who would again follow the Lord on His paths, living from His mercies and blessings. Now we have seen what God's case in Micah was, we can test different reformations and liberations by God's case in Micah as a touchstone. His case is relevant for all reformations. Because the Lord Himself does not vary; He will not alter. We, who may know Jesus Christ, are even more obliged to follow Him. God has shown us even more of His goodness and faithfulness in our Lord Jesus Christ

and in the Holy Spirit. We have even more reason to love mercy and walk humbly with our God. Therefore Hebrew 12: 28, 29 says:

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

1834

Let us start with the Secession of 1834, the Afscheiding in the Netherlands.

It was one hundred years after this Secession that Prof. K. Schilder defended the right and significance of the Afscheiding in an important article. In that article he also used Micah 6 as the touchstone for assessing its right. He summarized the core issue of 1834 as a case of God, according to Micah 6, that was brought into the midst of the churches by God's work in Hendrik de Cock. The accusations of the charge of God included deviation from Scripture as it had definitively been established in the subscription form for ministerial candidates in 1816. From 1816 forward, the covenant with God was broken and the foundation of the Church damaged. By that new subscription form the binding to the confession was officially loosened and self-willed doctrine was tolerated and sanctioned. Adaptation and compromise to the world in which man wants to go his own way, was established. The honour and the right of God was affected, the basis as true church was damaged, and the marks were no longer recognizable. Rev. Hendrik de Cock appealed against these deviations, but after the appeals were rejected, the only way for him to go, was to obey the Lord.

So when his call to repent was rejected, it appeared clear that staying in the bond of churches of the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk would mean sinning and being co-responsible for the corruption of the Word of God and the covenant of God. Following the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the church, meant he was required to secede and so to liberate himself and his congregation from the false decisions and the false bond of churches. In doing so, he acted according to and in obedience to the Scripture. The need for doing so was not due to the fact that De Cock was suspended as a minister, but that he could no longer further serve and defend the honour and right of the Lord, the Head of His Church. Keeping true to the meaning of art.31 CO made the way free to *act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with his God.*

God's case in Micah 6 made that very clear for Prof. K. Schilder, as it should for all of us.

To the question, whether the Secession of 1834 was "too early", Schilder responded negatively; his judgement was that it was better considered as being "too late", because the corruption of the basis of the church started in 1816.

1944

Then the Liberation of 1944. That year, the false doctrine of presumptive regeneration was officially confirmed and imposed, with definite damage to the foundation of the church. God's case against His church was again clearly raised through Dr. K. Schilder and others by means of public objections and also at the synod table. The synod refused to go the way of repentance and conversion, and suspended those who appealed to God's case. So there was for the sake of the honour and the right of the Lord only one way to go. And that again was Liberation according to Art. 31 CO.

Different synods of the RCN liberated, including those of 1946, 1961 and 1969, connected the Liberation of 1944 with God's case. Especially at the synod of Hoogetveen 1969, that had to deal with the signatories of the so called Open letter of 1966, the Liberation of 1944 was defended. This synod gratefully recognized and confessed that the Liberation of 1944 was indeed the gracious work of the Lord Jesus Christ in gathering His Church, and not the result of a quarrel among professors. The marks of the true church had been lost. Essentially this was the only valid reason, which not only *permitted* but even *required* the act of Liberation in 1944, as an act of obedience to the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ.

2003

But now, what about the Liberation of 2003? How should we judge that act? We should not merely compare it to the reformations and liberations in the past, and look for similarities. Although there is a lot to be learned from history and particularly from church-history, nevertheless history itself is not the definitive touchstone. History itself is not the norm, but the Scriptures are, and the confession that is based on Scripture.

From Scripture we can all know how to judge and how to act. That is not only relevant when we have been called to judge the work of others, but it is just as relevant for self-reflection or in defending our own actions towards others.

To be sure that there was a case of God against His church in 2003, we should be sure that the church had deviated from the Word of God.

Can we say that the RCN liberated, had at that time broken the Holy Covenant with God? Can we say that this church did not in all respects maintain the defence of the Lord's honour and right as they should? Can we say, that in their official synod decisions they tolerated and even provoked and stimulated sins and transgressions against the majesty of the Lord?

To have a judgement about that, we should of course be aware of the facts and actions. What were the synod decisions that were then agreed to by all consistories, and for which they therefore are all responsible and accountable?

Let me first make it clear, that all what I will put forward about this issue, is accessible by all of you, and could and should already be known by your churches. That applies especially for the synods of recent years that represented your churches: Smithers 2007 and Burlington 2010.

I will now first discuss with you the most relevant decisions of the Synod of Zuidhorn 2002-2003; most of them responses to requests for revision of earlier synod decisions.

1. The fourth commandment of the Law of the Lord

The first issue concerns the decision of synod Leusden 1999, which declared that it was allowed for ministers to preach that the Lord's day, as a day of rest, is *not based on a divine commandment*. This decision was clearly against Scripture and the Confession of the Church and therefore should be rejected. For the word 'sabbath' means a day of rest. This Sabbath was instituted by God Himself at the time of creation (Gen. 2: 2, 3. & Exodus 20: 8 -11). After the fall into sin, this day of rest, remained valid (Exodus 16:23-30).

In the New Testament the Sabbath was moved from Saturday to Sunday. For the Lord Jesus arose on the first day of the week. The actual day of rest remains the same, as a gift of creation to the honor of God for His great deeds of Creation and Salvation. This commandment is maintained by Jesus Christ as He said in Matthew 5:18 "Not one jot or one tittle will pass from the law till all is fulfilled". This in the past was understood and defended by the church in her confessions and the decisions of many synods. The General Synod of Dordt 1618/1619, gave a number of rules in regard to observing the Sabbath. Of those, we mention the following: one day a

week is dedicated to religion and that the day of rest is the Sunday. On Sunday man must rest from his daily work and the recreational activities that are unbecoming to the service to the Lord.

By this synod decision, the observance of the Sunday as the day of rest on the grounds and in obedience to the fourth of God's divine commandments was put on the same level as a *human* opinion. A minister would therefore then just be preaching a human opinion from the pulpit. The Synod of Zuidhorn also stated that such an opinion may *not be considered binding in the church*. Because of that, the doctrine of Sunday as the day of rest, cannot be preached with *divine* authority anymore. And so *discipline* may not be exercised on those who work on the Sabbath anymore. This in fact has then become a supra-Scriptural binding.

As a consequence of these decisions the *whole law* of God is affected. For James 2:10 says "For whoever stumbles over one commandment, is guilty of all". So the Word of God is robbed of its divine authority and the power and the calling to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord cannot be made.

In addition to this, the synod of Zuidhorn had rejected an appeal against the classis of Rotterdam that stated that the words referring to the physical rest in the *fourth commandment only applies to the old dispensation and is thus not valid anymore*.

As a result of all this, you can today expect that the attendance at the afternoon-services in the RCN liberated will be dramatically less in comparison to the morning services.

2. Open table of Lord's Supper

On the grounds of Scripture the Reformed Churches have always agreed that participation of the Lord's Supper is open only to confessing members of a Reformed Church or to members of a sister-church within their federation or from abroad, who have an attestation issued to them by their supervising consistory.

This is the Reformed rule that is laid down in Art. 61 of the Church Order. There it says that:

"The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister-churches shall be admitted on the ground of good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct."

In the Netherlands we have still maintained the original text of the Church Order of Dordt agreeing in Art. 61 that:

"the Lord's Supper shall be celebrated in a public

worship service, according to the ecclesiastical order in the churches, under the supervision of the elders.”

However the synod of Zuidhorn, rejected all requests for revision of an earlier synod decision that allowed the Lord's supper to be celebrated with members of all kinds of denominations and with all who wished to attend, under certain conditions in areas of war or crisis where army troops are sent. However, not with the oversight of elders and not in the midst of a lawful congregation, were it is not possible to protect the holiness of the Lord's Supper.

At Zuidhorn there were also appeals against a kind of ecclesiastical fellowship exercised in local liberated congregations with local Christian Reformed (CGK) congregations, in which heresies were tolerated and preached. Members of those churches were allowed to participate with the RCN liberated at each other's Lord's supper tables.

In addition there were requests at Synod Zuidhorn for revision of the decision for the RCN liberated to have a sister-church relationship with the PCEA (Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia), which admitted non-PCEA members to the celebration of Holy Supper on the basis of self-testimony and without confessional membership.

In all of these decisions, we sadly had to conclude, that the RCN liberated, intentionally insisted on continuing on her way of desecrating the Lord's Supper before the face of the Lord Himself. That should have prevented members from participating in the celebration to avoid sharing in the judgment of the Lord. They also had to contend with the knowledge of the Words of the Lord through Paul, that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough; that they should keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5: 6-8). In order to maintain the fencing of His table, Christ had ordered the oversight by elders. But the RCN liberated had rejected this, despite all appeals and requests for revision. She refused repentance and conversion, but continued on a path other than the path the Lord had indicated.

As a result, we can today see Lord's Supper tables in RCN liberated churches open for guests from all kind of reformed and non-reformed denominations including Baptists. The only criteria for attendance

is self- testimony and agreement with the Apostle's creed. A phenomenon which totally contradicts what we believe and confess in the Belgic Confession art. 27-32

3. The ecclesiastical unity

We can now be short about the process within the RCN liberated, towards unity with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken and the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken, a process against which many requests for revision were also tabled at the synod of Zuidhorn.

In these churches heresies and Scripture criticism are allowed, tolerated and adopted via the exchange of members, exchange of pulpits for the worship service, the sharing of all kinds of church activities and the sharing of community life with no regard for confessional distinctions. The tolerated heresies which were mentioned previously in the letters of appeal, include criticism of the Canons of Dordt, active female office bearers, the false teaching of Rev. Telder about Soul sleep, adult rather than infant baptism, open Lord's Supper Table, the lack of binding to the Confessions and Scripture criticism in regard to Genesis 1-11, the new hermeneutic that advocates the metaphorical exegesis of historical Scripture passages, and abandoning of congregational boundaries.

All these can be summarized with one word: un-Scriptural tolerance, allowing or advocating lies and heresies beside the truth, making the RCN liberated, a pluralistic church completely corrupting the basis of the church which is supposed to be:

God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

(1 Tim. 3:15)

4. The introduction of un-Scriptural hymns

We also have the issue of the introduction of Hymns from the "Liedboek voor de Kerken".

The Synod of Zuidhorn was confronted with many letters requesting revision regarding the adoption of these new Hymns. They were derived from an interdenominational book of songs that had previously been judged as products of false ecumenism. Especially, Prof. K. Deddens had condemned them as such in the magazine *De Reformatie* during the Seventies. The Synod of Kampen 1975, had also rejected their use.

However, from 1996 on, they were considered to be useful and approved by synods. In 2002 nearly all of the detailed objections against the 121 permitted songs were rejected. These objections regarded not

only the method of testing by the synod, and the danger of displacing the Psalms from the liturgy. But most importantly, they regarded the content itself, which contain a whole spectrum of heresies, such as the doctrine of universal atonement, the doctrines of Karl Barth, the Liberation Theology, as well as minimization or contortion of covenant life, that of the antithesis and the struggle of faith. In addition, mystical, magical or confusing elements were introduced; most of these heresies are presented in a treacherous double-tongued way. That should not be surprising, because their authors or editors had specifically intended them to please a whole spectrum of denominations.

How should we judge all this? In church we sing before the face of God in His very presence to please Him, to conform to His holiness in a way that is integral to Him. Hebr. 12 says:

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

That means that these hymns not only cannot stand in His presence, but are also really annoying Him. In addition to that, these hymns facilitated that heresies were introduced into and spread within the congregations.

Members would often refuse to sing these un-Scriptural hymns which were introduced into the worship service, contrary to Art. 7. of the Belgic Confession. Thereby the unity in the congregations in glorifying and praising the Lord was broken..

This demonstrated a very serious tangible break in the communion of saints. This was all the more serious because upright prayerful and glorifying singing to the Lord in communion with all saints, in His very presence, is one of the highest possible expressions of common faith.

That expression of faith was now definitely corrupted after the synod had rejected the rather massive and detailed objections. That meant that the churches were unstoppably willing to continue their way of deviation from the covenant of the Lord, by pleasing themselves and their ecumenical partners at the expense of keeping the truth; at the expense of the practice of the communion of saints; and above all at the expense of worshipping God acceptably and agreeably.

At least three additional issues were dealt with by

the Synod of Zuidhorn via submitted requests for revision:

5. The synod decision to allow even non-office bearers, who lead the worship service, to confer the blessing of the Lord on the congregation. This meant a visible devaluation of the office, and was a self-willed act in the face of and in the presence of the Lord during His service.
6. The synod decision to release a new marriage form which deviated from the Scriptural view of the relationships between men and women in marriage, especially as to the distinct tasks they have therein.
7. The synod decision to loosen the binding by common consent to the agreed church order, specifically as to the application of art. 65 and 67 of the church order.

We have now mentioned **7 major matters**, in which the Synod of Zuidhorn had decided not to accept the arguments, and for which the church orderly way had then ended (art. 33 CO).

But there was more. I will now quickly go through some other major issues of un-Scriptural synod decisions taken by the same Synod of Zuidhorn 2002, despite letters of appeal being submitted. These include the following:

1. The Synod decision promoting the subversion of the root of the seventh commandment with almost total discouragement of the use of discipline. This also contributed seriously to the desecration of the Holy Supper in many congregations.
2. Synod decisions which approved tolerance of published works containing very evident Scripture criticism in the Church, especially in regard to the training for the ministry of the Word, and in the adopted evangelization course.
3. Synod decisions that allow for the proliferation of liturgical innovations, which put emphasis on the religious feeling and creativity of men. One example of this was the introduction of the so called Ordinarium, a Roman Catholic liturgy. By these decisions the central position of the preaching of the Word of God was relegated more and more to be a minor part of the worship service.
4. Finally, synod decisions on the acceptance and participation in unreliable Bible translations, such as the Groot Nieuws Bijbel and the Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling.

Keeping the truth in unity

Going the church orderly way is also meant to maintain *unity* in the truth, but what must be done if that way has been definitely blocked by all the refusals of more than one thousand appeals and requests? Well, the next step was then to approach the consistories which are actually responsible for maintaining or refusing the un-Scriptural synod decisions. So a Call to Reform was produced, to inform the consistories, and to appeal to them not to ratify these synod decisions. In this call to reformation a brochure was included called "Let us Repent". This brochure contained more detailed information and exhortation. Not one consistory responded positively, so that it had to be concluded at that time that the appeal to repentance and conversion was refused by all congregations.

Only liberation would make it possible to obey the LORD more than man. So after this nation-wide rejection, there was no other possibility left. Therefore a Liberation from the false synod and consistorial decisions was in order to continue the true church by following the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. That started with the Liberation in Berkel & Rodenrijs / Bergschenhoek. It also involved a national Meeting of Liberation on September 20th, 2003 with the proclamation of the Deed of Liberation; and it finally resulted in the formation of the federation of Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (restored) that has now held their 3rd synod, which was completed last month.

What are the developments in the RCN liberated after 2003? Did they later show conversion, prompted by the Liberation and the discussions surrounding that? Unfortunately not, contrarily, these churches did not correct or respond to any of the mentioned issues, they have gone even further on their road of disobedience. Let me sum up some alarming developments:

- the decision to open the table of Lord Supper, in general, for members of all denominations based only on self-testimony.
- the decision in September this year to participate within the National Synod of the Netherlands to be held in December 2010 in Dordt. This National Synod will include most denominations that call themselves reformed or protestant, but even remonstrant. That fact is very striking, because the last national synod was the Synod of Dordt 1618

from which you and I have the Canons of Dordt rejecting the heresies of the remonstrants.

- the decision not to suspend teachers of the theological university that teach or publish Scripture criticism including not only the exegesis of Genesis 1-11 and many other parts of the Scripture, but even the origin of the Lord Himself as the God of Israel.
- the decision not to suspend a teacher who publicly had declared not to have problems with participating in the Roman Catholic service as well as accepting homosexual relationships.
- the synod decision to respond to the question whether practising homosexuals should be refused from participation to Lord's Supper, with the answer, that every consistory has to judge by itself.
- Not to mention all the examples of deviations in the practice of worshipping that are publicly accessible.

CanRC and RCN liberated in 2010

Now you have heard about the case of God against His own people in His way to reformation in the time of Micah. And you have heard about His case in the history of the church in 1834, and in 1944 in the Netherlands. So now, the question to you is:

Was the Liberation in 2003 from God or was it from man? Because that's the very question also you as members of the Canadian churches need to answer due to the decisions on this by your Synods Smithers 2007 and Burlington 2010. These decisions state, using as basis the same information I have now given you, that the RCN liberated have remained 'true and faithful', although Burlington 2010 continues to mention a number of 'grave concerns'.

At the same time your Synods judged the RCN restored, to be 'schismatic', after they had liberated themselves from all unscriptural issues on the basis of article 31 CO and art. 7, 28 and 29 of the Belgic Confession. As you all probably know, the appeals against the decision of Smithers 2007, were denied at your last Synod of Burlington 2010, and the decision to admonish the RCN restored, as schismatic was maintained.

So you are now left with synod decisions, to which all of your consistories, and even also all of you as members, are co-responsible, unless you should refute them as un-Scriptural according to art. 31 CO, and will then act accordingly. And if you do not do so, you yourselves are also co-responsible for the well known heresies within the RCN liberated.

All of you should realize that this is not a theoretical issue that has nothing to do with your own congregational or personal life of faith as Canadian believers. First, by these decisions the CanRC, as a federation, is showing her members how to respond to the general deep deformation and deviation from Gods covenant. They have judged the RCN liberated, as faithful, and they have judged the way of reformation and liberation as schismatic. That is the way your church is showing you as members how to form your judgement.

But is this according the Lord's will?

The other important consequence for you, also as individuals, deals with the influence of the developments within your own churches. For maintaining the Ecclesiastical Fellowship relationship with the RCN liberated, not only makes the CanRC co-responsible for their sins, but also responsible for their influence in the CanRC churches. For within this Ecclesiastical Fellowship church-relationship the revolutionary Dutch spirits and ideas are so easily spread. This will be facilitated by the appointment of ministers of the RCN liberated to your Canadian federation, ministers who have tolerated or even practiced these deviations; another example of this influence will be in the co-operation with the Theological University of Kampen, etc.

Major issues within the CanRC

Let me now end my speech by pointing, only very shortly, to some major issues, which have emerged within your own federation.

First you have accepted and practiced Ecclesiastical Fellowship with more and more denominations with the allowance of pulpit exchange and mutual participation of Lord's Supper, thus accepting their lack of confessional membership.

You also have a long list of appeals against these decisions, from Attercliffe and other consistories. All of them were rejected. The practice of EF and the lack of confessional membership, has already led to a liberation in Abbotsford. The questions I have for you on this issue, are the following: How does your acceptance and practice of Ecclesiastical Fellowship correspond to Scripture, as summarized in art. 28 of the Belgic Confession, where is shown the real unity in truth, the unity of the church as demanded by the Lord, the Head of the Church? This article states that the Scriptural unity with Him requires from all her members, submission

to its instruction and discipline, bending of their necks under the yoke of Christ, and the service of the edification of the communion. So how can you really exercise communion according to the Scripture if you as fellow churches are not totally one in Christ?

The *next* question is: how will you be able to preserve the truth and only the truth of Gods Word by embracing denominationalism and the pluriformity of the church, and having a relationship and exchange with all these fellow churches, and participation in ecumenical bonds like the ICRC and NAPARC?

How does that correspond to your own belief in art. 29 of the Belgic Confession which says that the true church is to govern itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it - I repeat: *rejecting all things contrary to it* - and regarding Jesus Christ as the only Head?

How will you really be able to reject all these things, in obedience to your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, while at the same time allowing the uncontrolled introduction, spread and tolerance of heresies from these bonds?

How will you as congregations and as members, be able to maintain discipline and the sacredness of your Holy Supper of your Lord, as is very seriously required by God Himself?

How can you faithfully perform this to the Lord, when you keep accepting those who are exposed to and may therefore accept these false doctrines from other denominations?

Let me give you an example. I understand from the decisions within the URCNA that they not only err in their doctrine of the church, but also in their doctrine of the covenant of grace.

The last one equates to the heresy of the covenant that was the very ground of the Liberation of your own parents and grandparents in 1944!

I understand that synod decisions regarding the issues of pluriformity have all been maintained despite many appeals in the past. So how is it possible that you tolerate that and are still pretending that the truth of the church has been maintained and that the church in Canada is maintaining the marks of the true church?

The developments in the RCN liberated may also serve as a mirror for the CanRC. The origin of the decline in The Netherlands was the false drive for ecclesiastical unity in addition to adaptations for human feelings. This false drive for unity

was maintained at the expense of the Truth by accepting an un-Scriptural tolerance. One of the first official manifestations of that was the synod decision of Ommen 1993 to permit women's voting in the election of office-bearers. That 1993 decision was new in church history and appeared to be a fundamental turning point. Since then the decline proved to be unstoppable, with the above mentioned deviations. Unfortunately with the 2010 decision on women's voting, the CanRC have shown that they are on the same road which the RCN liberated has travelled.

All I can do as an outsider, is to ask you to seriously assess whether or not God may have also a case against His church in Canada; and if the answer is yes, to ask you to act accordingly. May God help you in that assessment!

Rev. S. de Marie

* *The text is slightly modified by the author for the sake of clarity*

Sources:

- Acts General Synods of Zuidhorn 2002-2003, Amersfoort 2005, and Zwolle-zuid 2008 of the RCN liberated. (www.kerkrecht.nl)
- <http://www.nationalesynode.nl/2010/10/vrijgemaakten-ook-naar-nationale-synode/>
- A.P. Bezemer, C. Bezemer, T.L. Bruinius, W. Dijkstra, S. deMarie. *Let us repent; a call to reformation*, 2003. (<http://www.gereformeerdkerkbladdebazuin.nl/reformanda/vrijmaking/>)
- Acts General Synod of Mariëenberg 2005 of The Reformed Churches (restored). (<http://www.reformedcontinua.nl/documents/>)
- Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad of The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (restored): <http://www.reformedcontinua.nl/files/DoNotTakeAway.pdf>. Do not take words away from this book of prophecy; Answer to the brochure 'Not beyond what is written', Mariëenberg, September 2006. (<http://www.reformedcontinua.nl/documents/>).
- Report and Addendum to report to Synod Smithers from the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA), 2007; - CRCA Report to GS2007 Vol11 Churches Abroad.pdf: pages 39-71 (<http://www.canrc.org/?assembly=56>)
- Acts General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, Smithers, BC, 2007, pages 129-138; 164-168; 206,207, 129-138, 232-238 dealing with RCN

liberated (GKv) and RCN restored (DGK/GKH); other pages dealing with ecclesiastical fellowship relations (Acts also on <http://www.canrc.org/?assembly=56>)

- Acts General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, Burlington, 2010 including. Minority and majority reports on Women's Voting tabled at Burlington 2010, <http://www.canrc.org/?assembly=77>
- K. Schilder: *Beginsel, recht en betekenis van de Afscheiding*, Included in: *De Kerk II, Oosterbaan & Le Cointre 1962*, pages 77-123. (http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/schi008kerk04_01/schi008kerk04_01_0004.php)
- <http://www.calltoreform.com/>

Rev. S. de Marie is minister of The Reformed Church (restored) at Zwolle, the Netherlands



© www.freefoto.com



Introducing you to ...

The Reformed Church (lib.) at Emmen and environs

The concerns

In 2003 and 2004 there was a group of church members that regularly came together in Emmen to discuss the decisions of Synod Zuidhorn. They did this on the basis of the brochure: "Laten wij ons bekeren". (= 'Let us repent'). Members from Mussel and 2e Exloermond also joined in. There were also contacts with a group of church members from Gees.

The liberation

Several brothers and sisters from Mussel and 2e Exloermond liberated in July 2004, followed by another group from Emmen in October. Because of this liberation, a situation arose that forced them to look for other brothers and sisters in the region who had also liberated themselves, so that they could look at possibilities to convene worship services. Not everyone liberated at the same time, in many cases they did not even know each other. Most of the brothers and sisters were able to go to the congregation of Bergentheim-Bruchterveld, where they were welcomed with open arms. In between worship services, homes were opened for members and their families who came from far. This was very much appreciated. On Sundays they travelled to Bergentheim-Bruchterveld from a large area to be provided with the solid food that was so badly needed in the often lonely positions, but also to be replenished and strengthened and to discuss difficulties with brothers and sisters. The brothers and sisters came from Winschoten, Mussel, 2e Exloermond and Emmen and became acquainted with each other.

Own worship services in Emmen

Gradually there was a growing desire that worship services could be convened in Emmen. Especially the great distance to Bergentheim-Bruchterveld began to play a role.

A very suitable location was found on the outskirts of Emmen that was accessible for everyone and it had the advantage that it lay more or less in the centre of the area where the various brothers and sisters lived. An interim committee was formed.

Under the responsibility of the consistory of Bergentheim-Bruchterveld, the first worship service was held in

Emmen on the 31st October 2004: Reformation Day. At this stage there were 28 brothers and sisters who were member of the congregation of Emmen and environs.

In January 2005 a group from Gees also liberated and joined the congregation in Emmen, followed by several more families from Gees at the end of 2005. This congregation, under the blessing of the Lord, grew steadily so that at the end of 2005 there were 65 members of which 38 were confessing members and 27 baptized members.

Own congregation in Emmen

Slowly the desire grew to become a congregation with its own consistory. Happiness was great when on the 1st January 2006, under the leadership of the consistory of Bergentheim-Bruchterveld, The Reformed Church (lib.) was instituted. Many brothers and sisters were present to witness this happy occasion. The interim committee then handed over the task to the newly elected consistory which existed of 3 elders and 2 deacons.



At the end of 2007 the congregation had grown to 78 members: 47 confessing and 31 baptized members.

The year 2008 was a difficult year. The problems that had arisen in Bergentheim-Bruchterveld also had consequences for the congregation at Emmen when some members withdrew.

The year 2009 was a busy year for the congregation. The church of Emmen and environs was the convening church for the General Synod.

There was also thankfulness and happiness due to the birth of several covenant children.

The year 2010 is characterized by rest and growth. Several more brothers and sisters liberated and were admitted as members of the congregation.

The congregation at Assen

On the 1st November 2010 the congregation at Assen was placed under the care of the consistory of Emmen. The reason for this was that the congregation of Assen had no possibilities anymore to provide office bearers according to the Church Order. In order to be able to continue to administer the Word of God in the Assen area, and to keep the candle burning, in expectation of the blessing of the Lord, a choice was made for this solution. This was the advice of classis North-East.

At present the congregation of Emmen has 75 members, of which 49 are confessing and 26 are baptized members. The 'congregation' at Assen has 41 members - 27 confessing and 14 baptized members.

Looking back on the short history of The Reformed Church of Emmen and environs, we can see the Lord, in sad times, but also in joyful times, has always been with us over the past years, and we may thankfully and happily confess with the words of Psalm 8 verse 9: "O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!"

Ha. Folkers

Do or Die

Recently the Canadian Reformed publication *Clarion* published an editorial entitled "Secession in Abbotsford Leads to Sister Church in Emmen?" with the sub-title "False allegations should be unmasked" by Rev. Klaas Stam.

Upon reading the title I was immediately struck with the question: why is Rev. Stam, much less *Clarion*, publishing an editorial about the Secession in Abbotsford three years after the fact?

Surprise?

After a period of complete silence there is suddenly keen interest in a secession that took place in Abbotsford over three years ago. Rev. Stam even shows surprise at what happened in Abbotsford! He states: "To be frank I have never until this time read documents about an officially Liberated Canadian Reformed church."

The fact is all the Canadian Reformed consistories received official correspondence regarding this secession, including the consistory of Rev. Stam's own church. As it was written in the press release of the November 2, 2009 consistory meeting, printed in the November 8, 2009 bulletin of the Hamilton church, "A letter, with accompanying documentation, was received from the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford. Correspondence was received for information." Why did Rev. Stam not inquire any further about this correspondence?

The answer to my question: "Why write about secession in Abbotsford now" became clear after delving deeper into the editorial. It wasn't because of any interest in what happened at Abbotsford, but it was more about what happened in the Netherlands, at Synod Emmen of the De Gereformeerde Kerken (Hersteld). These churches are also known in Canada as the Reformed Churches (Restored).

Synod Emmen is of great importance; the Lord in His mercy granted that His churches in Holland could recognize their unity with His church at Abbotsford. For this we are very thankful after a number of years of apparent ecclesiastical isolation. Indeed, in our very recent history we have seen that the Lord preserves His church and defends her from the subtle attacks of Satan. Christ in his mercy had brought the office-bearers from the De Gereformeerde Kerken and the Liberated Reformed Church together to meet and discuss the situation in the Netherlands and also here in Canada. They

could see firsthand evidence of the deformation of the churches in both countries.

Motivation and research?

In his editorial Rev. Stam dismisses what actually occurred, with several paragraphs of chastisements, allegations and innuendos. He refers to "underlying motives and hidden agendas that are not so easily seen" ... "Check the closets" ... "there may be some skeletons ..." but he doesn't provide us with any substance. Rev. Stam states that "You have to do a lot of research and on the spot investigation" but he himself alleges a conspiracy. What does Rev. Stam know about underlying motives and hidden agendas, and what are the skeletons he is referring to? It seems to me that Rev. Stam should be the one doing some careful research on this matter.

What is the reality here? Let's take a look. Rev. Stam correctly states: "... the beginning of this group is found in opposition to the ecumenical decisions of Synod Neerlandia (2001)." However then Rev. Stam goes on to accuse the membership of the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford of "spreading falsehood about the churches [they] left." He claims that "These 'questionable practices' are not specified: it's all rather vague and nebulous." This is not a difficult conclusion to come to when, like Rev. Stam, you "take it to be an 'oral' report" that was brought to General Synod Emmen!

When Rev. Stam made the discovery about what was written in *Reformed Continua* why did he not investigate further? If he followed the links from the Reformed Continua website (top-right-hand corner), he would have found a link to the official website of the DGK (Hersteld) churches. There he would have easily discovered a section devoted to General Synod Emmen. Report #8 "Rapport Deputaten Buitenlandse Betrekkingen" (the Report of Deputies for Foreign Relations) should have instantly grabbed his attention. If he had looked at this report he would have discovered a number of written pages concerning the situation in Abbotsford that were written well before the delegates even got to Abbotsford! This first written report was made publicly available already at the beginning of 2010. Although it appears that the second written report has yet to be made public, Rev. Stam makes a reckless assumption that there was only an "oral" report that was made to General Synod Emmen!

This is terrible. Is this an acceptable standard of journalism for the editors of *Clarion*?

It gets worse. In the process of attempting to defend CanRC practices, Rev. Stam goes on to claim that in the Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton the Lord's Supper is "open only for communicant members and those from sister-churches with an attestation." While we have already explained elsewhere on the www.calltoreform.com website the concerns surrounding the admission to the Lord's supper and access to the pulpit in the Canadian Reformed Churches, the fact is that Rev. Stam's claims about Hamilton are not true.

Rev. Stam should have known that the press release of the December 7, 2009 consistory meeting of the Hamilton consistory, as printed in their December 13, 2009 bulletin is very clear about Hamilton's Lord's supper admission policy. It states that, "A list of standard questions to ask guests from a non sister church belonging to NAPARC or ICRC church before they would be received as guests at the Lord's Supper Table is reviewed and approved." In the past it was the case that the Lord's supper celebration was only open to communicant members and those from sister-churches with an attestation, but not any longer! How is it that Rev. Stam does not know what is going on in his own congregation?

Impatient?

Later on in his editorial Rev Stam writes: "*The Dutch Hersteld Churches have spoken too quickly and have impatiently written the Canadian Reformed Churches off.*" Is this true? What actually happened? A close examination of the Acts of General Synod Smithers 2007 provides more details.

Article 143, Consideration 4.2, of the Acts of this synod states that "*The GKH [the Dutch Hersteld churches] clearly indicates that they consider the GKN [sister churches to the CanRCs] a false church. This shows in the way that they consider themselves the 'lawful continuation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands' (Report 5.6.4). Further, they are unwilling to consider reconciliation unless the GKN would see 'the need to return to the Scriptures, confession and Church Order' (Report 5.6.5). For this reason, synod agrees with the CRCA when it speaks of the separation that occurred as 'schism.' The CRCA should be instructed to admonish the GKH in a*

brotherly manner on this matter as this action is not scripturally valid according to Belgic Confession Article 28 where we confess that 'all therefore who draw away from the church or fail to join it act contrary to the ordinance of God.'"

This decision was upheld on appeal to General Synod Burlington 2010 (see Acts, Articles 106 and 107). Then it is clear that it is not the Hersteld churches that wrote off the CanRCs but it is the CanRCs that wrote off the Hersteld churches! It is the CanRCs that have judged the Reformation in the Netherlands in 2003 to be unlawful, before there was even a secession in Abbotsford. In the light of these decisions how can Rev. Stam justifiably claim that the CanRCs "even had an open eye for those churches that left the GKN?"

Rashly and unheard?

In his sixth paragraph Rev. Stam states: "*I remind you that we may not condemn others 'rashly and unheard.'*" Later Rev. Stam states in one of his closing paragraphs that the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford is "*no church but a group of stubborn dissenters.*"

On what basis does Rev. Stam come to this conclusion? Did Rev. Stam really "hear" the case of the Liberated Reformed Church? What official correspondence did he read to be able to judge their case? Remember he stated [*none received*]. I understand that he has never sought clarification from any member of the Liberated Reformed Church. If Rev. Stam has a pastoral heart, would it not be proper for him to demonstrate how the members of the Liberated Reformed Church err based on Scripture, confession and the Church Order? Would this not be upbuilding for the readers of *Clarion*?

Rev. Stam claims that it is not OK for the delegates of the Hersteld churches to bypass the Abbotsford CanRC consistory. But did they really? If he had read the Report #8 that I alluded to earlier, he would have realized that the Hersteld churches made use of correspondence from the Abbotsford CanRC consistory in coming to its recommendations. If he had inquired more closely of the CanRC at Hamilton he could have even examined this correspondence for himself!

If Rev. Stam had done this he would have realized that it was the Abbotsford CanRC consistory which

closed the door to further discussion. Further information about the process that was followed can be found at <http://www.calltoreform.com/Library/CorrespondenceAbbotsford.htm>.

“Do-or-Die”?

Rev. Stam makes one further comment that “*Perhaps it is this ‘do-or-die’ mentality....*” Why does he say this? Immediately before this comment he states that “*We have been forthwith labelled as ‘false churches’ by the DGK.*” What was he expecting from a federation of churches who were told that their action was one of “*schism*” and “*not scripturally valid*”?

Why then is Rev Stam so concerned about the decision of “*do-or-diers*” in the Hersteld churches to establish a sister-church relationship with a bunch of “*stubborn dissenters*” in Abbotsford? Schismatics plus troublemakers? By nature they are so divisive. How is it possible that they can be unified? After all, a house divided cannot stand. Could it be perhaps that these labels do not fit?

Let us keep in mind that our covenant obligation is indeed to “*do-or-die*”. We are called to keep all that the Lord commands us lest we die. This is the antithesis. The only way to the Father is through the Son. Being a Christian means that we “do” and we are delivered from the “die” through Christ’s power. The unity that Rev. Stam pretends exists between the CanRC, the URC, the OPC, etc., is not a unity that is the DO of our covenant obligations. Instead the conflicting doctrines tolerated in these federations will ultimately tear them apart, just as iron does not mix with clay. For what do we see today? “*Let’s just be friends for now*” (*Clarion* - August 27, 2010 issue, p.465). Each one is content to live beside the other but not in true unity. Is this the unity that Christ spoke of in John 17? I refer to the article “*That they all may be one*” by R.H. Bremmer at <http://www.calltoreform.com/Articles/bremmer.htm>.

Rev. Stam should be assured that the unity that was established between the Church of Christ at Abbotsford and the Reformed Churches (Restored) in the Netherlands was founded on the basis of Scripture, the confessions, and the Church Order, in sharp contrast to the “unity” we see in the CanRC. It is a unity that did not have to take the Church Order and modify it to fit with the unscriptural decisions that have been appealed to every general

synod since 1977 (see <http://www.calltoreform.com/Library/Librumcorres.htm>).

It is my hope that Rev. Stam would rethink his position on these matters in order that the decline of the CanRC would be opposed on the pages of *Clarion*, rather than hastened. It is my hope that Rev. Stam would stand by his own words and investigate what actually has happened at Abbotsford before crying foul over what happened at Synod Emmen. It is long past the time to stand against the decisions of Synod Neerlandia 2001. Confessional membership and the supervision of the Lord’s supper have both been compromised as a result of this Synod’s decisions. The new ecclesiastical relationships have resulted in the pulpit being opened to all kinds of false teachings on the doctrine of the covenant, the doctrine of the church, and the assurance of faith.

May our Lord give strength and courage to speak the truth.

Note: See also

http://www.calltoreform.com/Articles/ed_unscripturalbinding.html

and

http://www.calltoreform.com/Articles/ed_unscripturalcommitment.html.

*Richard Vanlaar
October 9, 2010*



© www.freefoto.com