

# *Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford*

C/O 1595 Fadden Road, Abbotsford, B.C., V3G 1T9

February 25, 2016

General Synod Dunnville 2016  
of the Canadian Reformed Churches  
C/O Canadian Reformed Church at Dunnville  
P.O. Box 51  
Dunnville, Ontario  
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Esteemed delegates:

## **Re: Appeal of Article 62 of the Acts of General Synod Carman West 2013**

We hereby appeal Article 62 of the Acts of General Synod Carman West 2013, on the basis that this Article does not consider decisions of previous General Synods and conflicts with the Word of God and the Church Order, as follows:

### **Observations**

1. Article 62 of the Acts of General Synod Carman West 2013 declared our letter inadmissible.
2. The reason given for this declaration is found in "Observations re: Admissibility 2.2" as follows: *"The churches of the Canadian Reformed federation set the agenda for general synod. No church has asked us to address this issue. Synod also accepts correspondence received from churches with which we are in Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The letter from the LRCA does not fulfil either criterion."*

### **Considerations**

- 1) The assertion that it is only the churches that set the agenda of a general synod is contrary to the Church Order. Article 31 specifies who has the right of appeal when it states that *"If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right of appeal to the major assembly; 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."* Anyone whose life has been touched by a decision of an ecclesiastical assembly, in a federation which governs itself by this Article, *"shall have the right of appeal to the major assembly...."*

- 2) Article 30 of the Church Order contains the following provisions: *“Those assemblies shall deal with no other than ecclesiastical matters and that in an ecclesiastical manner. A major assembly shall deal with those matters only which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to the churches in common.”*
- 3) When in its Observations re Admissibility 2.1 Synod 2013 refers to the fact that *“The LRCA addresses Synod Carman 2013 out of a deep concern over ‘the deformation and apostasy that is growing in the Canadian Reformed Churches’ which is rooted in the decisions of general synod dealing with inter-church relations”* this can reasonably be construed as an appeal against these same general synod decisions in accordance with Article 31 of the Church Order. This observation goes on to describe the content of this appeal by stating that *“The LRCA conveys its ‘urgent call to reform the church and to return to its confessional basis as summarized in The Three Forms of Unity.’”*
- 4) As indicated by General Synod 1965 (Acts, Article 141, II) *“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.”*
- 5) Starting at General Synod 1980, after the decision of General Synod 1977 to declare the OPC a true church before resolution of the outstanding divergencies, numerous appeals have been sent to general synods regarding relationships with churches which do not maintain the reformed confession. All such appeals have been denied without interacting with the above consideration of Synod 1965.
- 6) In consideration B.3 of Article 130 General Synod 1998 admits that there was a shift between the 1965 consideration referred to in (4) above and the Synod 1995 comment that resolution of the divergent practices *“cannot in the end be made a condition for Ecclesiastical Fellowship”* (Acts, Synod 1995, Article 106.B.3). In consideration B.4.c of this same Article Synod considered, *“It should be understood that there is no doubt that the divergencies need to be discussed on an ongoing basis. But it should then also be realized that they can be discussed within a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship.”* It is clear from these considerations that Synod incorrectly saw the goal of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC to be of greater importance than the maintaining of the Reformed confessions as articulated by Synod 1965. With these considerations Synod 1998 admits that the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches has shifted away from its confessional basis.

- 7) When General Synods 1992 and 2001 entered into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCS, the PCK, the OPC, the RCUS, and the URCNA, the above consideration of Synod 1965 referred to in (4) above was overturned. When appeals relating to the above decisions were denied the general synods confirmed the implementation of these unscriptural decisions. When the consistories accepted and implemented these general synod decisions they no longer acted on the basis of the authority given by Christ. Instead the integrity of the preaching of the Word was undermined by the opening of the pulpit to those who have not subscribed to the Three Forms of Unity and who maintain unscriptural doctrines of the covenant and the church. At the same time the unity of faith that is required for the celebration of the Lord's Supper has been undermined by the admission of those who have not confessed the Reformed faith.
- 8) Article 50 of the Church Order reads, "*The relation with churches abroad shall be regulated by general synod. With foreign churches of reformed confession a sister church relationship shall be maintained as much as possible. On minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice churches abroad shall not be rejected.*" However General Synod 1992 (Acts, Article 50) replaced the existing rules for sister church relationship with rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship which proved themselves to be less restrictive. As we read from the Acts of General Synod 2001, Article 45, Consideration 4.17 (the decision entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC), "*The rules for ecclesiastical fellowship as adopted by the CanRC are not essentially different from those adopted by the OPC. The Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship do not presuppose complete unanimity on all points of confession and church polity.*"
- 9) Concerning Article 50 of the Church Order, Rev. W.W.J. VanOene writes, "*As unity of faith is the basis of the federation within our own country, so the unity of faith must be the basis for the unity of faith for the sister church relationship in another country. This does not mean that their 'Reformed Confession' must have been worded in exactly the same terms the Canadian Reformed Churches are using in their confessional formulas, but it does mean that the basic contents must be the same: a summary of the doctrine of the Old and New Testament. It should need no elaboration that these foreign churches not only must have the Reformed confession but also must uphold it and be faithful to it so that it is the rule for their doctrine and ecclesiastical conduct. Their merely having the Reformed confession is not a reason for allowing us to establish a sister church relationship; there must also be proof that they honour and maintain it in practice*" (With Common Consent, page 237). With respect to "minor points" Rev. VanOene writes, "*These 'minor points' are matters which have not been expressly revealed or provided in God's holy Word or which cannot with absolute certainty be deduced from God's Word*" (With Common Consent, page 243). Based on the above it should be self-evident that if the churches have taken the trouble to summarize

the doctrine of the Old and New Testament in the confessions of the church, it makes no sense to speak of “minor points’ or a lack of “complete unanimity” in the church’s confessions.

- 10) Concerning subscription to the confession, Rev. W.W.J. VanOene writes, *“The federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches is not a federation of convenience but a federation based on the unity of faith. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that the unity of faith be preserved and protected, for if this unity is no longer there, the very nature of the federation has been violated and total collapse is the final result, even though an outward show of unity is maintained.”* He continues, *“True unity is possible only when the churches can be assured of each other that the true doctrine of the Scriptures is believed and adhered to, and that heresies in every form are recognized and rejected. History, too, has taught us that wherever deviating views are tolerated dissolution begins almost immediately”* (With Common Consent, page 118).
- 11) Concerning the admission to the Lord’s Supper, Revs. Van Dellen and Monsma write, *“It should be plain however that a Church, if its members are admitted without confessing the Reformed fundamentals, cannot remain Reformed. After all the individual members, and not the clergy and the eldership, constitute the Church. And the confessional standards of a church can only be Forms of Unity when the membership confesses those standards. If the members of a Church do not confess its standards to be Biblical the Church loses its power and also its **raison d’être**. A Church which does not require of its members that they agree with its doctrinal tenets opens the doors to those who advocate false doctrines; heresy is bound to enter in, and eventually modernism may even predominate”* (The Church Order Commentary, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, page 251).
- 12) When the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford decided to no longer maintain the confessional position that it had adopted when it sent its Appeal to General Synod 2004, but decided to accept as settled and binding decisions it had previously judged to be contrary to the Word of God and the Church Order, the full ecclesiastical way had been taken. As stated by Prof. K. Deddens and Rev. G. VanRongen, *“After one has gone the full “ecclesiastical way” ... one has to either accept the latest decision as yet – which does not create any insurmountable difficulties whenever it is not a matter of conscience – or he has to “liberate” himself from the binding decision”* (see their book Decently and in Good Order, page 63).
- 13) In his article *“Concerning the Government of Christ’s Church,”* found in Bound Yet Free, edited by Prof. J. deJong, Prof. C. Veenhof envisioned the possibility that the local consistory was unwilling to set itself free from unscriptural decisions. He writes, *“In such cases, the faithful consistory*

members had to do all they could to convince the unwilling consistory to take the step. If they did not succeed, they had to take action against the unwilling consistory. In this way, the faithful consistory **members** became the **true, legitimate** consistory of the local church. The unfaithful consistory became a revolutionary counter-consistory. The faithful consistory (or perhaps the three, two or one faithful consistory members) summoned the congregation and thus brought about reformation. With the congregation, it separated itself from the revolutionary, un-ecclesiastical administrative organization, and the church thus liberated was and remained the old, free, and independent church at that place" (page 166). When it became clear that the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford had accepted the above unscriptural general synod decisions and was unwilling to liberate itself from them, the former office bearers in the church, who had participated in the original appeal to General Synod 2004, had to provide leadership to the rest of the congregation. After they had done all they could, and when it became clear that the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford would not heed their Scriptural admonitions, these former office bearers, together with the faithful remnant of the congregation, were duty bound to liberate and remain the true church in Abbotsford.

- 14) It should therefore be evident from the above background that the LRCA brought to Synod 2013 an ecclesiastical matter which belongs to the churches in common, in accordance with Article 30 of the Church Order. At the same time this ecclesiastical matter represents an appeal in accordance with Article 31 of the Church Order against decisions of previous general synods dealing with inter-church relations.
- 15) Concerning the question of admissibility Prof. K. Deddens wrote, "*Now the question is, is an appeal to a broader assembly inadmissible when it comes from someone who is not personally wronged? Not really! If there is injury, injustice, wrong in the church, everybody must have the right of appeal with regard to that evil. Why? Because injustice must be taken away, as soon as possible. Imagine that the person who is wronged by a minor assembly will become seriously ill after the decision. Imagine that he passes away before he can do anything. Or imagine that he was so upset that he withdrew from the church. Of course such action would be wrong. But the question is, what about that wrong decision? Is then injustice to remain because there is no possibility of appeal? May nobody else appeal? Is everything then blocked and will the injury be maintained? Here we have a ground which shows the need for an open Bible when we read our Church Order. The Bible says, 'How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Give justice to the weak and the fatherless, maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute' (Psalm 83:2,3). The late Prof. Dr. S. Greijdanus quoted this text in connection with the bad decisions of the General Synod of 1944 in the Netherlands" (see Fulfil Your Ministry, page 182).*

- 16) Prof. Deddens then continues, quoting Prof. H. Bouwman, by saying, "*The legal ground upon which an appeal can be based, is broader than the case that someone is personally wronged. This legal ground is also there when someone is of the opinion that a decision made by the consistory is in conflict with the Word of God and dangerous for the congregation. It is in the nature of the case that there must be the possibility to receive justice in a higher instance*" (Idem, page 183).
- 17) This principle was followed by General Synod 1986 when this Synod dealt with appeals sent by individuals that were not members of the CanRC or a sister church. Articles 186 and 187 of General Synod Burlington 1986 claimed that the brothers who withdrew from the church were "*technically outside the jurisdiction of this General Synod*" but do not explain how this is a disruption of the way of appeal. Despite this claim both of the above Articles stated that, "*Nevertheless, since he withdrew owing to difficulties directly related to the issues of the appeal, General Synod declares this appeal admissible in the hope that it may help in reconciling brother X with the consistory ....*"
- 18) This principle was also followed by General Synod 1989 when this Synod dealt with an appeal from the Orthodox Reformed Church at Edmonton. In deciding to declare this appeal admissible Synod considered that, "*Response to the appeal of the Orthodox Reformed Church at Edmonton is desirable in order to make clear whether all things were done in accordance with the Word of God and the accepted Church Order in view of allegations of being judged: 'rashly and unheard'*" (see Acts, Article 48, B.4).

## Requests

On the basis of the above Considerations we hereby request that General Synod:

- 1) determine that General Synod Carman West 2013 had erred by inappropriately declaring our letter inadmissible;
- 2) admit our letter dated February 28, 2013 (attached as an Appendix to this letter) to which can be added the above considerations; and
- 3) respond to the request contained in our February 28, 2013 letter "*to return to obedience to God's Word, to the confessional basis as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity,*" and "*to restore the unity which was broken ....*"

We would appreciate your written response to the above considerations and requests. In the event that you do not agree with any of the above

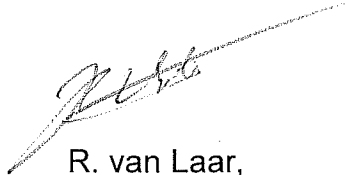
considerations and requests, we would appreciate receiving a detailed response based on Scripture, Confession and Church Order.

We sincerely hope and pray that these very serious concerns will be resolved to the benefit of His Church. We wish you all the Lord's blessing upon your deliberations.

Yours in His service,



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