

# REFORMED CONTINUA

Magazine of The Reformed Churches (restored) of The Netherlands

Proverbs 8:32

- Volume 4 - June 2010 -

## From the editor

June 2010

We thank the Lord for giving us the opportunity and the strength to be able to present you with a fourth edition of this magazine. This time, again, we have much to report concerning our churches.

In all this we acknowledge the hand of the Lord who protects His Church. Every time again we are made aware that it is not due to our own efforts that there still remains a church. We realize that Satan tries in all manner of ways to disrupt the church-gathering work of Christ. What remains of the church he will try to tear apart in such a way that it will become an easy prey for him.

Thankfully, we may place all our trust in the Lord and we may be assured that through His blood we may be part of The Church and... will remain so; by grace only.

In the previous issue we mentioned that the third General Synod in Emmen had started. Since then the delegates have met several times. If everything continues as planned then the last meeting of this Synod will be in October, 2010.

Saturday, June 12, 2010 was a historic day for our churches. In their meeting on this day the Synod dealt with a request from the Canadian Liberated Church at Abbotsford, to accept them as a sister church.

Much work had already been done prior to this day.

On February 13, 2010 the Synod had also dealt with this issue. At that time the deputies had received the mandate to gain more information about this

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newly liberated church in Abbotsford. They also received the advice to visit them. Two deputies from the Committee for Churches Abroad visited this congregation for 12 days in April, 2010.

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They visited all the members of the congregation personally. This visit, all the other meetings with the consistory and the congregation, as well as the additional information gave a clear picture as to their foundation and the church life of this liberated church. Upon these grounds the deputies could present positive advice to the Synod of Emmen.

On June 12, 2010 this issue was extensively discussed at the Synod. After a thorough discussion, also concerning the legitimacy of this liberation, the Synod decided to accept the Liberated church at Abbotsford as a sister church!! The making of this decision was received with great thankfulness, and was noted as a historic moment in the work of the Lord for His holy catholic Christian Church! (Reports and decisions can be found on the internet site or by contacting the deputies of the Committee for Churches Abroad.)

So much for now about the Synod of Emmen.

In this magazine you can find the fourth and final article concerning the decisions made by the

Canadian churches. Also an article written by Rev. De Marie about the calling and the act of liberation of a minister. In this issue we take a look at a fourth congregation, namely Berkel en Rodenrijs/Bergschenhoek.

Included as well is a shortened version of the Acts of Synod Zwolle, 2007.

And lastly, an article concerning a question that arises among many of us: why do some people withdraw from our church?

Our last issue was colorfully presented with typically Dutch pictures. We hope that this issue will be just as appealing.

We hope and pray that also this issue may be received in a positive manner and that it may direct many eyes to the true perspective of The Church. May this issue also, be an instrument in the church gathering work of God.

All glory and honour be to His Name.

*Joh. Houweling, Bleiswijk*



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# Calling and liberation of a minister

## Reaction on the step taken by Rev. R. van der Wolf

### Part 1

*Recently the Reformed Churches were again in the news. It is not good to always go into the contents of what others write about the churches in our church bulletin. The church bulletin is not for defending ourselves against all sorts of rumours, opinions or convictions from outside. Nevertheless, in this case, something will have to be written about it, as it concerns the church-gathering work of Christ and is something for which has been prayed for regularly in the worship services for many years, sometimes weekly. It concerns the separation of a minister from the Reformed Churches Liberated. Many of us pray daily if the Lord will work in the hearts of the ministers who are concerned, that they will develop faithfulness, courage and insight, to liberate themselves and to join the church and so be able to serve God together in true unity. So that these called ministers and teachers may serve in the true church of Jesus Christ.*

### To secede

When we recently heard the news that Rev. R. van der Wolf was going to secede from the Reformed Church Liberated, it seemed to be an answer to our prayers. Happiness about that was certainly allowed to be great! How difficult it had proved to be for ministers to openly disassociate from the deformation and apostasy from God's Word. Hereby we do have to consider that patience was required from them. After all, ministers in active service have a responsibility towards their own congregation, which is different from the responsibility of the church members. Yet that may never be a reason to keep silent, or not to lodge objections, if God's Word is being attacked on many fronts.

After 2003 the concerns among the ministers of the Reformed Churches Liberated slowly took shape, but it only limited itself to a handful of ministers who opened the site [www.gereformeerdblejven.nl](http://www.gereformeerdblejven.nl). Some of them also took part in giving critical information relating to the synod decisions of Zwolle-Zuid. However, an open call to liberation was not heard. Even after the synod of Zwolle-Zuid it stayed very quiet in the Reformed Church Liberated. Except on the matter concerning Rev. E. Hoogendoorn. There is then, reason for joy, now that Rev. Van der Wolf as a called minister, wishes to follow the voice of

the Chief Shepherd and take up his responsibility in it. With good grounds it testifies of courage in faith. If there are good grounds we may thank the Lord that He has worked it in Rev. Van der Wolf.

### Joining the true church

When at the same time it became evident that Rev. Van der Wolf was going to join the 'Matrix'-congregation, who had placed themselves outside the bond of churches, many of us were deeply disappointed, sometimes even having feelings of despair or impotence. How is it possible that he now just by-passes the churches? He separated himself, but not to join the church of Christ!

How could this happen? The news caught most of us by surprise. The questions are mounting: Have there then not been any discussions? Even old and stubborn rumours were brought up again, such as: before his possibly joining The Reformed Church (restored), he would have to confess his guilt. As far as that is concerned, the writer of this article, who has had discussions with Rev. Van der Wolf in the past, when asked about the source of those rumours, can outrightly deny that this is so, and others can do likewise. Lately however, Rev. Van der Wolf, from his side, has left all correspondence and invitations for more discussions unanswered.

But what is it that causes Rev. Van der Wolf to make this decision? Recently there was an extensive interview on [www.eeninwaarheid.nl](http://www.eeninwaarheid.nl) in which he gives account of his secession and of his joining the 'Matrix'-congregation. For us that was clarifying, but extremely disappointing. In any case, this does show us what his inner motives were. This concerns an extremely important matter, which surpasses the personal things: it concerns the church-gathering work of Christ. It is for that reason that we want to go into some of the items of his interview, namely those items that concern his motives and the choices that played a role in the ecclesiastical path taken by him. That will be able to help us in our position towards Rev. Van der Wolf. But that could perhaps also help us in our contacts with other ministers.

For a good discussion we first want to present how, in our opinion a minister as a servant of God, should act, according to his calling in the times when the bond of churches turns away from God's Word, and does not follow the way of repentance. Besides, we wish to ascertain along which path he, especially as minister and teacher, should secede and liberate. Moreover we must remember that we are speaking about the norm of which we must

remind each other. In wanting to follow those paths, many trials and difficulties can arise on the road of the minister, which can be hard for him. Therefore we are not to condemn the person, that is God's right only. Besides, let anyone who thinks that he stands, take heed lest he falls. (1 Cor. 10:12). But we do have to judge his ways.

### *Exemplary function*

A servant of the divine Word has a very important exemplary function. (1 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 2:7; 1 Pet. 5:3). He will have to show how God's Word asks obedience. As subordinate shepherd, he is called by the Chief Shepherd to teach His sheep, the church members, that God's Word is the voice of Good Shepherd, and is the norm-giving guideline for salvation. That counts for his speaking, his preaching, his writing and his action, also his ecclesiastical action. Being an example may therefore never be self-willed. Neither are his circumstances a norm for his actions. Otherwise he will harm God's Word and in fact the Chief Shepherd. Where he, as leader, guides his sheep with God's Word, he himself is also always bound to that same Word. This is also stated on the subscription forms for ministers. His signature must be a guarantee of complying with ecclesiastical agreements and supervision of the consistory. As a shepherd and an example he can also be tested. It is important to be protected by others for errors and apostasy, not only concerning doctrine and life, but also concerning the church government and Church Order. In a bond of churches in which churches live together, he shall also have to fulfill his agreements with regard to that living together, which has been laid down in the Church Order. Also on that point he needs to show what it means to be a subordinate shepherd. Therefore that also has consequences for abiding by the agreements of major assemblies.

### *Art. 31 C.O. (Church Order)*

Is a minister then always bound to ecclesiastical agreements? No, that is not unlimited. According to Art. 31 of the Church Order he is bound to ecclesiastical statements, even if he does not always agree with these statements, but there is a limit. For he - and that applies to each office bearer and to each church member - may not go along with decisions if it can be proved that it fundamentally violates God's Word and the Church Order. In the end it is God's Word that must have the final say. Not the ecclesiastical assemblies, but God's Word. That does not apply where it concerns personal or private matters, but serious matters of Scripture

and confession. In personal, private matters, one will at times have to endure injustice. In these subjective affairs, the decision will have to be left to God as judge, for the sake of the unity of the church. But it is different when God's Word, the Confessions or the Church Order are at stake. Then the ecclesiastical path of appeal, is in fact the obligatory way. A way that a shepherd is not allowed to avoid if he really wants to continue to stand up for the honour and righteousness of the Lord, unless either in physical or psychological impediment makes it impossible for him. If the way of appeal comes to a deadlock at the synod, a revision appeal can be submitted to the next synod. In this way his objections will be attended to in good order.

We are convinced that in the Reformed Church Liberated, where the deformation has been proven, all the ministers who wish to respect God's Word and therefore wish to come up for God's righteousness and honour, had and still have the duty to, where possible, follow this ecclesiastical way. If all appeals have come to a deadlock and no conversion is apparent, but falsehood has received a fixed place alongside, or instead of the truth, then, in the ecclesiastical way, an appeal will have to be made on the 'unless' of art. 31 in the Church Order. Then the unscriptural decisions are not to be accepted as settled and binding. According to us that was already very obvious, at Synod Zuidhorn 2002, and certainly no less obvious at Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008.

### *Liberation*

What then is the ecclesiastical way? A minister of the Word shall speak to his church council about the 'unless' of art. 31 of the Church Order, and see if other church councils will also reject the unscriptural decisions. Then, when no internal reformation seems possible within the bond of churches, he shall, with arguments, try to convince his own church council for the need to liberate. After all, he also seeks unity in the truth through reformation and liberation. He does not want to serve the truth on his own, without directing his brothers and sisters on the right path. Especially as a minister and teacher of his congregation, that was entrusted to him by the Chief Shepherd (Acts 20:29; 1 Pet. 5:1-4)! The form for ordination of ministers of the Word says of this:

*As the Chief Shepherd who unceasingly cares for his flock, He appoints shepherds to heed the His flock in His Name. They are to take care of the sheep*

*of Christ by means of proclamation of the Word, by the administration of the sacraments, and by prayers, and pastoral supervision. In this way the flock is tended and led on the right paths.*

Whether the church council does or does not follow him, he, as leader and servant of the Word is obliged to call the congregation to liberate themselves with him and possibly with any others. That calling will have to be founded, provided with Scriptural grounds, but also with evidence that the ecclesiastical way has been followed. He will also want to call up, if possible, across the whole breadth of the bond of churches. After all, all these matters concern the whole of the church, and they have played a role at synodical level for years. That is why everyone is responsible. Besides, it is not only about him as person, it is not so much that he himself has come to a standstill, Not even if he personally went the whole of the ecclesiastical way. It is not even about the fact that he could be 'damaged'. Is it not for the honour and the righteousness of the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ and of His whole church? He is Christ's ambassador and servant of the Word for the benefit of the congregation. (2 Cor. 5:20). Him he must follow, and to Him he will have to give account (Hebr. 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5).

Then he shall, under strong calling to church council and church members, finally liberate himself, with all those who will follow, from an unfaithful bond of churches. Such an unfaithful church has, after all, lost the predicate of being a lawful and true church. It has no longer proved to be the pillar and bulwark of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). According to Art. 28 of the Belgic Confession he separates himself from those who do not belong to the church, and joins the true church, that is: the church, that, as bond of churches, is faithful to the Lord and does keep His Word purely.

In this way the minister acts according to Gods ordinances (Art. 28 Belgic Confession). In this way he remains faithful to his Sender. In this way, in faithfulness to his calling, he continues to lead the congregation entrusted to him by Him who sent him (John 10:11-15). Also in the process of liberation, he will not want to avoid that calling. Just like a soldier who must not desert in times of war. Even if things are made difficult for him, even if there may be only a few that follow him (compare 2 Tim. 2:3). In that way he serves the church-gathering work of Jesus Christ. Faithful to the Lord of the Church, he will not want to follow his own ways, but only

the way the Lord shows him in His Word (see the paragraph in the form for installation of ministers under the heading: 'duties of the minister'). His own feelings, his own human preference or his human calculations should not be his guide. He must certainly not take any notice of rumours, insinuations and gossip.

### *The yoke of Christ*

What is it then, that determines with which church, which bond of churches this minister should be? For this, the scriptural marks are of importance, as worded in Art. 29 Belgic Confession: the pure preaching of the gospel, the pure administration of the sacraments and the exercising of church discipline. This also includes the duty to re-unite with brothers and sisters of the same house, those who in the same liberation process, have, under the grace of God, been allowed to liberate themselves from the wrong yoke at an earlier stage, and who under the blessing of the Lord could continue the church in a renewed bond of churches.

But what if the people there are not pleased with the minister? What if he, even if he takes no notice of rumour or slander, still feels that there is discord within the bond of churches? Well, then these are absolutely no reasons to bypass the church! For then the Lord Christ, the Chief Shepherd would also constantly have to bypass His church. And the apostles could then just as well have omitted their pastoral letters! What a struggle there has been. Not only about the church, but especially within the church. Struggle within the church is in itself certainly not per definition a wrong sign. It is more likely to be a healthy Scriptural intolerance towards false doctrine or independentism that, in obedience to the Lord must be kept out (Rev. 2:2). When there are no struggles in the church, you may well ask if God's Word does really reign there and whether Christ is the one Lord there.

If there is indeed talk of wrong intolerance, that must be dealt with, in love. Even so, that may not form an impediment to join this church if it has the true foundation.

It is not a minister who selects the church members. But the Lord gathers the members in His church and He will entrust His members to his called ministers. It is not the minister who chooses the people with whom he would like to sit at the table of the Lord, but it is the Lord who lets sinners, in faith, partake in His body and blood at His table and in that way also partake in all His benefits. Not the people of



the church, but the foundation of the church, the obedience of the church to Jesus Christ, must lead us in distinguishing the true church.

A lot of self-denial will be necessary on the path to joining the church. Also a minister must be willing to bow his head to the yoke of Christ, if it is his

wish to serve the unity of the Church of Christ, according to Article 28 of the Belgic Confession. That means: besides the acceptance of God's Word, church discipline, the Church Order and the living together in the bond of churches, that is all founded on God's Word, must also be accepted.

## Calling and liberation of a minister

### *Reaction on the step taken by Rev. R. van der Wolf*

#### **Part 2**

#### *Justification*

The recent withdrawal of Rev. Van der Wolf from the Reformed Church Liberated has caused quite a few reactions. In the October issue of 'Nader Bekeken', Rev. C. van Dijk wrote about it, and in the periodical 'De Reformatie' of 31st of October Prof. Dr. A.L.Th. de Bruijne even devoted an editorial to it. We may be inclined to reject this criticism with the argument that these writers have no right to speak. They have no, or very little eye for the apostasy, for the abandonment of the Word and the violation of the justice within their churches. Wasn't this the main commitment of Rev. Van der Wolf? Therefore their criticism wouldn't count. You will have to suffer their conviction, when you follow the right path. It is that last statement that counts: that you follow the right path. Rev. Van der Wolf has left the Reformed Church Liberated, and will therefore have to give account to these churches. An account that does justice to the ecclesiastical agreements and the calling received from God. Also when you get into difficulties. Even though we do not share their vision on the situation in the Reformed Church Liberated, we now already want to state that the above-mentioned writers in itself do have the right to question Rev. Van der Wolf, if his doings were correct. The word of the apostle Peter then counts for him, and certainly also for us:

*If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed (...) Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.*

1 Peter 4:14-19 (NKJV).

#### *Good Example?*

We can heartily agree with a lot of what Rev. Van der Wolf says in the interview about the deformation of the Reformed Church Liberated. We are pleased that he has received the insight to reject what is in conflict with God's Word. He mentions various matters, where conversion in the churches is necessary. He states, however, that the course however has been set, and that they will continue in that way. A sad story. For many years this has been pointed out. We are thankful that Rev. Van der Wolf has the courage to also say this openly, and thereby calling to repentance. We also want to add that we sympathize with him with the difficulties and the opposition he has encountered in his office whenever he wanted to stand up for the purity of God's Word. We acknowledge that it is difficult to follow the right path under tension and stress, but that is not allowed to mean that the Scriptural testing may then be omitted. With his present step, as Rev. Van der Wolf says, he wants to set an example to all the concerned members and to bring them together. However, the question for us is whether Rev. Van der Wolf, in his ecclesiastical action, did indeed give the right example. In this writing it is not only about our position regarding Rev. Van der Wolf, but also to show the concerned brothers and sisters and ministers who still have to liberate, the right way, now that they have been given Rev. Van der Wolf's example.

In the previous issue we wrote about the path that, according to us, a minister should follow in liberation. We now want to compare that with the interview with Rev. Van der Wolf, just as it is placed in two parts on the site [www.eeninwaarheid.nl](http://www.eeninwaarheid.nl). We will restrict ourselves to three matters.

- Firstly, in what way did he follow the ecclesiastical way with regard to the justified concerns against deviation from Gods Word and what was the ground

for that departure? Was it a justified liberation?

- The second concerns the calling with respect to the own congregation. How did he fulfill this calling in the liberation process?

- Finally we will pay attention to the way one joins the true church, according to Art. 28 Belgic Confession. What are the considerations mentioned in his choice of the church? Did he maintain the unity of the church of Christ in this manner? (see Art.28 Belgic Confession.)

### *Art. 31 of the Church Order*

As a living member of the church of Christ you must submit yourself to the yoke of Christ. In addition to the reverent obedience to God's Word, there is also the submission to church discipline, to the Church Order, and to the agreements of the bond of churches. In this way the unity in the truth is maintained. That certainly counts for a minister, who must also be an example in this as well. When you come across developments, that are against God's Word, in the churches in which you serve, you will need to follow the ecclesiastical way with objections. In that way you must appeal against decisions that are against God's Word and in that way reject unscriptural synodical decisions, taking into account the agreed ecclesiastical order, especially Article 31 of the Church Order:

*(...) and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.*

In the interview with Rev. Van der Wolf it does not become apparent that he fought out the decisions of the minor and major assemblies, right through to the synod in the ecclesiastical way, with an appeal to Art. 31 Church Order. That also counts for the press review written by him and which appeared in the 'ND' (Nederlands Dagblad, a daily newspaper). Here also, we hear nothing about an appeal to this article of the Church Order, or any other reference to its contents. It is also remarkable that he does not refer to the ecclesiastical way that others follow, nor does he make an appeal to it. We do read of his protests at classis, of lectures and articles, in which he voices his criticism. He says in the interview that he sees no benefit in the ecclesiastical way, but he does not mention in what way the correct ecclesiastical had been impossible for him to follow in the past.

The above-mentioned writers of 'Nader Bekeken' and 'De Reformatie' point to Rev. Van der Wolf conducting church services in the 'Ichthus'-

congregation after synod Zwolle Zuid 2008 had announced, that this congregation did not belong to the bond of churches. That is a decision that is to be held settled and binding, as soon as it is spoken, even if a possible ratification is still on the agenda of the church council, unless it is proved to be in conflict with God's Word or with the Church Order. This decision therefore, also counted for Rev. Van der Wolf, certainly when the church council had not yet decided on the matter - if indeed the church council is authorized to deal with this. The proof of contrariety with the Scripture or Church Order must - if there is still room for it - sound in the ecclesiastical way, or one must openly declare that for that reason one must break away from unscriptural decisions and an unlawful bond of churches. There is no room within the bond of churches to act on one's own initiative against the explicit decisions of that same bond, and certainly not for a minister who must serve as an example to others. In that way you break up the unity. Others have, in my opinion, rightly pointed to the inconsistent actions of Rev. Van der Wolf.

You would now expect that, if Rev. Van der Wolf has to state: I cannot stay in the Reformed Churches Liberated any longer, he would then liberate himself according to Art. 31 Church Order. Isn't that how it went in 1944 and in 2003 (see eg. the Acts of the Liberation 2003)? Didn't the Reformed Churches, of which he was a member, even have the postal name of 'Reformed Churches upholding art. 31 C.O.' for a good while? At that time, it all had to do with the right to let God's Word have the final word. There is a binding to decisions of major assemblies, but those decisions do not have the final word. Only God's Word has that authority, and the Church Order is based on that Word. An appeal on that Word must be orderly and in the right place. It must be "proved" at the proper ecclesiastical assembly (art. 31 Church Order). Only then does one, besides having the duty, also have the right to liberate himself. This now remains unclear in the actions of Rev. Van der Wolf. It looks more like a personal action and made to look as though things were being made difficult for him.

No matter, how difficult it may have been, his doings did not benefit the reformation and the liberation. Nor is it a valid argument that he saw nothing good come of the ecclesiastical way due to the 'degenerate system of the canonical way of speaking of today'. Luther also knew that he could not expect anything from a Reichstag (Parliament) at Worms. That was also a thoroughly degenerate

system. Even so, he went - most likely with fear and trembling - to justify himself and thereby to appeal on God's Word.

### *Calling up of own congregation*

Rev. Van der Wolf does make an appeal on the inner calling that he, as servant of God's Word, has received from God. He says that he is unable to continue in Urk. It was a small group that made his functioning impossible. He says:

*I must preach. I must spread the gospel. Now I will have to do that outside the Reformed Churches Liberated.*

However, didn't this calling in the first place, concern the leading in the congregation of Urk since he had accepted its call? His duty also with respect to this congregation does not come to an end when he has to conclude that the Reformed Church Liberated has become a 'degenerate bond of churches', in which 'the foundation of the true church is absent'? If he thinks that 'there is still something like: come out from her!' that counts, where then will that leave his congregation of Urk?

In the press review Rev. Van der Wolf does admit that the 'question may arise, whether I faithlessly deserted the congregation of Urk'. The only thing he says about that is that continuation of his service there was no longer possible. In the interview he explains that his congregation reacted 'with dismay, surprise and sorrow' at his departure.

*By far the largest part of the congregation did not want this and did not seek it, but it did happen. (...) They knew of my concerns about the course of the Reformed Church Liberated, but nobody had suspected that it would come to a definite break between Urk and the minister.*

But does the 'come out from her' then only count for the cornered minister, or for the whole of his congregation? In our first article we already wrote that each minister must give account of his care of the flock that was entrusted to him, to the Lord Jesus Christ as Chief Shepherd. In a lawful bond of churches a call to a sister-church can be accepted with confidence. You know that Christ as the Lord of His church, will also care for the then vacant congregation. You can then also confidently leave that church to a colleague minister. But in the case of Rev. Van der Wolf, his congregation is left behind, alone, and left to an unlawful bond of churches. With all his difficulties, should he not have also called to them: 'follow me, come out from her'? In this interview it has not become clear how Rev. Van der Wolf can justify this.

### *Dispersion*

When asked in the interview why Rev. Van der Wolf wittingly did not choose for The Reformed Churches, he answers:

*I have never made a secret of that either. I think that in The Reformed Churches (restored) there are many brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ with whom I would like to sit at the same table of the Lord's Supper. I would also like to contribute my part in making good contacts and to open the discussion, but I also think that within The Reformed Churches (restored), and certainly in the church government, some radicalization has arisen. That would need to be discussed quietly and openly.*

Rev. Van der Wolf wants to be open. He says not to have made a secret of his 'wittingly' choosing against The Reformed Churches.

A big question mark is to be placed with this, as he has not spoken with the churches, nor has he been willing to go into discussion, but no, Rev. Van der Wolf has bypassed the churches. His argument for this is vague and condemning: radicalization. He does not mention what this means, according to him, and why this means that these churches are not true churches. What criteria does Rev. Van der Wolf use for this? If he is referring to matters that he has heard via the 'Matrix', did he listen to both sides? Also here we need to ask the same question that was previously asked of Rev. E. Hoogendoorn: 'Are you allowed to publicly condemn the church without arguments and without having listened to both sides?' Rev. Van der Wolf does not only bypass The Reformed Churches, he chooses against this bond of churches, now that he is joining a group of members who have placed themselves outside the bond of churches.

Rev. Van der Wolf would like to sit at the same Lord's Supper table with certain brothers and sisters. In this way Rev. Van der Wolf considers some congregations within the Reformed Churches Liberated still to be true churches. We would like to point out to him the reaction that Prof. Dr. K. Schilder gave in 'De Kerk', Volume 3 (page. 231-238) on a view of Rev. B.A. Bos from 1948. This minister, just like Rev. Van der Wolf, advocated for a 'transitional period'. According to Rev. Bos there could be, also after the Liberation of 1944, 'true local churches' in a false bond of churches. Against that Prof. Schilder brings forward Art. 31 Church Order. By considering settled and binding all that is contrary to God's Word, the local churches within an unlawful bond of churches, have not maintained the marks of the true church. That does not mean



that there are no true believers in these churches, with whom you would like to sit at the Lord's table. Neither does it mean that the minister can or cannot have good sermons. However, God's Word has not been purely kept, because they jointly remain responsible for the unscriptural synodical decisions. Our prayer will therefore need to be that these members and ministers will liberate themselves from these decisions and with all their heart will join the church that is faithful to God's Word, and who are also willing to maintain a bond of churches in accordance with the demand of Christ and the Church Order that echoes God's Word.

The 'Matrix', as far as Rev. Van der Wolf is concerned, is the church of Christ. Around this church he wants to create 'temporary' bond of churches, together with others who have already independently left the bond of churches and who, in their actions have not wanted to be led by Art. 31 Church Order. To this

church he is now also calling concerned brothers and sisters in the Reformed Churches Liberated. We would liked to have written differently, but we cannot do anything else than conclude that the whole of his ecclesiastical action is simply disappointing. Without a proper justification, choosing his own way and leaving his congregation, he sides with a schism-church without listening to both sides. With his calling on others, he disperses instead of unites. Unfortunately - we must say this to our regret - he does not give a good example. We would have liked to have seen this differently for the sake of the Lord, and we call Rev. Van der Wolf to seriously and heartily acknowledge this and as yet seek contact with The Reformed Churches (restored).

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Rev. S. de Marie*



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# Synod of Zwolle 2007-2008 (1)

## *Opening*

The second synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands started on the 17th Nov. 2007. In his opening address Rev. S. de Marie emphasized the Christian way of opening as is laid down in the Church Order (art. 29) and the rules of the General Synod. At the opening and the closing of ecclesiastical meetings "the Lord shall be called upon in prayer and thanksgiving". "That prayer," Rev. De Marie argued, "does in fact not just have a symbolic meaning. It is not an ornament for this synod. No, that prayer as our calling upon the Lord together, is decisive for the whole of our meeting as synod, for the whole of our forthcoming functioning, our deliberations, and our decisions during this synod. That prayer is also decisive for the blessing that we may expect on our synod-work, for the building-up of the church of Christ"... "Brothers delegates, brothers and sisters, we may be united by the bond of peace. And united by the one Spirit of Christ. In this way we may participate and contribute to that church. Contribute by preservation and building, to the greater glory of God the Father".

With that Rev. De Marie indicated under which conditions this synod was allowed to do the work for the church. Man's work, for sure, but submissive to God's Word, and with the prayer to God the Father for insight and wisdom, and under His blessing.

## *Independency*

From the presented matters it became clear that it was not going to be an easy synod. Beside the reports of the various deputies, there were matters of appeal and revision requests to be dealt with. In a small bond of churches, it is more than necessary to guard against independency when it concerns revision requests and matters of appeal. One of the first tasks of the board of synod was then to decide which prime deputies were to be replaced by second deputies when dealing with these matters. The Church Order (Art 32) also indicates that. In own matters, also in matters in which one was previously involved, a deputy may not vote again.

## *Investigation of earlier synod decisions*

In one of the first meetings the report of the deputies who had investigated a number of synod decisions from 1993, was dealt with. There was a bulky report in which the deputies pointed out that many decisions that had been made were contrary to the Word of God. The decisions about the Holy Supper celebrations in crisis (war) areas and exceptional situations, the decisions concerning the

fourth commandment, the resting on the Sunday, divorce, the form for marriage, interdenominational evangelization, interdenominational consultative body and the relations towards the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken were declared void.

## *Adjustment of rules and internal regulations*

In a report concerning the rules and internal regulations, the previous synod board had made a number of suggestions for improvement. These were accepted by the synod. Also the rules for presenting revision applications and appeals were improved.

## *Theological training*

At the moment there are two young brothers in training (phase one) for the ministry. At the previous synod it became clear that there was already criticism against the training in Kampen (TUK) and Apeldoorn (TUA). A Deputation for Training for the Ministry of the Word was then formed to supervise these young brothers. Dr. P. van Gorp and Rev. S. de Marie were included in the deputation. Already then it became apparent that the second phase of the theology studies could possibly give major problems, because that phase was embedded in the ecclesiastical theology of those churches with which the training was connected. The newly-formed Deputation for Training would therefore also need to pay attention to that. This they did. The possibility to follow certain subjects at a number of universities shall be looked into. The consequence can be that the students will not receive a complete master study. The synod has clearly stated that the masters degree is not necessary. However, it is of importance that the students attain a sound academic level in all subjects to administer the Gospel in the congregations.

## *Library*

In connection with this, attention was also paid to a theological library. Already for some years a number of congregation members have managed a theological library with more than 15,000 theological books. It is the intention to hand over this library to the churches in the future.

## *Hersteld Hervormde Kerk*

In dealing with the report of the deputies Internal Relations, a proposal is forwarded to write a letter of appeal to the Hersteld Hervormde Kerk (HHK). It states that to come to unity, it is however, only possible if there is an identical foundation based on Scripture, the Reformed Confession and the Reformed

Church Order. The synod hopes that the reformation, the breaking away from the Protestant Churches of the Netherlands (PKN) may also continue.

### *Sri Lanka*

In their contacts with the Australian churches (FRCA), the deputies of Contact Churches Abroad (BBK) also came into contact with the mission work of the church of Byford in Sri Lanka. The synod decided to give the deputies a mandate to investigate this matter further and come to the following synod with proposals.

## *Churches Abroad*

### *Australia (FRCA)*

On invitation of the Deputies Churches Abroad, Rev. A. Veldman from Australia was present.

In his address to the synod he indicated that in Australia there are concerns about the situation in the GKv (Gereformeerde Kerken vrijgemaakt). These concerns have also been transmitted to the GKv. Yet, the delegates, Rev. Veldman and br. Breen, could in general, agree with the decisions of the GKv synod Amersfoort (2006), though they do have concerns about certain developments in the GKv, as also became apparent from decisions of the last synod of West Kelmescott (2006). Yet Rev. Veldman thinks that the brothers and sisters of The Gereformeerde Kerken (DGK) must not let go of those brothers and sisters of the GKv who want to stand on the same foundation. The churches of Australia had found a listening ear in the GKv when deputies discussed the concerns with them, and that is why the Australian churches wonder if the DGK in fact, had arrived at the end of the road in 2003. Based on the information that we had at the time, we could not comply with your request for sister-church relationship.

The chairman, Rev. De Marie, in his answering address, indicates that the end of the road had arrived, because the concerned members could not appeal for a third time. All warnings were disregarded. To the question from the FRCA whether the liberation was too early, Rev. De Marie answered: "Decisive in this is: does the foundation of the church still stand? That was no longer so in 2003! We have, under the grace of the Lord, been allowed to find that foundation again. If you say: you must not let go of your brothers and sisters who want to stand on the same foundation, then we had to acknowledge that we were no longer based on the same foundation. Therefore we must not say to the GKv, as you say it, "hold fast", but, "repent!" That

is what we missed in your reasoning. We think there is an important difference in evaluation. In 2006 we hoped on acknowledgement from your side. You did not come that far, yet. You explained that. You could not yet judge. Your judgment now depends on your assessment of the situation in the GKv. We hope that the Lord will give you clarity in this".

The deputies shall continue the contacts with the Australian churches.

### *Canada*

It is with sorrow that we must accept the fact that the deputies of the Canadian churches (CANRC), in their report to the synod (Smithers 2007) uphold their conclusion that the reformation in 2003 was unlawful and that they did not fully go into the matters of defence put forward by the deputies of DGK. From unofficial sources the synod has learned that the synod of the CANRC (Smithers 2007) accuses DGK of schism-making.

The synod has decided that the deputies are to pass on to the Canadian churches her deep disappointment about the attitude of the Canadian deputies and Canadian churches and also to indicate which deep concerns exist in DGK concerning the serious lack of Scriptural discernment within the Canadian churches. The deputies are to summon the CANRC to return from her wrong assessment, stand up for justice and honour of the Lord of the Church, and to reject all that is opposed to God's Word, also in ecclesiastical contacts. Besides that, they must warn the CANRC to continue to fully acknowledge the Scripture and Confession in doctrine and life, as the truth (Scripture) and the echo of the truth (Confessions) and not to give in to hermeneutical and Scripture criticism, which more and more allows for the present circumstances. They must do full justice to the Church Order, and not stretch things to allow for self-willed freedom.

The synod has also decided to no longer undertake further attempts to begin sister-church relationship with these churches until the CANRC take back the accusation of schism-making.

### *The reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI\_NT)*

These churches also show concern about the course of the GKv. Despite that fact, they do not agree with the Liberation in 2003. Unfortunately they do not give any grounds concerning the contents. They also wish to maintain contact with the DGK.

*P. Drijfhout*





## Introducing you to ...

### *the congregation of De Gereformeerde Kerk of Berkel & Rodenrijs/Bergschenhoek*

#### **General**

Berkel & Rodenrijs and Bergschenhoek are two towns situated next to each other, a stone's throw from Rotterdam, in the south-west of The Netherlands. It is situated in the middle of a large greenhouse area where vegetables, fruit, flowers and plants are produced.

#### **Church**

The Reformed Church of Berkel & Rodenrijs/Bergschenhoek (B&R/B) is one of the churches that emanated from the Liberated Reformed Churches at the liberation of 2003/2004.

The liberation in B&R took place on the 4th September 2003 and in Bergschenhoek on the 27th September 2003. In this way the church of B&R/B came into being and was officially instituted on the 23rd November 2003. During this period and in the period following, many brothers and sisters in surrounding areas and in places further afield liberated themselves and the church of B&R/B became a more regional congregation.

This means that there are a number of brothers and sisters who, by Dutch standards, have to travel a long way to attend worship services. A lot of travel time is also invested in congregational activities during the week. To accommodate for this, as an example, catechism classes for the four different groups, are given simultaneously so that the travelling back and forth is brought down to a limit as much as possible.

At present the congregation of B&R/B has approximately 225 members. There is a good balance between the ages of the members. Young and old are represented. There are about 40 young members in the four catechism groups, varying in age from 12-20 years.

Catechism classes are held every Tuesday evening (excluding the holidays) with the main topic being the Heidelberg Catechism. Next to that the other Confessions of the church and also church history are dealt with. So that also in this way, there may remain confessors of the reformed doctrine, which is according to the Scriptures.

Bible study clubs for the youth also serve this purpose. The 12-16 year-olds come together every fortnight on the Friday evening, under the guidance of two confessing members, to study and discuss part of God's Word. The

older youth (over 16's) do this fortnightly on the Sunday evening.

Because the education in the schools is continuously becoming less faithful to the Bible, a Bible club has recently been started up, under the supervision of the work-group Education and Upbringing. Once every three weeks a part of the Bible is discussed with the children aged 4-12 years.

The studying together of God's Word and the Confessions of course, does not limit itself only to the youth of the church. Adults are active in that field as well. There are also a well-running men's club and a women's club. Over the past years courses for the young confessing members and for the newly-weds in the congregation have also been given. All this for the up-building of the congregation in the faith that expects everything from the Lord.

The church council of B&R/B that serves the own congregation consists of 5 elders and 3 deacons. Up until now the Lord has not granted us a minister of our own.

Within the bond of churches B&R/B, together with the congregations of Zwolle and Hasselt, form the classis South-West. In time we hope that a fourth congregation will be added, namely the congregation of Amersfoort, that at present is a district congregation under the care of B&R/B. This district congregation has 2 elders and 1 deacon. These, together with B&R/B form a complete church council. As soon as it is possible that Amersfoort can become independent, the congregation will be officially instituted there.

Generally, the worship services are held in a sports hall in Berkel & Rodenrijs. Thought is being given to the possibility of buying an existing church building. The advantage of this is that the weekly conversion (by congregation members) of the sports hall into a venue that is suitable for worship services, would be a thing of the past. Sermons of deceased ministers and of both the ministers Rev. P. van Gurp and Rev. De Marie (of the bond of churches) are read in the worship services. In special worship services such as with administration of the sacraments or wedding services, Rev. De Marie will lead the services.

We are thankful to the Lord that he makes all these things still possible. We are thankful for the rich treasure of the sermons from times past, that are available to us. We find it striking that sermons, 20, 30 and even 40 years old can still be so surprisingly relevant to our times. Time and again it confirms the fact that God's Word is ageless and is authoritative and normative for all times.

We and our children, under God's gracious guidance, wish to continue to submit ourselves to the authority and norm of God's Word, so that the Name of our faithful God and Father in heaven shall be honoured and praised by us, in a country that sadly continues to stray away from Him more and more.



*A. van Egmond*

# Synod of Zwolle 2007-2008 (2)

## *Appeal case - Church boundaries*

Reformation is always a process. Not everyone is involved at the beginning of the liberation. Some congregation members prefer to wait, others are still involved in a revision request that has to be settled by a church council or major assembly. It is also possible that people first join an existing congregation even though they live far away. In this way the congregation of Bergentheim/Bruchterveld had many members from the area around Emmen. There were not, as yet, enough to start a congregation in Emmen. When however, the numbers in this area later increased, the church council with brothers and sisters started discussions to institute a church in Emmen. That happened on the 1st of Jan 2006. All the church members from the area Emmen, became member of the new congregation. That took some getting used to. In the congregation of Bergentheim/Bruchterveld they had found friends and acquaintances, and now they had to part from them again.

In the congregation of Zwolle there were also many members from surrounding areas, and the church council of Zwolle actively assisted in instituting a congregation in Hasselt. However, it appeared that not all members from that area joined Hasselt. They remained members of the congregation of Zwolle and that whilst the small congregation of Hasselt was in need of members, also in the fulfilling of the offices. When the church council and the classis urged them to join Hasselt, these members thought they could appeal on a synodical decision of 1892. In 1892 the congregations of the Separation and the "Dolerenden" congregations (the churches of the Second Secession) united. Two church federations were united under the blessing of God. Especially the Separated churches had already existed for more than 50 years. The union of two federations is, in practice, not always easy. At times there were two separate churches in one place, therefore new borderlines had to be drawn, whereby congregation members of the Separation suddenly belonged to the "Dolerenden", and the other way around. To simplify that process the synod in 1892 made the rule that members were allowed to remain in "their own" church. Prof. Rutgers therefore says in his ecclesiastical advices that these are exceptions. It is normal that each church member within an established church area, joins that church where he lives.

To the question put by Prof. Rutger: *"when a church, that earlier had fallen under the care of a neighbouring church, becomes independent, do*

*then her members come with an attestation from the former church, or do they transfer to the book of membership?"* He answers: *"When recently at X an own Reformed church started up, then in my opinion the Church council of Y should have transferred all the members living within the boundaries of the church of X, into a new membership book, and give this to the new Church council of X."*

(Rutgers, F.L. *Kerkelijke adviezen* 11 Hoofdstuk 212, vraag 353).

The synod was asked by an appellant to revise the classis decision that church councils must conform to the stipulated boundaries.

The appellant thought, referring to the decisions of 1892 that he had a right to make his own choice. The synod however was of opinion that the exceptional situation of 1892 did not apply in the present situation, as it now concerns members of the same bond of churches. In addition several deputies pointed out that we may not only look to own interest, but especially bear in mind especially the continuing church-gathering work of Jesus Christ. In the new situation every congregation member will need to apply his gifts and strength in harmony with the new situation. Nevertheless, the churches have shown care not to force anyone to a choice. However, in pastoral aspect, churches do have to pay attention to this.

## *Revision request matter Zwijndrecht*

The synod of Mariënberg had decided that the objection against the decisions made by the Classis Zuid-West concerning the unjustly refused approval according to Art. 40 CO (Art. 38, Dutch Church Order) to institute the offices in Zwijndrecht could not be granted. The church of Bergentheim/Bruchterveld makes objections against this. The church council of Bergentheim/Bruchterveld is also of opinion that General Synod Mariënberg unjustly agreed with the classis decision concerning Art. 41 CO (Art. 39, Dutch CO), and that the classis may not request the church of Zwijndrecht to conform to this decision. In making its decision the classis was not lording, Art. 74 CO (Art. 83, Dutch CO) as the church of Bergentheim/Bruchterveld thinks.

In Zwijndrecht a number of brothers and sisters had liberated themselves. In the national meeting prior to the formation of a bond of churches, it was agreed that those churches where the offices were not yet instituted, would place themselves under the care of the nearest officially instituted church, Art. 41 (Art. 39, Dutch CO), and that with



permission of classis, this neighbouring church shall lead the institution of the offices, Art. 38 CO (Art. 40, Dutch CO).

*If a congregation in formation, after a period of time is not able to institute the offices because of stagnation of growth, it will be desired that members of such a congregation will place themselves, as a residing member, under the supervision and discipline of the nearest instituted church. Regarding not (yet) instituted congregations, this meeting decided that these would, after a period of time, place themselves (or let them be placed) under the care of a neighbouring instituted congregation.*

Internal tensions, including confidential matters, prevented the neighbouring church and classis to institute the offices.

The church of Bergentheim/Bruchterveld was of the opinion that, according to art. 31 CO, they could not ratify these decisions. The synod however, thought that the 'considered settled and binding' of art. 31 in the first place concerns those who receive an answer to their objections to a synod decision. Moreover, in synod's opinion, it concerned confidential matters. Major assemblies (classis and synod) are called to deal with internal problems and its consequent adverse affect on mutual trust and peace in Zwijndrecht, in closed committee. Consequently nobody, except the ones involved and the authorized ecclesiastical assemblies, have the right to interfere with matters that are confidential due to their character, and need to be dealt with in such a manner. However, whoever does attempt to gain knowledge of this to form an opinion about the matter, falls under the judgment of 1 Peter 4:15 as being busybodies. In 1 Peter 4:15 they are mentioned in the same breath with murderers, thieves and evildoers. According to the "Kanttekening of the Statenvertaling" (Annotations of the Dutch Authorized Version of the Bible), the busybody is one who meddles in someone else's doings, it concerns someone who meddles/interferes with someone else's matters or business out of curiosity or inquisitiveness, whereby often confusion, quarrels and disruptions occur, and therefore is also punishable. The church council of Bergentheim/Bruchterveld e.o., in testing this synod decision, did not restrict itself to the starting point, that a decision concerning a personal matter is to be in agreement with the Scripture, the Confession and the CO, with regard to the course of proceedings. The revision request wanted further

information concerning a number of confidential matters. These were of importance in the matter Zwijndrecht. The classis and synod passed judgment on that matter.

Concerning the procedure in this matter, the church Bergentheim/Bruchterveld also have big objections because they are of the opinion that classis Zuid-West are not allowed to be involved in the decision-making. The synod points out that this classis refrained from voting when decisions were taken about these matters. The synod also states that the revision request of this church reveals an attitude that is to be considered worrisome in the bond of churches and in the congregation. The church council asks the synod namely to confess their guilt over the process that was followed by the synod of Mariënberg regarding the appeal of Zwijndrecht. Confession of guilt assumes sin. In the grounds and remarks that the church council put forward to come to its request, he does speak of difficulty, surprise, queries, but there is nothing that indicates sin. In a letter of appeal or a revision request, one could, at the most, speak of a wrong view, an error, but certainly not of sin. That would suggest malicious intent. Through speaking in this manner, the church council gives a wrong signal, to both the sister churches and to the own congregation. To the sister churches by its accusation toward the synod of Mariënberg and of the brother delegates of the classis who are responsible for the decision-making, but also to their own congregation by publicly accusing the major assemblies of the churches, and to present it as being a gathering of brothers from sister churches, who have made themselves guilty of bending justice and of oppression and lust for power. Such a public statement can have far reaching consequences, because it disturbs the peace and unity in the bond of churches, but also in the congregation. The synod wishes to assure that the church council did not see the implications of this statement and that this disturbance of the unity was not desired. The attitude of the church council appears further in the lack of trust that shows in various places in the series of statements and grounds. As examples the synod points to the following: In this way the church council judges over the introduction of the procedures by the synod of Mariënberg regarding the appeals and that a one-sided pressure is placed on the synod by the classis Zuid-West. A synod can, however, introduce a regulation that is in use at a different ecclesiastical meeting, if it is of the opinion that it is a good regulation.

Also the decision of the previous synod, to deal with certain matters in closed committee, shows that lack of trust. Whilst that synod, in point 5 of her considerations, refers to a decision of GS Sneek of 1939, that every synod has to judge whether certain matters are to be dealt with in public or in closed committee, the church council wants to know why the previous synod decided likewise. The church council even wants church councils to be able to examine whether the case of appeal of Zwijndrecht and the petition of a brother contains confidential elements, as the synod brings forward as ground for her decision to deal with the Zwijndrecht case in closed committee.

The church council also wants to know what the discussion of the committee with those involved, was about, what was discussed in the committee meeting and what the contents of the reports of the committee are. The suggestion that deputies of classis Zuid-West had also voted on the grounds of this synod decision, is no more than an assumption, inspired by distrust and contrary to reality. GS Mariënberg 2005 states in Art 40: *With the final decision-making in the form of voting, the deputies of classis Zuid-West abstain from voting.*

A number of brothers and sisters put in a revision request to the synod about the Zwijndrecht case. The synod had to reject this request also on practically the same grounds as the revision requests from the church of Bergentheim/Bruchterveld.

### *Administering justice*

That does not mean that there were no sad matters that needed attention. Justice had to be administered. Requests also had to be rejected and letters declared unacceptable. I will say more about the latter later on. The saddest was that during the synod meeting fierce commotion arose in the congregation of Bergentheim/Bruchterveld as reaction to the synod statements. That is so very sad because in it a wrong spirit of revolution was revealed. Even before the synod was closed, and therefore long before the Acts could appear, there was, initially by writing and later via website, a campaigning against the decisions taken, and not via the ecclesiastical and Scriptural path. One no longer wanted to be represented in, and bound to the decisions of major assemblies. So, they actually placed themselves outside the bond of churches. Sorrowful and sinful. The advisor of the synod, dr. P. van Gorp was treated discourteously outside the meeting. This, in the meantime, has been admitted and confessed as guilt by the present

church council of Bergentheim/Bruchterveld.

I will not go into lengthy discussion on this now. That is not my duty. But it is good to point out here, that the synod, keeping exactly to the CO and maintaining important earlier decisions, to which we as churches are bound, were not allowed to declare some revision requests and in part an appeal as admissible. This concerned the matter Zwijndrecht, in which those who made objections, were not themselves involved. Seeing that there is no possibility of hearing both sides, and there are often confidential matters at issue, a third party cannot and may not judge over the matter. In such cases where the decision itself does not appear to be contrary to the Word of God or the CO, someone else is not permitted to get involved in the matter. The course of procedure of an appeal to the synod is allowed to be tested on the basis of the acts. For the rest, only the person involved is allowed to appeal against the particular statement of the synod or classis. Several synods in the past, including synod Heemse 1984/85, where it was mentioned for the last time, have spoken in this way. Therefore we are bound to this. By abiding to that, the synod wanted to serve the churches and all the parties in faithfulness, and especially in responsibility to the Lord, the Head of the church.

It has become a difficult task for the synod to fulfill its work in an atmosphere of distrust and displeasure. Yet the Lord has been with the synod and with the deputies. Practically all decisions could be accepted with a majority of votes, also those decisions concerning the difficult case of Zwijndrecht.

### *Faithfulness, justice and order tested after 2003*

How must we characterize the spirit of our time? We may surely see it as a time of liberation and of building up after the crisis. It is a time of again tasting the good of the Word of God and the regaining of the communion of saints, and therefore of peace. Even now there is tribulation after the crisis. The crisis of the new liberation was and is there to fully hold fast to unabridged Word of God. It is there to continue to bow obediently to Gods commandments. It is there to reject all heresy, to give the Lord the central place in the worship services and not man. The crises was also necessary to be able to continue to maintain the CO as rule for the ecclesiastical life together and to continue to see the necessity of the bond of churches against the proliferation of independence, wilfulness, and perforation of

church boundaries. How do we now continue with each other as church of Christ, as communion of saints, as bond of churches? How do we continue as thankful liberated children of God, and also in the affliction in which some have so much difficulty with the CO, canon law, ecclesiastical decisions and statements, and with the official authority, where one, in his difficulties calls it harsh, loveless and heartless? Self-examination on these points is, of course, always indicated. However, is not the judgment that the ecclesiastical assembly must speak, played out against the love, also in the interest of those involved? The question then arises whether that love more likely will give more room and toleration for evil. Is that then true love?

Where do those difficulties and reactions come from? In the time of crisis of the new liberation, many have known the great concern towards unscriptural decisions and the great frustration of the rejected revision appeals. Many will most likely have experienced a heartless or a brushing aside attitude from their church councils. Besides that, many have, through lack of leadership, often had to do so much on their own in the church struggle. Let us, however, also remember that we all live under the influence of the spirit of the times of the emancipated person, who will not listen to reason, but who will stick up for his own right and honour with all admissible and un-admissible means. For years there has also been an undermining of the right knowledge of Church, Church Order and canon law. Essential self-examination of one's own actions is required here.

What is the basis of the reactions in the church in our time? It will be impossible to heap everything together. Also great care is needed. In recognizing a pattern in the reactions in the history of the church and the recent experiences, I will venture to name some possible underlying causes:

- It can partly have to do with the lack of insight in the church and the bond of churches, and its correct relationship to authority.
  - It can partly have to do with the lack of humility and self-denial.
  - It can partly have to do with reaction to the crisis, in which the authority, that was misused at the time, is now difficult to accept and where one is suspicious of every ecclesiastical decision in which they themselves had no say.
  - It can also partly have to do with unwillingness to devote oneself to the on-going reformation in one's own life and in the church after the reformation.
- How do we go on from here? Let us, in any case, see

from God's Word, how we need to deal with the valuable gifts of the church government, locally and nationally, that were given to us by the Lord. Do we use these gifts with care? Do we continually commend the appointed or delegated brothers in our prayers? Do we wish to heartily humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, also in subjection to this authority (1 Peter 5:1-6) and also when they need to admonish? Do we also, in faith, leave it to the authority to judge, also at the appropriate assemblies?

Do we then, in a spirit of meekness and patience, go the ecclesiastical way to administer justice, following God's Word, in submission to the CO? Or will the spirit of liberty and democracy then reign in us, in which we ourselves want to take place on the judgment seat, and reach out to the means of rebellion, schism-making, scandal and slander?

### *Maintaining the unity in truth*

Not only at the Liberation of 1944 but also in the years following, the interpretation of Art. 31 of the CO played an important roll. The two parts, on the one side the binding to ecclesiastical decisions and on the other side the right in testing to God's Word in the - "unless" must both be maintained. It is not the one at the expense of the other. That is the true Scriptural and therefore reformed approach. Let us therefore, in the time to come, continue in an atmosphere of trust and up-building, with God's Word as touchstone, and God's justice and honour and the building up of the church being the great aim. Then we can again receive a good understanding of the thankful task, that each of us have received in our own position, to hold on to what we have received. In this way we will grow together towards Christ in the ongoing reformation:

- through holding onto God's Word, which is to our salvation, and to hold onto the confession of the church, which is to our unity,
- through together holding onto the CO which is also to our well-being,
- through placing ourselves obediently under the preaching of God's Word on the Sunday,
- through also putting on that armour which is commanded in the Word, locally and also nationally, for instance, by means of church magazine and Bible study societies,
- through promoting reformed education,
- through continuing (where possible) with the calling up of all believers who have not, or not yet, given shape to the unity in truth.

Then suffering slander for Christ's sake, as church



or church member, is truly an affliction, but an affliction that gives us joy, because we then have part in the suffering of Christ. Then the humiliation and self-denial gives a rich reward, namely the grace and the exaltation by God, at His time (1 Pet. 5:5-6).

At the first meeting of the synod we read from Ef. 2:11-22 about the unity in the church. We spoke about the bond of peace by which we are united, united by one Spirit. We spoke of the necessity of faithfulness and of self-denial, waiving our own interest and the looking up to people. We emphasized the seeking of good for the church and above all the honour of God. For that we went to the Lord in prayer.

For that unity in love and self-denial we will need to continue to pray and continue to work. This will continue to be necessary also after this synod, in

the churches, at the church councils, and in the homes and the families, so that we also maintain the unity of the Spirit which is in Christ through the bond of peace (Ef. 4: 3). Then we can be built up further on the foundation of apostles and prophets where Christ is the Cornerstone, as a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. In this way we can bring forth a call to the concerned members and other believers who seek the same unity in the church. May the Lord also grant His blessing on this.

Finally, there is still one thing we were able to learn from church history. That is that the Lord builds His church, also through periods of crisis and heavy affliction. From that we may also know: on our prayer the Lord will stay with His church and so continue His church gathering work. Let us continue to pray for that and continue to work at it.

*P. Drijfhout*



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# Learning from difficulties

## Difficulties

A congregation did not submit itself to a classis decision and put in a appeal to the General Synod, was proved to be in the wrong and then refused to accept the synod decision, refused also to further follow the ecclesiastical path, but appealed directly to the members of the church, thereby placing itself outside the bond of churches.....

Another congregation felt it ought to stick up for this congregation and did that in such a way that the congregation tore apart...

In various churches members backed out, they withdrew because they did not agree with the course of events or because they refused to submit themselves to discipline...

And there is more. Think of the recent schism in the congregation of Zwolle.

There was and is a lot of gossip, harmful rumours, inside and outside the church were and are being spread by church members, discord was spread, sometimes it sounded like "let's get out of here, this isn't where it is"...

What could be the reason for all these difficulties?

We can point to the lessons from church history: always during and after a reformation Satan is always furiously on the move to set people up against each other and to destroy the work of the Lord in the reformation of the church. This has been foretold to us in the Bible and we have been warned about it.

This is the main Biblical line, the line of the history of salvation: the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, a struggle that will continue until the Last Day.

Beside this, we could, against the background of the antithesis, possibly point to concrete causes for the arisen difficulties. So that we can learn from it. To armour ourselves against new apostasy and unchristian discord. So that we can understand better what the Lord asks of us.

The following is an attempt to point out three causes of the discord and apostasy.

## Lack of faith-based motivation

We think that in the past years it has become very clear that not everyone who liberated from the decisions of Synod Zuidhorn and the Reformed Church (liberated), had the same motives. Many were deeply concerned about the decline in the Reformed Church (lib.). They saw the width and the depth of the decline. They saw in the depth of it

that there was a letting go of God's Word and how truth and falsehood received a recognized place next to each other. They saw in faith that they could not be obedient to the Lord anymore in the Reformed Churches (lib.), and obediently they let themselves be called away.

But we must also conclude that this does not count for every liberated brother and sister. Some had great difficulties with only a few or just one aspect of the church decline. For example: difficulties with the constantly changing liturgy or with the introduction of new hymns, or with a minister who changed his style of preaching. For them, dissatisfaction about one or a few aspects of the liturgy, or the preaching became the motive for liberation.

It also occurred that some were strongly focused on one aspect of the doctrine of the church. That was then the whole issue. They wanted to be justified only on that point, sometimes even seeking their own right with less attention for the Lord's right. There was no attention for other aspects of the deformation. These brothers and sisters, so it was found, lacked insight in the width and depth of the deformation. This, for instance, showed in the fact that they had little or no knowledge of other matters. It sometimes showed in the fact that they refused to call the Reformed Churches (lib.) a false, that is, an unlawful church and could still calmly attend their worship services. We think that we can also derive this from the sense of guilt that is sometimes absent and always sticking to what terrible things some ministers and elders did in their Reformed Church (lib.).

We think it is good to make a difference between concern and dissatisfaction.

Dissatisfaction over changes and innovations is not a good motive for liberation. Faith-based concern about leaving God's Word is. That is, in fact, the only Biblically justified motive.

*"For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.*

*Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him*

*shares in his evil deeds.*" (2 John :7-11) NKJV  
 This is what it was and is all about, that the Biblical motive for liberation: concern, sense of guilt and sorrow over not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. Unfortunately it has become and is becoming clear that in ecclesiastical life, some of the brothers and sisters, that had liberated on grounds of insufficient motivation, were very susceptible to new "sounds of dissatisfaction", easily going along with them and often not open to teaching and admonition. There was a constant "looking back to the pots of flesh in Egypt", a longing for larger numbers. Deep down it became clear that they showed insufficient trust in the LORD, an insufficient willingness to go the way on which He called us to go.

We are also of the opinion that this is where there is a link with the fact that many do not see that on-going reformation is necessary. After all, ecclesiastical decline and uniformity to the world also permeates the whole life. God's people cannot, after a reformation, continue life just as before. Constant on-going reformation is an important calling for God's people. Being blind to that calling can also lead to church members sometimes not being receptive to further teaching, and that instead, they take offence to the preaching in which there is the simple call to obedience to God's word.

### *Lack of armour*

During the past five years it has also become noticeable (in fact it was noticeable many years before our liberation) that things were in rather a bad shape with regard to our spiritual armour. Especially the knowledge of God's Word and what that Word means for us today, knowledge of the confessions, knowledge of church history, of Church Order and Canon Law and knowledge of the work of church predecessors, was and is, in places, in a bad way. We have taken this lack of knowledge along with us in our liberation.

*"Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."*  
 (Ephesians 6:13-17) NKJV

Lack of knowledge leads to lack of discernment. Without sound knowledge, not only rationally approached, but also accepted with a believing heart, we are not able to discern what is truth and what is a lie.

We are not able to discern what is truth and what are lies if we no longer take the knowledge of God's Word and God's mighty works to us, we cannot gird our waist with truth, put on our breastplate of righteousness or use the sword of the Spirit, that is the Word, in the right manner. Over many decades we have been slowly poisoned in the Reformed Church (lib.) with wrong knowledge and with the conviction that knowledge is not really that necessary. It has been poverty at catechism classes and in societies. The spiritual armour was dismantled. This lack of knowledge, added to the influence of modern time and the idea that one is allowed to have an "own" opinion, even must have an own opinion about everything, and the conviction that others should, of course, respect that opinion, led to the fact that standpoints, that are not correct and not tenable, were quickly accepted, but once accepted, are difficult to let go again.

This inadequate knowledge also led to some brothers and sisters not having a right and believing insight of the church-gathering work of Christ, of the office and of the bond of churches. And that several play off the love that the LORD asks of us, against the calling of all believers in doing right of God, as though there is an antithesis in this and that the love just must not show in the keeping of all of God's commandments (2 John :6).

God's love does not exclude His justice. Especially in the way of justice, of His holy righteousness, God has given His greatest gift of love. God showed His immense love, not by forgetting sins, but by letting His own Son pay for them!

When we speak about righteousness and love, we must never lose sight of this. Also in church life, love and righteousness are not opposed to each other.

On the contrary, admonition and discipline serve to save sinners and to keep safe the Church of Christ.

Not enough knowledge and a faulty armour, in our opinion, led to the spirits not being tested enough, that people were swayed by the issues of the ecclesiastical day and without any reason adopted a worldly attitude in church matters, even if they did see the decline in the Reformed



Churches (lib.) and had, initially, let themselves be obediently called, through reformation, to the church of Christ.

### *Lack of an anti-revolutionary attitude*

Christians, believers, reformed people, should show an anti-revolutionary attitude in their lives.

- Being revolutionary, that is the attitude of Cain and Lamech, of Nebuchadnezzar and Herod. Deep down, being revolutionary is: Me! My opinion! I know and I decide. Even deeper down: I am my own god! I am boss over myself. Authority from others I accept only as far and as long I consider it useful, for as far as I myself legalize it. For many decades, the fundamental attitude of a large majority of our western society, has been revolutionary. This revolutionary attitude has completely impregnated our lives.

- Being anti-revolutionary is: The LORD is the first and the last. We have opinions and we make decisions in dependence of Him, in deep understanding of guilt and mercy. The LORD is God. His righteousness and His love must determine life. Church people also, do not always escape from the influences of revolution, that is, doing the reverse of everything that God has commanded.

- Being revolutionary in the church is: ignoring the authority of the office-bearers, ignoring and denying the derived authority of ecclesiastical assemblies, attempting, in a baptistical manner, to put the ecclesiastical decision process in the hands of the congregation instead of with the office-bearers and the major ecclesiastical assemblies that were instituted by the Church.

- Being revolutionary in the church is: wanting to hold onto one's right against lawful decisions without valid Scriptural and Confessional arguments and back out from Scriptural authority if one doesn't get his own right.

- Being anti-revolutionary in the church is: being prepared to let yourself be instructed, to bow to the Word of God, to bow for the common accord of legal church laws and accept decisions of office bearers and ecclesiastical assemblies, even if I don't agree with it. Even if I think that the "opposition" had made mistakes.

We must be very clear about what the difference is between a lawful decision and an opinion. Ecclesiastical meetings make lawful decisions and we have agreed that we consider them settled and binding, unless they are in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order. I could

wholeheartedly be of the opinion that such decisions are wrong but that does not make them unlawful! We think that in our churches, some stumbled over just that point and, we assume, with the best of intentions, they fell into the pitfall of the revolution. The revolution that says: if my opinion is different to those that have authority over me, then I will reject that authority.

*"What does God require in the 5th commandment?*

*That I show all honour, love and faithfulness to my father and mother and to all those in authority over me, submit myself with due obedience to their good instruction and discipline, and also have patience with their weaknesses and shortcomings, since it is God's will to govern us by their hand."* (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 39).

We think that also a lack of anti-revolutionary understanding, a lack of a Biblically obedient attitude, a lack that is "fed" by poor knowledge, and uniformity with the world is visible as the reason for the problems in our churches.

It is visible, not only in the rejection of decisions without sufficient substantiation, but also in the manner of approach towards office-bearers and ecclesiastical meetings, i.e.: by using big words, massive reasoning, and texts in which it was already established that the claiming party was right and only wished to hear it being confirmed, and not giving ecclesiastical meetings any room whatsoever for differentiation, further teaching or rejection.

It is visible also in the fact that some turned away from the Church and seemed prepared to put the continuation of the congregation and of the bond of churches (for so far as this is dependent on people) into jeopardy, without, however, calling to reformation, which should be the first to be done if the doctrine of the Bible was really at issue.

Such doings do not serve the peace in the church and is not loving. It is not directed at peace. Peace is not the absence of struggle. It is not the "rest" of being proved right. It is a hearty commending ourselves to Christ, looking to His sacrifice on the cross, and therefore and therein bearing with one another.

### *Summarizing*

As reason for the difficulties in the church, we feel we can point to a sinful attitude that is founded on a lack of faith-based motivation for the liberation, lack of knowledge and insight, and

insufficient perception in believing the church; and a large amount of uniformity with the world where it concerns getting ones right and being proved right. The consequence was and is willfulness and is in contrast to a faith-based submission to the Scripture. The cause can only be taken away through repentance. That is: a return to the Scriptural obedience that the LORD asks of us. This is where each healing of rifts begins.

### *Praying and working*

We are conscious of the fact that the above may come across as being sharp. But we don't get

anywhere by concealing difficult matters and not discussing them with each other. The events of the past years, in which brothers and sisters nevertheless departed from us, must be a lesson for us as well. It may and must teach us how important it is to continue studying, to continue to work at on-going reformation. Yes, we must repent daily and pray for a believing insight into, and safekeeping by God's Word. In all this, not trusting our own knowledge and feelings, but only looking to our Lord Jesus Christ.

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# A response from the Canadian Churches (CANRC) (4) (Final article)

## Overview of the objections and decisions of the Canadian Synods

The previous article pointed out that Neerlandia (2001), Chatham (2004) as well as Smithers (2007) have dealt with several of the presented issues, but their answers did not make clear reference to Scripture. Actually, they found that the answers provided by the deputies of the Reformed Churches liberated (RCL = GKv) to be sufficient.

### **The elder pronouncing the salutation and benediction:**

This is not in contradiction with the Church Order (Neerlandia 2001 Art. 80). One does not confront oneself with the relationship between an office bearer and the ministry of reconciliation.

However, this point was included in the objections made against the Synod decisions. It was primarily the Australian churches that pointed out this objection. It seems that the Canadian churches agree that there is sufficient grounds to make such a dramatic change to the specific duties of the office bearers, since the Church Order doesn't forbid such a duty.

### **Celebrating Lord's Supper with soldiers in crisis areas:**

As a result of the decision of Leusden (1999) the Canadian churches have suggested to the RCL to adhere to article 60 (art. 61 Dutch Church Order) and 61 (= art. 60 Dutch Church Order) of the Church Order. (NOTE: Article 61 of the Dutch Church Order also states that: the administration of the Lord's Supper shall take place where there is supervision of elders, according to the ecclesiastical order and in a public gathering of the congregation.)

Scripture clearly states that the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated with the congregation during a worship service. All attending Lord's Supper must be under the supervision of church council (Neerlandia 2001, Art. 80). This issue was later on, never included again in the decisions of the Canadian Synods.

We must assume that, also now, the Canadian churches agree that celebrating Lord's Supper in crisis areas is the responsibility of the minister in charge. This suggests that the issues of true unity and enforcement of church discipline are issues of less importance.

### **Holy Supper:**

The Canadian churches say it is not true to state that the RCL have relaxed the criteria for attending Lord's Supper. The approval of church council is still necessary, before allowing anyone to the Lord's table. The criteria for admission are very strict (Considerations Smithers, 2007).

The question remains, in what manner have the Canadian Churches read up on this issue? Have they then not understood that now, in the RCL, members of other federations may attend Lord's Supper by giving only a verbal confession of their faith, and, that congregations can deal with the content of this verbal confession in different ways? Along with consenting to the Apostle's Creed other freer forms are accepted. Do they not have questions concerning the Church?

The importance of being a member of the true Church in connection with celebrating Lord's Supper is not mentioned in any of the Acts! Are we able to separate celebrating Lord's Supper from the communion of saints? Certainly not! Also here we miss a solid Scriptural foundation.

We are left with a strong impression that when Synod deals with crucial issues that touch upon the point of working together with other churches, Synod doesn't seriously listen to God's Word and the confessions. Maybe the contacts with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) plays a role here.

### **The fourth Commandment:**

The information of the RCL in the brochure "Zondag, HEERlijke dag" = "Sunday, LORDly day", has convinced the Synod that the RCL continue to uphold the Sunday as a day of rest (Smithers 2007). The Canadian Churches have no objections to the fact that the RCL upholds two opposing views concerning the Sunday as being a God-given commandment.

One may teach that this is a God-given commandment, but if one is convinced that it is not a God-given commandment but a human institution, that conviction may also be proclaimed in the sermon during a worship service. It is also not considered wrong if one sees this guideline as merely an advice in which this explicit command to rest on the Sunday is changed into an insistent advice to rest.

Unfortunately, it has become clear that the churches in Canada have taken over this contradictory viewpoint.



***The large number of hymns:***

For the time being they are satisfied with the answer of the RCL deputies.

They did not examine the contents of the Liedboek hymns. They only had some difficulty with the large number of hymns as opposed to the number of Psalms. That really surprised us.

During consecutive synods of the RCL, they have discussed many other issues concerning the Liedboek hymns. For example: the changes made in the criteria for selecting hymns suitable for the worship services; the examination procedure and, most importantly, the contents of the selected hymns. Many extensively documented objections were submitted by the churches in The Netherlands.

The Synod of Smithers should have taken notice of these objections in the various Acts of the RCL Synods.

***The new marriage form:***

It was considered that no unscriptural elements were found in this new form. However, questions concerning the way things are formulated in the new form, still exist.

Due to the fact that this new marriage form has been in use for more than 11 years within the RCL, it was decided to close this issue (Considerations Smithers, 2007).

We really wonder how the Canadian churches have come to this conclusion. Synod Neerlandia had stated that the language used, led to a weaker version of the teachings from Scripture. Deputies from Neerlandia also had the argument that young couples, at their marriage ceremony had difficulty in giving an honest answer to the questions of the old marriage form. This should have made the Canadian Churches ask questions concerning the exegesis. That did not happen. The weakness of the Scriptural teaching noted in the past are now not seen as a reason to question the Scriptural soundness of the new marriage form.

***What remains?******Hymns:***

The concerns remain that the large number of hymns will push aside the priority that the Psalms deserve. It is necessary to mention this concern once again. The newly appointed deputies must, for the first time, also examine the contents of the hymns in order to see if there are grounds for this concern (Considerations Smithers 2007). The deputies of the Canadian churches have constantly refused, on formal grounds, to judge the contents of the hymns,

even though there was enough information about that issue present in the Acts of the RCL Synods! Due to the report of her deputies, the Synod of Smithers, now recognize that the Canadian churches cannot avoid judgment regarding contents.

***Divorce and Remarriage:***

There is a need to discuss, with the deputies of The Netherlands, the new approach in dealing with divorce, because of the concerns that exist about the new hermeneutics (the style of the Kingdom of Heaven).

How does this approach affect the revision of the Church order with regard to church discipline?

There seems to be a trend in the manner in which the Canadian Synods deal with the original objections and we cannot free ourselves of the impression that for the remaining two issues, in time, satisfactory solutions will be found for Canada.

The RCR (The Reformed Churches - restored) bond of Churches has been condemned because it has brought a schism to the body of Christ, The Church. In the Canadian churches there are indeed "concerns" about some of the decisions made by the RCL Synods but these "concerns" are within the limits of the sister-church relationship. They do not even find it necessary to send out a warning, for they are still convinced that the RCL is the true Church, one where the true preaching of the Word of God and the three forms of unity are safe. By making this choice for the RCL they have made a choice for a church where pluralism prevails. Our question to the Canadian churches is whether they have chosen for God and His Word or is it a choice made for man whose obedience to the Word depends upon his feelings and culture.

***How further?***

Now that the Canadian churches have not honoured our request for a sister-church relationship, the question arises whether it is useful to continue further contact from our side. When we notice how the concerns about the character of the RCL that was revealed at the Synod Neerlandia (2001) began to disappear and 'evaporate' over the years, and that they disregard the Scriptural response from the RCR, can we then still talk of a bond that is based upon Scripture and Confession?

Three consecutive Canadian Synods that have dealt with these concerns, have all come to the above mentioned disappointing end results.

The main thing I want to mention is that for the churches abroad, it remains a difficult task to

be able to judge the RCL in The Netherlands. Also the language (Dutch/English) remains a barrier. Especially the younger Canadian church members are not familiar with the Dutch language. Furthermore the latest Canadian deputies queried as to how they were able to judge a situation in a church abroad. Already in Neerlandia (2001) this was brought forward. Already then the concerns about the course that the RCL was following, resulted in several churches taking action. The question was if these concerns had been made visible in the official documents (Acts, Synod reports). May articles in books, newspapers, magazines carry weight when making a judgement?

In their judgement of the RCR the Canadian deputies come back to this point their report to the Synod Smithers (2007).

The point of Scripture criticism is also dealt with in the papers of the RCR. It mainly deals with the publication "Woord op Schrift". The Canadian deputies respond that they cannot discuss this with the RCR because they only deal with official Acts. Information in publications, magazines and newspapers are not taken into consideration when making a judgement. With this approach they follow the practice that exists in the Canadian churches. The Canadian deputies point out that by following this procedure the Canadian churches disadvantage themselves.

They also make mention of the contents of the new hymns. They purposely did not want to make a judgement. This would make their task nearly impossible.

With this, the Canadian churches acknowledge that not all the issues that were presented as being the grounds for the secession, have been examined because they were not given a specific mandate to do so.

This statement should have resulted in cautiousness from the deputies as well as the Synod when making a judgment concerning the Reformation in 2003. This, unfortunately, was not the case.

Synod Smithers has been dealing with this problem. In an article in Clarion (July 2007) Dr. J. Visscher examined the decisions made by the Canadian Synod of Smithers. He mentions that a certain brother did not agree with the strong words used when making a judgement about the RCR. This did not result in Synod making a change in their decision. Dr. Visscher asks: Has now all been said and done? Can we now return to the order of the day? Can we put aside the concerns that the RCR have brought forward?

Dr. Visscher continues by writing that on some points

progress has been made, but the concerns about other issues remain. We must follow the continuing discussion about marriage and divorce and in particular the hermeneutic principles, which form the background to this. We must also pay attention to the issue of the growing number of hymns as well as to the contents of the hymns. The further developments concerning the fourth commandment must also be followed closely.

The Synod decided that the Canadian deputies must present themselves as "pro-active". In other words, when having contact with the RCL, deputies must also pay attention to other sources than only the Acts. In future, the Canadian deputies will have personal contact with the RCL deputies every two years in order to discuss issues of mutual concern. Does this mean that contact is still possible for the RCR? I am convinced that it is not possible.

In their explicit judgment they accuse the RCR as being schism-churches. In their opinion we are actually sinful, disobedient churches that try to hinder the Church-gathering work of Christ. With such a judgement, they themselves are actually the ones that have severed the bond with the RCR.

If we had remained in the RCL as concerned members, we maybe would have received a listening ear in Canada.

The Synod of Smithers has now given their deputies the mandate to continue to have contact with the RCR. Their reason being to try and promote unity with the RCL. They want reconciliation between the RCR and the RCL without the Scriptural grounds for the secession being valid grounds for the separation.

On the other hand the RCR will only be satisfied with a sister-church relationship that is based upon Scripture and confession. Now that the Canadian churches continue to uphold the sister-church relationship with the RCL and moreover, are convinced that Scripture and confessions are safe there, it is no longer meaningful to continue contact with these churches. They have made their choice. They have made their judgement.

As long as the bond of Canadian churches does not repent then we will not be able to maintain or seek a sister-church relationship.

In our prayers we must ask the LORD if He will continue to have mercy upon these churches and ask if He will someday bring them to the proper insight and conviction that they have dealt wrongly.

Yet, we must not forget that the Canadian churches have not yet officially made a statement concerning this synodical judgement.

If we pay attention to the objections and doubts

that several churches have brought forward at the Synod of Neerlandia (2001), then we may expect that more churches will come into action against this synodical judgment.

Does the RCR in The Netherlands still have a task? Synod Mariënberg has given an answer to the appeal of the RCL, namely that we, more than anything, wish to see that the schism is repaired - but on one condition - return to Scripture, the confessions and the Church Order.

Only if these conditions are met then we can work towards restoration. The Canadian churches have been informed of this response. Yet, they remain convinced that the RCL remains true to Scripture, the Confessions and the Church Order. On these grounds we must note the fact that their decision to continue to have contact with the RCL with the

purpose to try and restore the schism that has occurred with the RCR, will prove to be fruitless. Does that mean that all contacts will be fruitless? From the side of the Canadian churches: definitely. Is there still a task for us towards our brothers and sisters in Canada? I am convinced there is. The task remains for the RCR to send out a Scriptural warning to the brothers and sisters, with the purpose of making them aware what the consequences are of the decisions that their Synod has made, along with a call to repentance and a return to the obedience of God's Word.

Our next Synod will also have to deal with this issue.

May the Lord also in this, give the right insight and true wisdom through His Spirit and Word.

*P. Drijfhout*

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## REFORMED CONTINUA

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