

ACT OF SECESSION AND RETURN

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, as members of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford, B.C., Canada, have observed for a considerable period of time the increasing corruption within the Canadian Reformed Churches. This corruption resulted from general synods' establishment of relationships of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK), the Free Church of Scotland (FCS), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), and the United Reformed Churches of North America (URC). This was explained in letters to our fellow members dated January 19, 2007 and July 17, 2007, and can be summarized as follows (for a listing of general synod decisions regarding ecclesiastical relationships see the Appendix):

FEDERATIVE CORRUPTION

- a) In the preaching – by an implicit acceptance of the doctrine of the pluriformity of the church, which has its roots in the concept of the “more or less pure church” as explained in Chapter 25:4 of the Westminster Confession of Faith. The permission of pulpit exchange with ministers who hold to this and similar confessions, without resolution of this and other confessional divergencies, make legitimate the preaching of unscriptural doctrine in the Canadian Reformed Churches, contrary to the Subscription Form.
- b) In the administration of the sacraments – by the admission of people to the Lord's Supper, of whom it cannot be known whether they profess the Reformed faith. The acceptance of attestations from churches who do not require adherence to their confessional standards, and whose confessional standards diverge from those of the Canadian Reformed Churches, give evidence to an unscriptural unity, and therefore corrupts the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ has instituted them.
- c) In the exercise of church discipline – by the admission to the Lord's Supper of people about whom the proper information regarding their doctrine and life has not been determined. This is in conflict with Scripture and the confession, and Article 61 of the Church Order. In this way the work of the consistories in maintaining order and discipline in the church is undermined.
- d) In the government of the church – by the failure of the general synods to maintain the requirement for confessional membership as indicated in the first question of the Form for the Public Profession of Faith. In this way the scriptural unity of faith, that is essential to the pure administration of the Lord's Supper, is not maintained.
- e) In the integrity of the process of appeal under Article 31 of the Church Order – by the failure of the general synods to properly consider the scriptural, confessional and church orderly basis for numerous appeals which have been submitted to them by churches and church members. Although the full ecclesiastical way under Article 31 of the Church Order has been followed, decisions have been made and maintained, as described above, which have been proven to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.

LOCAL CORRUPTION

- a) In its acceptance of the general synod decisions which fostered the above federative corruption as settled and binding – the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford has now made itself responsible for all of the corruption referred to above. This consistory's appeal to General Synod 2004 on the basis of its commitment to uphold

Scripture, the confessions and the Church Order is not maintained, despite the fact that the original concerns in this appeal were not properly addressed by General Synod 2004.

- b) In the response to letters concerning these matters from members of the congregation – the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford has consistently refused to interact with the scriptural, confessional and church orderly material it had received, even though the consistory itself had used this very same material to support its appeal to General Synod 2004. As described in Appendix A of the letter calling the secession dated July 17, 2007, concerned members had repeatedly and persistently addressed consistory regarding these matters, but to no avail.
- c) In the implementation of pulpit exchange with ministers from the above mentioned churches – of whom it has not been ascertained that their preaching is fully in accordance with the confessions of the church.
- d) In the admission of guests to the Lord's Supper – of whom it can not be verified that these guests confess the Reformed faith in accordance with Article 61 of the Church Order. If the guest were to provide an attestation, this attestation would give no assurance that the guest actually professes the Reformed faith in accordance with the confessions of the church.
- e) In the consistory's withdrawal of appointment as elder of a lawfully elected brother – without a charge of delinquency in doctrine or life. He was prevented from serving in office because of his inability, on the basis of Article 31 of the Church Order, to accept the binding of his conscience to these unscriptural general synod decisions.
- f) In the issue of a public letter supporting the above unscriptural decisions – which included a public call to repent to those who were faithfully testifying against these unscriptural general synod decisions. This public call was issued in conflict with Article 66 of the Church Order.
- g) In the consistory's withholding of a brother from the Lord's Supper – for faithfully testifying against these unscriptural general synod decisions and supporting those who made a similar stand against these general synod decisions. Although consistory placed only one brother under church discipline, it threatened all those who were involved in this faithful testimony with church discipline.

THEREFORE, in consideration of the fact that the above corruption concerns the marks of the true church as described in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession, and that Article 28 of the Belgic Confession indicates that *"it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate from those who do not belong to the church,"* and, in accordance with Article 32 of the Belgic Confession, *"We believe that, although it is useful and good for those who govern the church to establish a certain order to maintain the body of the church, they must at all times watch that they do not deviate from what Christ, our only Master, has commanded. Therefore we reject all human inventions and laws introduced into the worship of God which bind and compel the consciences in any way. We accept only what is proper to preserve and promote harmony and unity and to keep all in obedience to God. To that end, discipline and excommunication ought to be exercised in agreement with the Word of God."*

AND, in consideration of the fact that we are called to *"contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints"* (Jude 3), *"holding on to faith and a good conscience"* (1 Timothy 1:19a) and that we cannot consider *"settled and binding"* matters that are *"proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order"* (Article 7 of the Belgic Confession, Article 31, C.O.),

AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR PROFESSION OF FAITH, WE DECLARE THAT

- a) Submission to the above ecclesiastical decisions of the Canadian Reformed Churches brings us into conflict with what God teaches us in His Word concerning the basis of the unity of the church (Psalm 119:63, John 4:24, John 17:17, Acts 4:32a, Ephesians 4:4,5), and as we confess it in Articles 27, 28 and 29 of the Belgic Confession and Lord's Day 21, Q.&A. 54 of the Heidelberg Catechism.
- b) Submission to the above ecclesiastical decisions of the Canadian Reformed Churches brings us into conflict with what God teaches us in His Word concerning the admission to the Lord's Supper (2 Chronicles 30:18-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:17-20, 26-32,) and as we confess it in Lord's Days 30 and 31 of the Heidelberg Catechism.
- c) Submission to the above ecclesiastical decisions of the Canadian Reformed Churches brings us into conflict with what God teaches us in His Word concerning the use of church discipline (Joshua 7:10-15; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13; 2 Corinthians 13:1, 5; 2 Thess. 3:14-15) and as we confess it in Lord's Day 31, Q.&A. 85 of the Heidelberg Catechism.
- d) Submission to the above ecclesiastical decisions of the Canadian Reformed Churches brings us into conflict with what the churches have agreed to concerning the order of the Church (Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:8-9; 16:19; 18:15-18; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 14:33a; Galatians 5:1; 1 Timothy 3:15; Article 32 of the Belgic Confession and Articles 31, 61, 66, and 76 of the Church Order).

AND WE ALSO DECLARE THAT we wish to exercise fellowship with all true Reformed believers and that we wish to unite with every assembly that is founded on God's infallible Word at whatever place God has brought them together. We testify with these that we maintain the Three Forms of Unity, that is, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. Our public worship services will conform to the time-honoured liturgy of the Church as regards worship and church government by upholding the Church Order of Dort. We do this in the prayer that by casting off the yoke of the above mentioned synodical and consistory decisions it may be possible for us together to exercise the full restored communion of Word and sacraments in the fear of the Lord. We urge you most earnestly for the sake of the Lord, the holiness of His house, and the gathering of His sheep, to respond to this testimony. We beseech our heavenly Father to give you the wisdom and faith to come back from the wrong way so that the broken unity between us may be restored.

MADE EFFECTIVE IN ABBOTSFORD ON DECEMBER 9, 2007

<original document signed by communicant members of the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford>

APPENDIX - GENERAL SYNOD DECISIONS REGARDING ECCLESIASTICAL RELATIONSHIPS

The following *Acts* of General Synods have established and maintained relationships of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF), in conflict with the following consideration of Synod 1965: "*Correspondence with Churches abroad should not be entered into, until upon a conscientious and serious investigation, it has become apparent that these Churches not only officially embrace the Reformed confession and church polity but also in fact maintain them.*" (Article 141, II). This consideration has never been appealed nor has it been officially set aside by any subsequent general synod.

<u>Name of church</u>	<u>Year EF established</u>	<u>Years EF maintained on appeal</u>
Presbyterian Church of Korea	Synod 1992 (Article 111)	Synod 1995 (Article 106) Synod 1998 (Article 108)
Free Church of Scotland	Synod 1992 (Article 128)	Synod 1995 (Article 106) Synod 1998 (Article 119)
Orthodox Presbyterian Church	Synod 2001 (Article 45)	Synod 2004 (Article 86) Synod 2007 (Articles 55 and 83)*
Reformed Church in the United States	Synod 2001 (Article 59)	Not appealed - however the same principles apply
United Reformed Church	Synod 2001 (Article 73)	Synod 2004 (Articles 96 and 97)
Reformed Church of New Zealand	Synod 2007 (Article 66)*	
l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec	Synod 2007 (Article 75)*	

At the root of the above decisions lies the decision of Synod 1977 (Article 91) to declare the Orthodox Presbyterian Church a "*true church.*" No general synod since 1977 has adequately dealt with appeals against this decision. Appeals were brought against this decision to Synod 1980 (Articles 97 and 152), Synod 1983 (Article 55), Synod 1986 (Articles 126,128,132,136 and 137), Synod 1989 (Articles 94 and 143), Synod 1992 (Article 72), Synod 1995 (Articles 106 and 121) and Synod 1998 (Article 130).

At the same time no general synod since 1986 has taken account of the decision of Classis Ontario South in March 1987 (further elaborated on in December 1987), "*that Rev. B.R. Hofford c.s. brought their complaint concerning the fencing of the Lord's Supper to the 50th General Assembly of the OPC. They were unjustifiably denied their complaint; and therefore the Tri-County Reformed Church has rightfully separated herself from the OPC.*"

In addition Synod 2007 (Article 143)* has rejected as "schism," the liberation from unscriptural decisions that resulted in the formation of a new federation of churches in The Netherlands in 2003 (the Gereformeerde Kerken Hersteld). It came to this decision without interacting with the Acts of Synod of these new churches, even though it had received and declared them admissible.

* Please note that no correspondence had been submitted regarding decisions of Synod 2007. References to decisions made by Synod 2007 are provided for information purposes only.