

Unhappy Consequences

From time to time we receive feedback from our readers about the content of our magazine. We appreciate that! Often a ‘keep up the good work’ accompanies a subscription cheque or ‘we appreciate the articles you write – do not loose heart.’ These are encouraging words. We also like to hear some more detailed feedback – and we get that too. Some say that certain articles are too doctrinal, others express special appreciation for the doctrinal articles. Some say the articles are over their heads. Others say they appreciate the detail that is provided so that they can be armed with sound responses when they are confronted about the issues we deal with. We will continue to attempt to provide a variety of articles so that there will be benefit for all.

One of the realities we do not want to neglect is that the doctrinal issues we deal with have consequences in practical matters. This time we want to have a look at some of those practical matters and how they have been and are affected by doctrinal direction of the past and present. To say it in another way, when we go down a wrong road doctrinally there will be unhappy practical consequences. Or as others have taught us in the past, ‘where there is no soundness of doctrine there can not be soundness of life.’

Bible Translations

In the past we have written and published a number of articles about Bible translations. We have generally expressed unhappiness with the synodical decision to adopt the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible in the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC). We were also critical of the fact that three options were permitted. We warned about the possibility of a gender neutral Bible being in the plans of the International Bible Society (IBS) and/or Zondervan Publishing House.

Recently there have been two developments in the field of Bible translation that may bring some chickens home to roost. About a year ago a new translation of the Bible was completed. It is called the English Standard Version (ESV). We mentioned it as one of our News items a number of issues ago. It uses the same source as the RSV did, but has improved in those areas where the RSV was rightly criticized. We have not done extensive research on the ESV, nor are we able to, as some do not fail to point out. But we were encouraged by positive reviews this translation received from Rev. VanderVelde of the CanRC in Yarrow, BC. His article in *Clarion* dated February 2002 indicates that he has done some research and comparisons. Nelson D. Kloosterman also wrote encouraging words about the ESV. His article appeared in *Christian Renewal*, Volume 20, No.11, dated February 25, 2002. It may be useful to repeat some of the things he wrote in that article.

“ Any thoughtful comparison of the 1952 RSV with the 1978 NIV will conclude that the RSV translation is more literally precise in terms of the vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar of the original languages. The RSV embodies formal equivalence, rather than the dynamic equivalence of the NIV.

To this formal equivalence or literal precision the ESV has returned.

Evidence of this return is seen in the ESV’s retention of theological terms like grace, faith, justification, propitiation, reconciliation – terms essential to the church’s vocabulary and to personal faith understanding. The ESV has also restored important verbal connecting words like ‘and,’ ‘for,’ ‘also,’ and ‘but,’ words that belong to a biblical authours flow of argument or narrative.

Because the ESV is a contemporary Bible version, its producers had to wrestle with the nettlesome issue of genderized language. Where the biblical context refers to both men and women the phrase ‘any man’ has been rendered ‘anyone,’ and ‘men’ is sometimes replaced with ‘people.’ But where the original word possesses a specific male referent, the words ‘man’ and ‘men’ are retained.

Interestingly, the address form ‘brothers’ (Greek, *adelphoi*) is retained to indicate the familial relationship between fellow Christians. Because it is often used as a legal term in connection with inheritance and adoption laws of the first century, the word ‘sons’ is also retained.”

Many other 'conservative' theological leaders and spokespersons have also been quoted as being positive about the ESV.

While this, seemingly, positive development was underway the IBS was busy with its own new translation of the Bible. It has recently been introduced as *Today's NIV*. Even though the IBS has said in April of 1997 that it was not working on and had no plans for a gender-neutral translation. The *Today's NIV* is exactly that. In World of February 23, 2002 Susan Olasky states in her article 'Should we trust the NIV', 'The justification given for making extensive gender changes in modern Bible translations is that today's readers, women especially, either don't understand or are offended by traditional usage.' After a number of blatant examples she concludes her article with the concise remark, '...so this would appear to be one more politically driven change.'

It appears that the choice of the NIV is leading to the unhappy consequence of having adopted a translation that is not the best available and that is associated with a society that continues down a wrong road.

Admission to the Lord's Supper

In 1999 the Synod of the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands declared the Presbyterian Church in Eastern Australia (PCEA) a true church and established Ecclesiastical Fellowship with it. This was done in spite of the fact that the Free Reformed Churches in Australia (already in EF with the Dutch Liberated Churches) had decided that they could not yet take such a step. They were convinced that some of the practices in the PCEA are contrary to Scripture. Reformed Polemics has long argued that EF ought not to be established until such issues have been resolved.

Recently Nederlands Dagblad reported that the Church in Franeker, (a Liberated Church in the Netherlands) declared itself an 'open' church. It has decided to admit to the Lord's Supper all those who profess themselves to be Christians. They must also accept the Apostle's Creed. Emphasis is also increased on the need for those intending to participate to examine themselves. In the past the consistory of this Church had insisted that guests who wanted to join the Lord's Supper celebration would have to present themselves for examination. But this became too burdensome.

The CanRC in its decisions at Synod Neerlandia did require the committees that were mandated to maintain contact with Presbyterian Churches to raise all the issues of difference that had been defined earlier in the discussions. But it appears that other churches in EF did not deem those differences important enough to discuss and resolve. Instead, it appears that some of the practices that we not considered impediments to further unity are being taken over by the reformed churches. More chickens coming home to roost.

The Church

Much has been written in Reformed Polemics about the Church. Recently we came to the conclusion that inter-church relationships have moved from a correspondence between churches that are the same to a fellowship with churches that are similar.

No longer do the Confessions serve as forms of unity but are suffering from a severe sifting of content to determine what are essential or major issues and which are non-essential or minor ones. The Three Forms of Unity have become a cause of disunity.

A similar direction can be detected when one hears the explanation of the Church as being a vertical and horizontal relationship. The point frequently appears to be that when one has a vertical relationship with God the horizontal relationship with His people is of less significance. The unhappy consequence is that those who go in this direction present a false dilemma.

It is much wiser to stay away from such man-made mental diagrams and use the words of Scripture that tell us that Jesus Christ has bought us with His precious blood. He has made us His own. We are to live in obedience to Him. Part of that life of obedience is to become and remain living members of His Church-gathering work. In His Word He tells us what that Church is. He reminds us not to compromise the truth and to live holy lives even as He is holy.

To be sure He also calls us to unity with all believers. But when we can not get that done in the time frame we set for ourselves, we are not permitted to compromise the truth and/or ignore significant differences. As an unhappy consequence to the hurry to establish unity many have changed their understanding of what the Church is.

Most if not all CanRC members will state that they disagree with the concepts of an invisible church or even of a pluriform church, but the very ideas some espouse do lead to such conclusions. The apparent desire of many to be part of a larger organization or the fear of being labeled sectarian has caused too many reformed Christians to abandon the Scriptural norms they have adhered to and defended in the past. The unhappy consequence is that they are in danger of losing sight of what God commands in His Word. There are so many examples in history that can teach us about the consequences of leaving the narrow way of the truth and ending up on the broad highway of the lie. There are an equal number of examples of deformation when we start to modify, alter and compromise the direction and ordinances of all of God's Word.

The only solution to unhappy consequences is a return, a reforming of our actions and thought patterns. In the Old Testament times God told his prophet that 7000 had not bowed their knee to other gods. They remained faithful. In the New Testament Jesus asks if He will still find faith on earth when He comes again in glory. And He promises to come again early – for the sake of the elect.

PdB

EXPLAINING WHAT WE CONFESS AND PRACTICE

Common Clichés and Popular Fallacies

In the recently published papers and/or articles about "the matter of supervision of the Lord's table" we have refuted many of the arguments that have been brought to the fore to support the supposed need to review, revise or perhaps get rid of our long-established Reformed practice of closed communion. The exchange of views about *closed* communion had its origin in our contact with the OPC in the 1960s. Closed communion again became the subject of some discussion in 1975 when the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) decided to abandon this practice and *instead* open the Lord's table to "all sincere believers", regardless of their church affiliation. In 1994, in the context of discussion about the possibility of unity and church union with the churches that had seceded from the CRC, the long-established practice of closed communion was called "a Canadian Reformed idiosyncrasy". Those who took part in and wanted to maintain this practice were deemed to be narrow-minded, judgmental and sectarian.

CLICHES AND FALLACIES

In the process it soon became clear that most of the arguments adduced for the need to get rid of this practice are neither new nor original. It seems that the on-going debate on this matter frequently brings to the fore opinions and views that find their starting point in not much more than simply "parroting" or repeating what already has been said

many times before by many *other* people. There is nothing new or of substance to glean from the statements or assertions that are made. They have lost their originality and effectiveness. Such statements are often referred to as “clichés”. A cliché is “an expression or idea that has become trite” or “an idea or phrase which is no longer original or effective.” We think here of such clichés as “not doctrine, but life”, “no creed but Christ”, “doctrine divides, service unites” or “not form but the spirit, not confession but experience.” Many of these have become mottoes or slogans. And most, if not all of them, can be suitably described as “fallacies.”

What is a “fallacy”? A *fallacy* is “a false or mistaken idea, opinion, belief, etc.; error”, or “an idea, notion or argument which is incorrect, misleading or illogical.” In short it is “an erroneous belief or misleading notion”, and what is involved is “a piece of false reasoning.” False reasoning frequently gives rise to false dilemmas and false distinctions. In the debate about “confessional membership” and “the matter of supervision of the Lord’s table” we encounter many such fallacies. We come face to face with misleading and illogical notions that are the consequence of false reasoning. Many of these wrong notions develop into mottoes or slogans that are clichés by virtue of the fact that they are no more than simply “parrotting” or repeating that which already has been said many times before by many *other* people. And, as is often the case, these “*other*” people include those in positions of leadership in the churches. At present, in the context of discussions and overtures toward unity and church union we encounter our fair share of these clichés that indeed have their starting point in or are based on popular fallacies.

LONG-ESTABLISHED PRACTICES AND TRADITIONS

In a recent article in *Christian Renewal* (11/26/01), by Christine Farenhorst, titled “Unity” the status of our long-established practices and traditions are the subject of some reflection and introspection. The question is asked: “Do we not inadvertently elevate our rules and regulations, our forms and federations, to an improper level of devotion?” This question is followed with the suggestion that “the false unity which the devil would have us follow is the supposition that we as Reformed independent communities can embalm, preserve and place our traditions on a pedestal rather *higher* than our servanthood in Christ.”

In response to the question whether we do perhaps “not inadvertently elevate our rules and regulations, our forms and federations, to an improper level of devotion” we must allow that there are people who perhaps “*inadvertently*” do so.

Therefore this rhetorical question is has merit. And we can also subscribe to the statement that “tiny Reformed independent communities” may in fact follow the supposition that they can embalm, preserve and place their traditions on a pedestal. The implicit warning against such a course of action is therefore to be taken to heart.

Nevertheless, church history has shown that it is far more likely that there are people who knowingly and intentionally change the rules and regulations to achieve their own unscrupulous and unscriptural goals. We think here of the developments in the Christian Reformed Churches (CRC) where a specific article of the Church Order was changed to accommodate the agenda of those who wanted to open the Lord’s Supper table to “all sincere Christians” regardless of their church affiliation. What also comes to mind is the matter of declaring a word or article of the Church Order “inoperative” to allow women in office and on the pulpits. Here we certainly do not see much evidence of “inadvertently elevating rules and regulations... to an improper level of devotion.” In fact, we see quite the opposite; total disregard for agreed upon rules and regulations, indifference to our long-established Reformed practices and disdain for our time-honoured traditions. We see the irrefutable evidence of continuing decline and deformation in the church.

DEALING WITH SPECIFICS

The author of the aforementioned article acknowledges that her question about ‘an improper level of devotion’ can be categorized as “somewhat of a generalization.” And we can say that generally speaking, generalizations are of little value if we don’t get down to specifics. Therefore, in our refutation of the gist of this question we in fact mentioned some very specific issues and cited some well-known instances of how people in the CRC knowingly and intentionally changed the rules and regulations to achieve their own unscrupulous and unscriptural goals. The author gives us some examples of the issues she has in mind when she writes: “We insist that so and so must sing from this particular Psalter and that anyone not drinking from a common cup during communion is in danger of rank heresy. We argue that elders must sit in the front pew or else, and before we know it our traditions have become doctrine. We queue up in long line-ups to behold and worship these traditions which, unfortunately, create somewhat of a false unity.”

We note that in the aforementioned quote we are given some examples of traditions that we allegedly “behold and worship.” They are a) “this particular Psalter”, b) “drinking from a common cup”, and c) “elders must sit in the front

pew”. There is, however, a vexing problem here, a problem common to those who so readily speak in generalities, namely, *who* exactly are the “we” who “queue up in long line-ups to behold and worship these traditions”? Although the comments made by the writer seem to indicate that the context of the discussion is that of our “own” and “other Reformed communities”, we are not specifically told who the so-called “we” are. Nor are we presented with any concrete evidence about the “when, where and how” of the three examples of traditions that we allegedly “behold and worship”. Without such clear evidence, the allegation that “we” (whoever that may be) “queue up in long line-ups to behold and worship these traditions” is rather interesting, but without validity and lacking in substance.

And that, generally speaking is the case when we speak in generalities about our long-established Reformed practices and traditions. We can all agree that we should not “inadvertently elevate... to an improper level of devotion” and that we certainly should not “behold and worship” traditions. However, we are not helped or served by those who insist on speaking in generalities. If we make accusations or allegations based on “somewhat of a generalization” and thus neglect to give specifics, it becomes impossible to engage in serious polemics. An edifying discussion is out of the question.

GENERAL REMARKS

It is not within the scope and aim of this editorial to enter into a detailed discussion about the three issues as presented by the aforementioned writer. Furthermore, since we lack specifics, it is not possible to deal with statements that might have substantiated the points made. Hence we are forced to restrict ourselves to a few short general remarks. We begin with the last of the three issues, namely that “we argue that elders must sit in the front pew or else, and before we know it our traditions have become doctrine.” The tradition that elders sit in a place where the whole congregation can see them and where they can also see the whole congregation is a sound and good tradition. To suggest that we, in the context of seeking unity and church union, have made this tradition a point of doctrine is an allegation that needs to be substantiated. The author has simply failed to do so.

Next, to put forward that “we insist that anyone not drinking from a common cup during communion is in danger of rank heresy” is, to say the least, somewhat peculiar. We have had and continue to have discussions about the destructive influence of individualism and the effect of this influence also for our *communal* celebration of the Lord’s

Supper. Part of this discussion has indeed been the matter of the common cup and the desire/insistence of some to change to the use of individual cups. It would be our contention that people who desire or insist on such changes must adduce Scriptural grounds for them. However, tangible evidence will also need to be produced for the statement that we “insist” that anyone not drinking from the common cup during communion must be declared as being “in danger of rank heresy”. Without such tangible evidence further discussion becomes an exercise in futility.

Finally, the author states that “we insist that so and so *must* sing from this particular Psalter” (emphasis mine, RD). In the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) we do indeed *insist* that the “metrical Psalms adopted by general synod as well as the Hymns approved by general synod shall be sung in the worship services” (Church Order, Article 55). The “so and so” who *must* sing from the Book of Praise are the members of the CanRC who, for the greater part, gladly maintain this long-established Reformed tradition. The churches that *do* maintain this Reformed tradition, do not *insist* that this be done because they *must* “submit” to this particular article of the Church Order, but because they desire to faithfully keep the promises they have made and honour the things they have agreed upon.

DOCTRINE DIVIDES, SERVICE UNITES

The author writes: “Surely to follow Christ is to be a servant – to live at peace with one another in so far as we possibly can – to tie sandal thongs – to bend over backwards to accommodate one another – to share pulpits with other Reformed communities – to break bread with other Reformed believers – and to sing praises together at common meetings.” We are encouraged to “not seek unity in the approval of men. Rather, let us seek unity in Him through whom we have the victory, He who bought us with His own blood.”

And then follows a rather intriguing and crucial statement. “He (that is Christ, RD) will not be overly concerned with where the elders sat or what psalm book we sang from. Neither will he differentiate between the Heidelberg and the Westminster. But He will be concerned about the state of hearts.” It is interesting to note that the author appropriates for herself the aptitude of knowing what Christ “will not be overly concerned with” and what He will not “differentiate between.” The conclusion based on that self-appropriated divine knowledge is that we in our pursuit of unity and church union must “follow Christ” and be “a servant.” And being a servant means that we must not “preserve and place our traditions on a pedestal rather higher than our *servanthood* in Christ.” We must not be nuanced too precisely

in theological matters or doctrinal issues. After all, Christ “will not differentiate between the Heidelberg and the Westminster. But He will be concerned about the state of hearts.” Therefore, “follow Christ” and “be a servant!” If we sum up the author’s message we might easily come to the familiar cliché - “doctrine divides, but service unites!”

A FALSE DILEMMA

The motto or slogan, “doctrine divides, service unites” is nothing less than a false dilemma. And the message that this “piece of false reasoning” communicates has striking similarities to the sentiments expressed in some of our “Reformed” publications and magazines. Doctrine divides! Therefore, in the context of overtures to unity and church union we must be open to discussing, reviewing, revising or perhaps getting rid of our long established Reformed practices of closed communion and confessional membership. (1) The difference of opinion about these practices is sure to generate discord, disagreement and disunity. Therefore we’ll discuss these potentially divisive issues some other time.

The influence of this “doctrine divides” sentiment is also not far removed from the perspective perpetuated by General Synod Neerlandia, 2001. There we are advised that the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards can be discussed later because unity in faith “does not necessarily imply complete agreement on every point of doctrine or practice.”(2) Making use of the by now familiar words of our frequently quoted author, Christ “will not differentiate between the Heidelberg and the Westminster.” But He will be concerned about the state of hearts.” Therefore we must follow Christ’s example. We must be willing to serve, for service unites.

And so in our pursuit of unity and church union we have sought ways to “assist each other” and explore “certain forms of cooperation.” And the proposed way to achieve federative unity as prescribed by Synod 2001 pretty much parallels what the author had in mind when she writes: Let’s “bend over backwards to accommodate one another... share pulpits with other Reformed communities... break bread with other Reformed believers... and sing praises together at common meetings.” In this manner of “service” we can grow in the unity of faith. Doctrine divides, service unites!

IN CONCLUSION

And so we observe that what we profess and practice is once again trivialized, minimized and undermined by our indiscriminate endorsement of a “piece of false reasoning” communicated by common clichés which are based on

popular fallacies. Such a cliché is the slogan “Doctrine divides, service unites!” And although many people will have their misgivings about the message this cliché communicates, they often fail to realize that in practice they have, perhaps *inadvertently*, been taken in by the captivating and alluring message it communicates. In a future editorial we will, D.V., take a look at a number of *other* common clichés based on popular fallacies which frequently find their way into our polemics on what we, as Reformed believers, confess and practice.

Ron Dykstra

1) *Visitors at the Lord's Table*, Clarion, Year-end 1996 edition.

2) *Acts of Gen. Synod* 2001, Article 45, Consideration 4.13, p.48)

THE BIBLE IS CLEAR

By Mieke Brink-Blijdorp

It has become trendy to read the Bible as if it were an artistic expression of truth. The Bible is viewed as a piece of art, which requires interaction with the reader. The associations that it evokes in you might differ quite significantly from those it calls up in someone else. But that should not bother anyone, because everybody is right. Supposedly, we must learn to read the Bible in such a way that we become aware of our own associations. By validating these associations we hear the Bible speak to us today. Its message becomes ours.

And don't ask whether it all really happened. Silly question. You don't wonder about that either when you read a classic novel. That is not the point. Do you really believe that Matthew wanted to tell us that Peter walked on water? Of course not. We must search for the deeper meaning of this tale by examining Matthew's motives for writing. Even better, we must get in touch with our own response to this story. As the essence of the story vibrates with our inmost self, we find something of great value. After all, let's be realistic. Matthew's intent is beyond our grasp, and even if we could reach it, it would only be his opinion. That would have some value, but no more than any other evaluation of his artistic writing.

Sure, the Bible has a message, but the meaning is indefinite. Everyone has to discover his own application.

You could try a different approach. You could make a very serious attempt to investigate Matthew's intent. You could even trace the origin of his ideas and the historical facts on which he based his fiction. Mind you, that is quite a job. You would need quite a few scholarly books for that. But you could do it. You'd probably discover that the majority of scholars agree on certain conclusions based on certain research. That could be pretty convincing. Should the majority vote not give us a decisive clue about the Bible's message for us? Still, there is room for nagging doubt. There were some assumptions in the scholarly discussions. The Bible clear? No.

Let us remain of sober mind. Away with assumptions and associations. God has given us His Word because He wants to tell us something that is of vital importance. God addresses us personally through Matthew and others. Certain events were “written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come” (1 Corinthians 10.11). It is contrary to the divine nature of the Word that we try to trace down a theology of Matthew or that we get in touch with our inner selves to determine the drift of text. It is irreverent to assume that the Bible does not tell us the facts.

Denying this truth will have repercussions, because the Bible deals with matters of life and death. God warns us not to make excuses about the clarity of His Word. "For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'who will go up to us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil." (Deuteronomy 30.11-15)

When the living God addresses us, the only proper response is to bow respectfully and to accept. There might be things left that we do not understand. The Ethiopian Eunuch wondered about whom Isaiah was prophesying. It only became clear to him after Philip told him about Christ. The apostle Peter readily admits that much in the letters of Paul is difficult to understand. Yet he immediately adds the warning that ignorant and unstable people use these difficulties to twist the Scriptures to their own destruction.

When the living God addresses us, we may not interrupt him with complaints about clarity. Would the Creator of language not be able to speak clearly? May our ears be opened that we know how to listen!

"Since it is forbidden to add or take away anything from the Word of God, it is evident that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects." Belgic Confession, Article 7.

"The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." Psalm 119.130
(Originally published in "Nederlands Dagblad". Translation Jane deGlint)

Don't Check Your Baggage!

By W.L. Bredenhof

So far in our discussions we've seen that Canada has a great need for the gospel. In the last presentation, we examined some of the practical things about bringing the gospel to our neighbours. Most importantly, I stressed the need for living close to the Word and being fervent in prayer. Any evangelism we do, whether on a personal level or in a project of some sort, all of it needs to be bathed in prayer. I want to go a step further with this presentation.

I don't know how many of you flew into Smithers for this Youth Conference. However, if you had planned on flying in and would have asked my advice before doing so, I may have advised you NOT to check your baggage. Ever since Air Canada has taken over the airline industry in Canada, there have been many problems with service in and out of Smithers. They seem to be improving, but still...it may be wise NOT to check your baggage. Why not? Because you might end up losing it as others have done. Your baggage is valuable and you wouldn't want to go without it, would you? You might have your camera in there, maybe other valuables. The point is, it's risky to check your baggage when you fly into Smithers.

This isn't just a lesson in what to do and what not to do when it comes to the airlines. No, I hope you can see the illustration I'm trying to bring across. The same thing can and often does happen in evangelism and mission. From my studies in the field of missiology (the study of missions), I have to tell you something rather sad: there is very little from a Reformed point of view. It's not that there are no missionaries from Reformed churches or no missiology professors with membership in Reformed churches. Rather, it's the case that these people have often checked their baggage and lost it. They brought their Reformed heritage to the missions counter and they haven't seen it since. Of course, it doesn't bother them very much since for many of them that baggage was too heavy anyway and not very valuable. But we do know the valuables that were in that baggage don't we? The Reformed faith encapsulates the faith of the Scriptures – it is the Biblical faith – it is the doctrine of the apostles. That's why the original Belgic Confession begins with the subtitle, "True Christian Confession Containing the Summary of the Doctrine of God and of the Eternal Salvation of Man."

I could come with various examples to back this up. There are many sad cases where men who were formerly Reformed, who were holding to the confessions, they became missionaries and for the sake of mission, turned their backs on the Reformed faith. In the bigger picture, the story of the World Council of Churches exemplifies this whole situation. The World Council is a very broad ecumenical organization that today has no Scriptural basis. Today it

contains countless churches that deny cardinal doctrines such as the literal resurrection of the Saviour. However, it didn't start out that way. It started out as a group of international churches, some Bible-believing and conservative, trying to work together in missions. They wanted to get the gospel of Christ out into the world on a larger scale. They found that for this mission cooperation to be effective, doctrines and confessions had to be tossed out the window. And so they were. For the sake of unity in evangelism and mission, doctrine was abandoned.

Are we in any less danger of this happening? Sadly, we have to say that we are not. There are so many opportunities for young people such as yourselves to be involved with short-term mission trips and evangelism projects. Maybe some of you have been involved in these sorts of things. However, unless the project is administered by a Reformed church or organization on the basis of the Reformed confessions, you'll most likely be asked to check your baggage. The emphasis is on lowest-common denominator Christianity. So they'll make a distinction between salvation issues and non-salvation issues. Infant baptism is not a salvation issue, so please don't bring it up or discuss it. Whether there are 7, 3 or 2 sacraments is not a salvation issue, so please don't talk about it. And while we're on the point, does it really matter for our salvation whether or not Christ literally ascended into heaven? After all, the Lutherans deny that He did.¹ Let's just stick to the Apostles' Creed (or something like it), they say. Anything other than that is not a salvation issue. And so it doesn't matter anymore which church you go to. When you evangelize, you just have to tell the people to find a faithful church somewhere or don't bring up church at all. Church is a footnote to evangelism and missions. It's nice to have, but not essential.

My young brothers and sisters, we have to put some question marks behind this way of thinking. If we are Reformed people who love the Reformed faith as the most Biblical expression of Christianity, then we have to speak the truth: this is not the right way to go in missions and evangelism. Checking your baggage is very dangerous, for there is the risk that you will lose some of even all of those valuables.

Ah, but someone will say, what about what Paul says in Philippians 1:15-18? Paul says there were different preachers of the gospel, but that it didn't bother him so long as Christ is preached. So long as that happens, Paul will rejoice. However, we should note that the difference between these preachers was not in their message. They preached Christ – which means they brought the apostolic message of peace through the blood of the cross. The difference was in the attitude and motivation with which the rivals preached the same message. One group had sincere and good motivations and the other had questionable motivations, doing it from selfish ambition. So this text does not really help us when we ask the question of whether or not we may check our Reformed baggage at the missions counter.

Likewise, we're not really helped with what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." In the first place, we can hardly imagine that Paul's mission preaching consisted of just those words "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," as if he had five word sermons. We know clearly from Acts that the apostolic preaching was considerably more detailed and even, dare we say it, doctrinal. The point in 1 Corinthians 2 is that Paul did not preach human philosophy – no, rather His message focused on Christ. The apostolic doctrine and preaching focus on Christ – and this is a line carried by our Reformed confessions as well – everything is focused upon Christ.

We find more help from the Spirit through Paul in the first letter to Timothy. You'll know from your Bible reading, I'm sure, that Paul's letters are filled with doctrinal instruction. It becomes clear that doctrine and life are inextricably connected. Paul also makes no distinction between salvation issues and non-salvation issues. That's why he says to Timothy in the first epistle, in 1:3, that Timothy should make sure that no other doctrine be taught other than the one Paul has passed down. Only the apostolic doctrine is to be taught by the Church. Why? Because, as Paul says in 3:15, the church of the living God is the pillar and foundation (or ground) of the truth. The church is where the truth is found and therefore in her witnessing to those outside, she must also hold out the truth as taught by the apostles. These truths are summarized in our Three Forms of Unity.

Paul goes on to say in 4:16, "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." Paul does not say to Timothy that he should cool it on the doctrine and just focus on the cross of Christ in his preaching to those within and without. Rather, the emphasis is on all the apostolic doctrine. In all his pastoral work (and that undoubtedly included evangelism²), Timothy was not to check the apostolic baggage. Rather, he was to proclaim it and let it determine how he was going to do his work. Shouldn't we run the same course in our evangelism? You see, the issue isn't whether or not our evangelism involves

¹ The background to QA 48 of the Heidelberg Catechism rests in this controversy.

² Cf. 2 Timothy 4:5.

doctrine – for all evangelism does – the issue is which doctrine are you going to bring? Which doctrine is going to determine how you do missions and evangelism? Is it going to be the apostolic teaching summarized in the Confessions or is it going to be a distorted minimum of the apostolic teaching?

There are so many texts I could mention in this regard, but I'd like to bring up just one more. It's that familiar one from the end of Matthew 28, the so-called Great Commission. People who are excited about missions and evangelism often refer to this text. However, they often make a great *omission* when it comes to the Great Commission. It's one little word in verse 20 and that one word has everything to do with what we're speaking of this afternoon. It's the word "all." "Teaching them to observe **all** things that I have commanded you..." You see, Paul was right in line with the Lord Jesus Christ in his instruction to Timothy. Paul was passing on what the apostles had learned from the Master.

Evangelism and mission does not involve a simple four-step message – you say those four steps and then your evangelism is done. Rather, Biblical evangelism brings the whole gospel to the whole person.³ Biblical evangelism involves discipleship, taking people under your wings and mentoring them in the truth. It is so much more than a five-minute message designed to produce an instant conversion. Study the book of Acts and see how the apostles so often reasoned with unbelievers and persuaded them. Read Peter's sermon in Acts 2 and Stephen's sermon in Acts 7. Remember further that the book of Acts does not present the entire story. Much more was said than what was written down. So when Paul and Silas say to the Philippian jailer in Acts 16, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household," these are not necessarily the only words which Paul and Silas spoke. It was a crisis situation and we must likewise take that into account – the jailer had just about killed himself. The situation can be a determining factor in how much you are going to say.

So I hope you've been convinced that we need to hold on to our Reformed character when it comes to evangelism and missions. What does this mean concretely though? How does this affect how we do evangelism and missions? I'd like to give you several suggestions. The first is that we never lose sight of God's sovereignty. There is a lot of unBiblical language and a lot of unScriptural evangelism literature out there. There is a lot of speaking about man's free will, a lot of watering down of the gospel message, a lot of distortion. The Reformed faith gives us the discernment to see this. Reformed believers confess and know that God is sovereign in man's salvation. Reformed believers are certain that the truths in our Canons of Dort are glorifying to God and faithful to Scripture. Reformed people need to have and use their own evangelism materials – for the Reformed faith is the Biblical faith. The message brought across in our evangelism should be consistent with that. So if we are involved with an evangelism project of some sort, I urge you to search out evangelistic literature written by reliable Reformed believers.⁴

Secondly, being Reformed believers means we recognize that the end never justifies the means. There are several examples in Scripture of believers making wrong alliances for what they thought was a good goal.⁵ These examples ultimately always led to disaster. We need right methods and right means. Why? Because Reformed believers submit wholeheartedly to the authority of Scripture. They turn to Scripture as the authority when they want to learn how to do evangelism and missions. Then we see that we can never take over a method or involve ourselves with an organization simply because it works and gets instant results. The results are not the standard by which to judge something when it comes to spiritual or moral issues. Principles are to be our standard and our principles are to come from the Word.

A third concrete application of what we've learned this afternoon is with respect to the church. As I mentioned before, there are a lot of opportunities out there for short-term mission trips and evangelism projects. Many of these projects have nothing or very little to do with a local church. They are not administered or under the supervision of a consistory. I take no pleasure in saying this, but it must be said: this completely contradicts Scripture. Evangelism and mission were given to the church through the apostles. The evangelistic endeavour was not given to parachurch organizations, to Campus Crusade for Christ, Youth With a Mission, or whatever other

³ Highly recommended for further study: *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People*, Will Metzger, Downers Grove: IVP, 1984.

⁴ For more information on Reformed evangelism literature, feel free to contact the author: Box 3868 Smithers BC, V0J 2N0 or wbredenhof@canrc.org.

⁵ One such example can be found in Judges 1:22-26.

organization you can think of. Our Lord Jesus gave the Great Commission to the apostles. The preaching of the gospel is one of the keys of the kingdom, keys that are given to the church by the Lord Jesus Christ.⁶ These other organizations are stealing or usurping this key which belongs to the church.

Concretely, I believe this means that we as Reformed believers should not check our baggage by getting involved with mission projects or evangelism projects that are not under the direct oversight of a Reformed church. We should work within the church on these sorts of projects and ask for the supervision of our consistories. If we do get involved with other organizations, more often than not, you're required to check your baggage and bring a lowest common denominator gospel. If someone brings up a question about baptism, you had best not mention the covenant and the baptism of infants. You should not appeal to someone on the basis of their baptism (if they're baptized) and the associated covenant promises and demands. Church administered projects will be under the Three Forms of Unity and should never run into a conflict on those sorts of issues. Such projects will follow the apostolic pattern and direct new converts to the pillar and foundation of the truth, to the local church.

There is plenty of room for evangelistic projects of various sorts within the local congregation. While a student at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, I was involved with something we called the Areopagus Project (after Acts 17). It was an outreach at the University. We had an information table set up once per week in a very high traffic location. Through that table we distributed tracts and Bibles and also made invitations to our Bible Study. It was an exciting project and we did our best to maintain a Reformed character with it. We invited people to church and were able to see at least one person join our churches in Edmonton as a result. Maybe something like this could work for you in your situation. If some individuals had the right amount of initiative and zeal, I'm sure something like this could work in a shopping mall just as well as at a university.

However, for most of us, the bulk of any evangelism we do will not be in a project of some sort. Most of our evangelism will be relational, focusing on friendships. There is nothing wrong with that at all, and I strongly encourage it. Speak with unbelievers you come into contact with. Ask them to come to Bible Study and church with you. There is no question that the best way to get to someone's heart is to develop a relationship. However, I would like to make one comment here before we conclude. Please do not ever get it into your head that you can evangelize an unbeliever in whom you have a romantic interest; that you can win them by developing a romantic relationship. Forget about it. I've been there and thought I could do it and failed. I was proud and thought I could do it but failed to realize I was lacking in maturity. Don't make such and such a boy or girl your evangelism project so that you justify your seeking love outside the bounds of Christ's church. The Scriptures never, ever encourage this. In fact, quite the opposite – they warn against it.

So, brothers and sisters, I thank you warmly for asking me to speak with you these last two days. I encourage you indeed to be bold and strong as we face Canaan today. My prayer is that the Lord will use you for Reformation and Revival in our land –so that His Name will be increasingly lifted up and honoured among all nations, that also Canada will be glorious once again.

Revised text of a speech given at the Bulkley Valley URC Youth Conference, May 18-19, 2001.

Social and Political Comment

⁶ Cf. also the Belgic Confession in Article 28, "...there is no salvation outside of it [the church]." This is the church that instructs and disciplines, with which believers unite and join – viz. the local church. Calvin writes in a similar vein in *Institutes* 4.1.4, "Furthermore, away from her bosom [that of the church] one cannot hope for any forgiveness of sins or any salvation, as Isaiah and Joel testify." This all serves to demonstrate that the administration of salvation normally belongs in close association with the local church.

In the editorial article *Unhappy Consequences* we pointed to some ecclesiastical matters that have gone awry in the Church. We stressed that when error occurs in doctrine it works its way out in practice. It will not come as unexpected revelation that the same can be found in society. And as is the case in the Church - that we may not keep silent in the face of doctrinal error – so we may not keep silent in society when politicians and other government officials seek to take us in an opposite direction than what we are taught by our God and Father.

The Vancouver Sun reported in its March 16, 2002 issue that couples of the same gender were pleased with the change in the adoption law in 1996. They focused on two men who recently completed the adoption of a 21-year-old man who they had been fostering for four years. Such action (legitimized by government) is in direct contravention of the Biblical institution of marriage and the injunction against homosexuality.

Denyse O'Leary recently wrote a book titled Faith@Science: Why Science Needs Faith in the 21st Century. In it she wonders why scientists who espouse the theory of evolution always need to maintain a defense fund. In addition "she also wonders if Christian couples might begin to set a better example, by re-examining their desire to have a child of their own at any cost. 'When their physicians use fertility drugs and in vitro fertilization, the chance of a multiple conception increases dramatically. Physicians often advise would-be parents to selectively reduce the number of living embryos by abortion to give the others a better chance at life.'" In a part of the book she describes a discussion she had with a Dr. Gilbert Meilaender, professor of Christian ethics at Valparaiso University in Indiana. They decry the fact that many people, including some Christians, think of children as their own personal project. They see a materialistic, consumer-centered attitude quite acceptable in 'the world' but sharply at odds with Christian faith. The consequences of wanting to be like God. The very thing that Eve already found so attractive in the Garden of Eden is very much alive in her very great grand children in society today. It can be called man-centeredness, humanism or egotism, but in the end it is disobedience and uprising toward the Supreme Being who made all things. It is the clay rising up against the potter. It is idolatry.

"A court in France ruled in December that a disabled child has a right not to be born. The so-called 'wrongful life' judgment meant that the child could sue a doctor for not having diagnosed a disability, with the result that the mother did not abort the child." (The Report, Feb. 18, 2002) At present a similar case is before the Supreme Court of Canada. They have not yet decided if they will deal with it. Once more we see the consequence of denying the Creator of life to decide when He will give life and when He will take it away. The sanctity of life has given way to the convenience of life.

If matters of this nature were not so serious and so diametrically opposed to Almighty God, one could perhaps be brought to the thought 'from the sublime to the ridiculous.' In the United States the Chief Justice in Massachusetts, Margaret Marshall, has declared, "Posthumously conceived children may not come into the world the way the majority of children do. But they are children nonetheless." She had to make this ruling in a case about inheritance for an artificially conceived child after the father's death. (Source: World, January 12, 2002)

The problems in the world multiply as the directives of the Creator are ignored and rebuked.

In The Report of February 18, 2002 Ted & Virginia Byfield noted that Archbishop Michael Peers, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada is surprised at the godless government in Canada. The archbishop recently pointed to the fact that mention of God was not permitted at the memorial service in Ottawa for victims of the September 11 terrorist attack. The same government edict was in force when the name of Jesus Christ was forbidden at the government-organized memorial service for victims of the Swissair crash.

In their article the Byfields correctly state, "The prohibiting of the word 'God' in the formulations of the federal government is not the first step in the secularization of the Canadian State: it's the last step. There have been 50 or more steps, all in the same direction. About these, so far as we can recall, he said nothing whatever. Only now that the transition is complete does he suddenly speak up. It's baffling." Such is the consequence of not speaking out until it is too late.

Recently efforts have been made to revitalize activity among Church members in political and social matters. George Gunnink, newly elected President of the Surrey/Cloverdale ARPA, wrote the following as part of an article in *Information* of March 17, 2002.

“Is there a need for an organization dedicated to addressing political issues from a Christian perspective? What should such an organization’s goals be and how might they be accomplished? These were among the questions answered by a motivated and committed group that met for an ARPA kick-off meeting on Friday, February 1, 2002. At this meeting we were addressed briefly by Rev. C. Van Spronsen who reminded us of our duty with respect to government. Directing us to a familiar phrase used in Lord’s Day 36, dealing with the third commandment, he urged us not to be silent bystanders as our nation and its governments fall further and further from God. By remaining silent we may be participating in their blasphemy or refusing to recognize Him. The Reverend then pointed us to various Biblical examples of people who could not remain silent, but felt compelled to witness to our God when confronted by the authorities (Daniel, John the Baptist, and Jesus). Undoubtedly we have as many opportunities to witness, especially in this democratic nation, where citizens are encouraged to make their voice heard. We too should feel compelled to respond to our authorities’ lack of recognition of His Name.”

Since the meeting referred to in the quote from br. Gunnink the Surrey/Cloverdale ARPA has had another meeting in which they dealt with the Robert Latimer case. In this case the father has been convicted of killing his handicapped daughter. In reviewing the case and the subsequent desire to ask for mercy from the highest point of appeal, the meeting noted a number of alarming consequences to the failure to deal justly (Biblically) with crime.

Now that Peter Veenendaal is making his second tour around Canada as National Coordinator for the Reformed Political Research Center encouraging the formation of ARPA’s, let us consider how we too might become a witness. Associations for Reformed Political Activity are not only for eloquent speakers, but also for willing organizers, typists, distributors of pamphlets, etc. This is our Father’s world. We may (and therefore we must) work in it, to the praise and glory of His Name.

PdB

Letter to the Editor

I have read PdB’s *Editorial Opinions Regarding the Acts of General Synod – Neerlandia 2001*. I was one of the church members who was surprised that the decision with regard to Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the OPC was unanimous. With growing astonishment I read his apology about his position as delegate to General Synod over against his editorial position in Reformed Polemics. His referring to proposed amendments like they are printed in the Acts does not prove the legitimacy of his voting in favour of EF. The differences like they have existed for years, are still not solved. The matter of being “grateful with the statement that neither the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) nor the OPC condones pluriformity of the Church” should almost make me laugh if it was not so saddening. The same about referring to Rev. Williamson’s speech in which he finds himself “giving thanks to God for the Westminster Confession because it reminds me that in the churches as we actually find them here during our earthly pilgrimage, some more pure and some less pure – and none are perfect.” I from my side will refer to you to the speech of Rev. Peterson to General Synod (GS) 1995, Acts, page 96 – 97, and the same to GS 1998, Acts, page 208. That minister is defending the fact that people, who deny the covenantal sign and seal for their children are, nevertheless, heartily welcome in the OPC and at the Lord’s Supper table.

In spite of all this, GS 2001 said (and also PdB), “We are engaged for 24 years already, although we were not able to solve the differences, let’s get married. Do you want more about the pluriformity “that is not condoned” in the CanRC and OPC? See the Acts on page 199 about the RCUS with regard to the doctrine of the Church: “Within the multiformity of the visible church there is true uniformity, and that multiformity does not per se obscure the unity of Christ’s church. The URC uses language of the Westminster Confession too much. The Westminster Standards and the writings of certain theologians has brought about the RCUS’ more philosophical approach to the church, notably

separating the church into an invisible and a visible church. ... some of the dangers inherent in the idea of pluriformity of the church of Christ. One of the most obvious dangers is that there is no church consciousness, which results in little commitment to church.”

Other concerns can be found on page 61 regarding ‘the matter of Sunday observance’; page 62 regarding ‘not being familiarized with the plain language of the Belgic Confession re the doctrine of the church’; and ‘concern about admission of guests to the Lord’s Supper table.’ Nevertheless on page 63 we can read, “Despite the fact that the RCUS has not a universal policy on the matter of the Lord’s Supper (page 201); that there is diversity about Sunday observance; that the speaking about the church is not in harmony with the language of the Three Forms of Unity (page 63), Synod decided that “all these matters are resolved and discussed.” (page 63-64). Synod unanimously adopted the proposal to enter into EF with the RCUS.

Pluriformity not condoned? Was the lesson about the 24 years of contact not enough? Seeking for reasons to vote in favour if there is so much evidence that there are still very serious differences with the OPC may not be a reason at all to vote in favour of all proposals for EF. If pluriformity is not condoned, like Synod Neerlandia stated, then such things will definitely promote it.

Everybody can make mistakes, but not everybody is able to acknowledge that a mistake has been made. That is not good, but it is totally wrong to try to excuse yourself for mistakes made at GS. Voting in favour of EF because “one must deal with the reality that such relationships have already been established and that the discussion with the OPC has a long history and has already developed to a certain stage” makes one wonder what we can expect from Reformed Polemics from now on. Is PdB going to bargain away the principles which were always so clearly defended because he is not a delegate anymore but editor again? Why is abstaining from voting not considered? That is what we did in the Netherlands before the GPV was established.

We hope and pray that the editorial staff my take and hold a firm Scriptural stand.

With brotherly greetings

W. de Haan.
Dunnville, ON

CHURCH NEWS

NEWS FROM CHURCHES IN ECCLESIASTICAL FELLOWSHIP

Invitation from the Free Reformed Youth of Australia,

During the past months, the main committee of Tassie 2003 have been working hard to lay the foundations of the Convention. While much of the details are yet to be thrashed out, we are now at a stage where we are able to provide you with information relating to dates, cost, attendance and other details regarding Tassie 2003.

Tassie 2003 will be held in and around Launceston, Tasmania. Tasmania is an island state just south of the East Coast of mainland Australia. The Lord willing from the 6th to the 11th of January 2003. All Free Reformed youth of Australia and youth of their sister churches, aged 17 and over (as of January 1, 2003) are invited to attend. During the Convention we hope to combine Bible study, workshops and presentations from guest speakers, with entertainment and social activities, all the while enjoying the Communion of Saints.

In a few months we hope to be able to provide you with a precise cost for attending Tassie 2003; however, we can give you an approximate cost at this stage of about \$200 per person. This cost will cover three night's accommodation, all meals, entertainment and social activities, a registration evening and much more. We will be taking firm bookings for Tassie 2003 as of the 1st of August, but we will advise you of how booking's can be made, in a future press release.

Our new web site is now on-line and is located at <http://www.spacetowns.com/tassi2003>. Soon the site will contain a page with links relating to travel and accommodation. The links will include major airlines that travel to Tasmania, Tasmanian tourist sites, and other useful sites with information to help you with your planning.

If anyone has queries regarding accommodation in Tasmania out side of Tassie2003 Youth Convention, please feel free to contact us and we will be more than willing to help you. Any general queries relating to the Convention or anything else are also welcome. So please do not hesitate to contact us.

We ask for your prayerful support in the work ahead of us.

Yours in Christ

Renske Veltkamp, Public Relations Committee

From Nederlands Dagblad we provide the following news items as they pertain to the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

"Days of Creation not necessarily chronological"

From our church news editor.

KAMPEN - According to (Liberated) Reformed minister J.J.T.Doedes (age 33) the days of creation from Genesis 1, do not necessarily have to be understood in a chronological order. He finds room for the idea that God's creation describes the first chapter of the Bible "in the form of an Israelite workweek".

That's what the minister in Vlissingen, the Netherlands, writes about the authority of the Bible in a new book which includes contributions from other (Liberated) Reformed theologians. In addition to Doedens, Prof Dr. B Kamphuis, Prof Dr. C Trimp and drs. A. L. Th. De Bruijne (drs. indicates a Bachelor's degree) have also contributed to this new publication. The book was published under the title, "Word or Scripture." On behalf of the authors, Trimp writes in the introduction that they want to be "a stimulant for the reformed scientific study of the Bible, and to be of service toward a healthy explanation of the Bible".

Doedens describes how, in the reformed theology, the debate on Genesis 1 is pretty well stuck on the rocks. For many scientists and students, practically speaking, this means a division between faith and science as in, "When I have faith there is no science and when I practice science I have no faith. This is not only a shame, but also comes with a great risk". According to Doedens it is high time to pull the discussion on Genesis 1 off the rocks and set it afloat again.

Traditionally reformed people defend a literal – chronological understanding of Genesis 1. In most cases, according to Doedens, that position is a literal explanation in name only. The meaning of the text is massaged/molded in such a way as to make it appear to include credible scientific insights. In reality the text is forced to fit within scientific insights.

In his opinion it is not just the modern science of nature that asks for another exegesis of Genesis 1. The reason for a non-chronological explanation of the chapter is primarily found in the text itself. Similar to the writing of all of history, Doedens continues, the history described in Genesis 1 is about something that happened in the past and to which we, in a physical sense, no longer have access. At the same time the story about creation has something unique: it is about a

reality that still exists today, a reality that can still be checked today and which science can still probe today with its own methods.

Referring to the reformed theologian K. Schilder, Doedens states that scientific insights can be a reason to question a well-accepted explanation of the Bible. The big question has always been what image the Bible reader has of the first three days of creation, considering there is mention of a morning and an evening while solar structures were not created until day four. "All aspects of creation are so finely in tune with one another that it appears that, for the clarity of those who lived then, in Genesis 1 the 'days' are meant as a classification rather than a literal report of what happened".

The structure of the text can be important for the exegesis. Doedens notes that Genesis 1 has an appearance of its own: maybe it is not poetic, yet it is more than story-telling prose. "Within this chapter it is significant that certain sentence structures are repeated, as if it were a refrain".

Doedens is of the opinion that the days of creation have a certain order, following logic and theme. Is this still in line with Ex. 20:11 and 31:17 in which texts it is repeated that God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh day? Doedens thinks it is. "Genesis 1 relates that God's work of creation is finished and that He is faithful to that work. That means that you don't have to be afraid of frightening 'impossibilities' of all kinds that still might be coming our way. Therefore, as a human being, you are also allowed to stop working for a day. Result does not only depend on our labour. God's faithfulness (Genesis 1) demands man's trust (that is shown in the Sabbath). That is what the texts from Exodus keep telling us".

KAMPEN - "Well intended, wrongly presented and therefore -unfortunately- not effective"

That's how Prof. dr. C. Trimp, in the periodical 'Nader Bekeken', judges Prof. dr. J. Douma's proposal to the General Synod of the (Liberated) Reformed churches to proclaim a confession of guilt about the business at synod in 1967. Synod Amersfoort-West 1967 decided not to accept the credentials of one of the delegates, Rev. B.J.F.Schoep. The break between Schoep and synod also led to a fracture with the churches (in Noord Holland) who sent him to synod and more churches later on. Synod Hoogeveen 1969 reaffirmed the direction of 'Amersfoort-West'. Those churches, outside the federation, subsequently formed the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken

Taken From Nederlands Dagblad, March 23, 2002 and translated by Jack VanderVeen.