

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT TO SYNOD CARMAN 2013 SUBCOMMITTEE FOR RELATIONS WITH THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

Subsequent to the Report of the Subcommittee for Relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands for Synod 2013, the committee received a letter from the deputies Betrekkingen Buitenlandse Kerken (BBK) of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) dated Dec. 6, 2012 related to this report, along with a letter they intend to send to Synod Carman 2013 attached (Appendix I). We sent a reply to this letter as well as their letter to Synod dated Jan. 21, 2013 (Appendix II).

In addition, we as yet wish to react to a letter sent to the subcommittee March 26, 2012 on behalf of the “Raad van Toezicht” and the “College van Bestuur” of the Theological University of Kampen (TUK) in response to our March 9, 2011 letter expressing concerns about the interpretation of Scripture at the TUK (Appendix III). Our April 19, 2012 meeting with representatives of the TUK in Zwolle, the Netherlands, took place subsequent to this letter and most of the points in it were discussed at that meeting. What we report below is actually in response to the letter and the Zwolle meeting.

Finally, we wish to address Synod 2013 about the appropriateness of a letter addressed by deputies BBK directly to a Synod of a sister church.

I. BBK Dec. 6th, 2012 Letter (appendix I)

This letter and attachment addressed to Synod Carman were sent in reaction to our final report to Synod Carman as published for the churches. This letter expresses alarm at the evaluations and conclusions of our report. The BBK proposes that if our “ ‘disquiet’ about the ‘growing sense of estrangement between CanRC and the RCN’ (p. 18) is real, then our relationship is coming under such severe pressure that such a relationship as we now have it is gravely threatened.” The RCN have not understood how serious the concerns of Synod Burlington 2010 were, and we are thankful that they have now drawn the conclusion from our report that the CanRC do view the developments in the RCN with much concern.

The basic criticism of our report to Synod and the report of the CanRC delegates to Synod Harderwijk 2011 (published in Clarion) is the critical language used and the bad publicity this brings on the RCN among other sister churches. However, when it comes to interaction with the substance of our evaluations and conclusions, there is very little in this letter which would cause us to reconsider any part of our report. We have taken care to base our considerations and conclusions not on second-hand information but on published documents and first-hand discussions.

As for the letter the BBK of the RCN is sending to Synod Carman 2013, we offer the following point-by point response:

1. Regarding the roles of the BBK of the RCN and the CRCA Subcommittee of the CanRC, we continue to believe that face-to-face discussions between the BBK and the CRCA Subcommittee from the start would have been beneficial to come to better understanding of each other’s churches. We were frustrated that requests for such meetings on our part were

met with reluctance on the part of the BBK, even when we suggested that our full committee would like to be present at such a meeting around the time of Synod Harderwijk 2011 (our letter Dec. 3, 2010). Their response to our request on Dec. 23, 2010 stated that they were not willing to meet with our committee because they did not believe that a meeting with them to discuss our concerns was their mandate and that Biblical or confessional concerns should be addressed directly to their Synod. The result is that the BBK was and remains upset about the impressions and criticisms of our two delegates expressed in the Sept. 2011 Clarion report on the visit to Synod Harderwijk. And we in turn were and still are taken aback by their expressions of dismay at the same report. We continue to assert that the best way to come to full understanding of one another's churches, especially if concerns need to be discussed, is not only to deal with published materials and gain impressions at assemblies, but also to make time for face-to-face dialogue with the officially-appointed committees of the churches. Again, such meetings may not resolve issues as such, but would help to come to at least a healthy understanding of those issues.

2. Regarding the matter of relations with the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC), the BBK letter to Synod Carman 2013 is critical of what we see as "some alarming trends" (p. 52) in our report concerning those relations. They state that they hear only positive things about the cooperation of an RCN and NRC congregation in Zaandam and see no sign of them "going liberal." And their conclusion is that "it seems the mere fact of cooperation is in itself grounds for rejection from your side." However, our conclusions that there are some alarming trends are not based on one or two individual cases of cooperation about which we know little to nothing. The conclusions of our report are based on the reports of deputies for church unity with the NRC to past synods of the RCN and the decisions of those synods concerning the relations with the NRC. It is in the way that those reports and decisions deal with the relations RCN-NRC that we see some alarming trends.
3. Regarding the remarks about the "feelings" of our deputies to Synod Harderwijk 2011, it should be remembered that the report of the delegates to Synod Harderwijk about their impressions was exactly that: about their impressions of that synod and what they experienced while in the Netherlands. It is an overstatement to say that it "is an abusive use of language" when thoughts and impressions are expressed.

Unfortunately the protest about "more bizarre things...are happening" has been taken out of context in the BBK's letter to Synod Carman. What was said in the context of liturgical experimentation is: "The media like to give much attention to these and more bizarre things that are happening. We were told that it is good to realize that this involves a very limited number out of the 270 local churches in the federation, and that most of these things are not in any way sanctioned or approved by a classis or a synod. As a matter of fact, these activities are quite often frowned upon by many people, and by most ministers. This may be so, but it is also important to note that nothing and no one seems to be able to stop these things. And the result is that more and more the churches of the GKV federation show a fragmented picture." This was simply an observation by our delegates, but we believe that concern about liturgical experimentation and diversity is well-placed, as it is one of the items mentioned in Rule 1 of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship which states: "*The churches shall assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy and be watchful for deviations.*"

The BBK is correct in connecting the statement of the Subcommittee delegates that they “believe things are going off the rails in the Dutch churches” with the Subcommittee’s perception that there is a “hermeneutical shift” in the RCN. The BBK, though, disagrees with our assessment of what has transpired in that respect at the TUK and with the work done by the deputies Man/Vrouw in de Kerk. However, as mentioned in the report of our delegates to Synod Harderwijk 2011, already the meditation of sister Elly Urban at the first meeting of the BBK to introduce the Synod to the foreign delegates raised questions about the hermeneutical direction promoted in the RCN. In spite of continued assurances that the RCN remains faithful to Scripture, our concern remains that “new ways of speaking, new ways of interpreting” as mentioned in that meditation signal the hermeneutical shift our churches are so concerned about.

We would prefer that rather than express disagreement about “harsh expressions” used in the report of our delegates to Synod Harderwijk 2011, the BBK would interact with the actual substance of our concerns about hermeneutics as documented in our report to Synod.

4. In this section of their comments to Synod 2013 the BBK once more complains about what they consider “abusive language” used in the report of our delegates to Synod Harderwijk 2011 and they state it is not informative at all. They opine that “What you say has a lot to do with the way you say it.” Unfortunately, we believe that the Dutch brothers do not appreciate how grave the concerns of Synod Burlington 2010 which we were mandated to convey to them were (Synod Burlington 2010, Article 86, Mandate 4.4, p. 131), and how serious we as subcommittee also regard the situation in the Dutch churches with respect to the three main parts of our report! We expressed deep concerns about those matters, whereas the BBK has great concern about the language used in and publicity afforded to our delegate’s report.

In short, the BBK’s letter does not change our (and Synod Burlington 2010’s) view of what is happening in the Dutch churches. The same applies to our meetings with the BBK and TUK representatives in April 2012. We were thankful we as subcommittee could finally have a substantial meeting, but unfortunately we heard very little which would convince us that the contents of our reports to that point of time were not valid.

II. Letter from “Raad van Toezicht” & “College van Bestuur” of the TUK, Mar 9, 2011.

We are thankful that we were able to meet with representatives of the TUK in April, 2012, subsequent to this letter. This letter and the meeting, however, did not allay our main concerns with the direction of the TUK in particular as regards hermeneutics and critical scholarship. In the letter the brothers address the two main concerns of our report: the appointment of Dr. S. Paas as lecturer at the TUK and the dissertation of Dr. K. van Bekkum.

With respect to Dr. S. Paas, his appointment in spite of his dissertation is defended by pointing out that this dissertation was completed already in 1998, and it is not a theological work but one in the field of the history of religions. The TUK, however, appointed him as lecturer on missiology on the basis of his publications in the area of missiology. We find this argument very weak. If there are questions concerning one’s faithfulness to Scripture in one field, surely it would not be wise to assume faithfulness in other fields.

Further, it is asserted that Dr. Paas wrote his dissertation in the framework of the history of religions field, without taking a stand with respect to his own beliefs. We find this argument completely unconvincing, as he uses the first person in his assertions which surely signal a personal viewpoint in what he is saying.

And finally, the argument that the TUK has discussed with Paas his views on the historicity of Genesis 1 and 2 and that it is satisfied that he “wants to understand Scripture according to its God-given intent” is not an argument which would give us a much confidence in his approach to Scripture.

So with regard to Dr. Paas, the letter or the subsequent discussions have not allayed our concerns about his view of Scripture. We as subcommittee wonder why Dr. Paas has not responded to criticisms about his views and his dissertation in person. A clear expression of his personal standpoint regarding the interpretation of the Bible would have been valuable in settling any discussion of questions surrounding his views and his appointment. As subcommittee we continue to believe he should not have been appointed without further validation of his views and a definite retraction of personal Scripture critical statements he made in his 1998 dissertation.

As for the dissertation of Dr. K. van Bekkum, we do not understand how the acceptance of this dissertation could have taken place in a Reformed seminary the way it stands. Dr. G. Kwakkel’s explanation of why it is beneficial to research the “truth value” and to delve into the “truth claim” of Bible passages does nothing in dispelling our concerns about van Bekkum’s method of interpreting passages of the Bible as outlined in our report. So our concerns about the acceptance of the van Bekkum dissertation remain.

In conclusion, this subcommittee maintains the recommendations in its main report and advises Synod Carman 2013, should it decide to send a letter to Synod 2014 of the RCN, to take into full consideration the concerns in our main report. The recent letter from the BBK has not at all convinced us that we have erred in that report.

III. Appropriateness of the letter of the BBK to Synod 2013.

We as Subcommittee for Relations with the RCN find it inappropriate that the deputies BBK of the RCN have indicated they intend to address a letter directly to Synod Carman 2013. This letter circumvents the subcommittee appointed by Synod Burlington 2010 and in fact purports that the grave concerns of Synod 2010 were misplaced and that the Subcommittee for Relations with the RCN have misrepresented certain developments in the RCN. We question whether the deputies for church relations can directly address a letter to a synod of a sister church about concerns those deputies themselves have with respect to the correctness of matters which a previous synod of that sister church mandated its committee to research and communicate and report.

**SUPPLEMENATRY REPORT TO SYNOD CARMAN 2013
SUBCOMMITTEE FOR RELATIONS WITH THE REFORMED CHURCHES
RESTORED OF THE COMMITTEE FOR RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES
ABROAD**

Since the publication of our report concerning the Reformed Churches Restored (RCR) and the Reformed Church of Dalfsen (Dolerend) (RCD), we have received two items of mail. The first item is a letter from the Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad of the RCR (Appendix I) notifying us of the names and email addresses of the Deputies for Contact With Churches Abroad appointed by General Synod Hasselt 2011/12 of the RCR.

The second item received was a press release of the Classis South-West of the RCR in December, 2012 (Appendix II) reporting as follows (translated from Dutch, JM):

The RCR and the RCD have since 2010 already determined that they stand on the same foundation of Scripture and confessions and that both churches wish to live together according to the Reformed church order. Afterwards the heartfelt desire was expressed from both sides that this would lead to a full union of both churches.

After an extended time of deliberations the RCD decided on Dec. 18, 2012 to come to full ecclesiastical union with the RCR church federation. On Dec. 28, 2012 Classis South-West of the RCR discussed this decision at a special meeting and, after positive advice from the deputies ad Article 49 of the Church order, it was decided with gratitude to the Lord to unite so that the RCD would immediately become part of the RCR federation of churches.

In addition, it was decided to admit Rev. E. Heres immediately and without further examination as minister in full right in the federation of the RCR. In a subsequent meeting of Classis South-West on Saturday, Jan. 12, 2013, the Lord willing, this matter will receive further attention. At that time the Lord will be thanked for this union made possible by Him. This assembly will be held in the church building "De Hoeksteen," Scheldelaan 141, Zwolle and will commence at 1:30 pm.

It is the express desire of both the RCR and the RCD that with the Lord's blessing this ecclesiastical union may have a positive effect among all who love the Lord Jesus Christ from the heart and who want to maintain fully the solid foundation of the Church – God's Word and the confessions based on it – and so want to make tangible the unity in truth in obedience to Christ.

The Subcommittee for Relations with the RCR is thankful for this development and we express the hope that all who love the Lord and wish to live in obedience to His church-gathering work in the Netherlands may find one another in the unity of the Reformed faith.

APPENDIX I



For your information: this letter was sent to the subcommittee listed as the recipient.

From:
 Deputies BBK of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated)
 c/o BBK Office
 Gbouw
 Postbus 499
 8000 AL Zwolle
 The Netherlands
 e-mail: bbk@gbouw.nl

To:
 The CRCA Sub-Committee on Relations with Churches in The Netherlands
 c/o Mr. Gerard Nordeman
 3182 Sprucehill Ave.
 Burlington, ON, L7N 2G5
 Canada

Via e-mail: gnordeman@cogeco.ca

Dec. 6th, 2012

Dear brothers in Christ,

Thank you for your letter of Sept. 20, 2012, received by us by e-mail on Sept. 21, with accompanying attachment documents.

You begin by thanking us for the meeting we could have on April 19 of this year, in Zwolle. We too look back on that meeting with thankfulness and appreciation that we could meet and talk together. We certainly concur with your statement: "It is good that we as sister churches can meet to assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith."

At that meeting we could indeed "speak openly with each other about the blessings we experience, but also the concerns." We do sense that your "concerns" have become "grave concerns," regarding not just incidents and some individuals in our church federation, but regarding "the direction these churches are slowly but surely moving," since you express the fear "that this is a direction which is leading them into conflict with the Word as it is confessed and understood in faithful Reformed churches throughout the world." (your *Report of the CRCA Subcommittee for Contact with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands Liberated (RCN)*, p. 14).



We appreciate your concern, and your words: "We hold you dear," and your prayers for us, "our 'mother' church in the extreme secular European situation."

Nevertheless, we are quite alarmed at the evaluations and the conclusions of your report on our churches. The report itself is extremely long, including appendices, 77 pages, and contains extremely detailed analysis and criticism of various persons and documents. Apparently you believe that such detailed criticism is necessary and warranted. This is your right, but we believe that your report is unbalanced at many points, and paints a very black, general picture of our churches. There are some words of "appreciation" in the report, but they are come across as formal polite talk, without much specification, and out of balance with the critical remarks. Expressing concern is one thing, but to say that our entire federation is (potentially) heading in a completely wrong direction, is something quite different. That disturbs us.

In fact, in the light of the breadth, depth, detail, and seriousness of your criticism, we wonder indeed if your recommendation to the coming Synod of Carman, in 2013, "To continue at this time the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RCN" (p. 18) has sufficient backing in the report itself. For surely if you fear that the "direction" of our churches is leading us "into conflict with the Word," and if your "disquiet" about the "growing sense of estrangement between the CanRC and the RCN" (p. 18) is real, then our relationship is coming under such severe pressure that such a relationship as we now have is gravely threatened.

We believe, in fact, that your suggestive language use ("fear," "direction," "disquiet," etc.) is counterproductive, and could be the cause of irreparable damage to our relationship. We hope sincerely that this will not be the case.

Our discussions of April 19 have made no substantive changes in your assessment of our churches, whereas we got the distinct impression that our discussions did help "clear the air" somewhat. We asked in our discussion document if you could correct some use of language used in a report in *Clarion*, but now, on the points we mentioned, you say that no correction is necessary (your report's *Appendix 4 b, Response to the discussion document... on April 19, 2012*, p.52, 53). We are disappointed about this, and puzzled as to why these corrections could not be made, in spite of your explanations.

With respect to publicity given to perceived unbiblical developments in our churches, we hope that you would do your best to be very careful what you say about us. Bad publicity has a damaging effect, not only in Canada, but around the world in other sister-churches. Getting a besmirched reputation is something which is very hard to fight against. We hope that subsequent informative articles in *Clarion* or other media will be more careful than in the past.

In a separate document, attached, we would like to respond to your *Response (Appendix 4b)* in some more detail.



In a separate document, attached, we would like to respond to your *Response (Appendix 4b)* in some more detail.

In another attachment we include a copy of a letter addressed your coming Synod with some short remarks about your report.

Brothers, it would be good to talk with each other again about the matters you address in your report. However, as we have repeatedly tried to make clear, the severity and detail of your criticism, if adopted by your coming Synod, are such that they should be conveyed directly to our next General Synod, as the body which is responsible for defending or reassessing Synodical decisions and policies.

In the meantime we will be praying for you and for all the churches in the world who in sincerity wish to be true to the Lord Jesus as our Head, to the Word of God, and the Reformed Confessions as reliable summaries of the teaching of that Word, that we may remain faithful. We pray also that we may all seek to "not give false testimony against anyone," and do what we can "to defend and promote my neighbour's honour and reputation" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 43).

Greeting you on behalf of all the members of the BBK deputies,

sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Wezeman', is written over a horizontal line.

Prof. drs. K. Wezeman, Chairman of deputies BBK



For your information: this letter was sent to the subcommittee, listed as the recipient.

**BBK Section 3's response to "Appendix 4b of the Report of the CRCA Subcommittee for Contact with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands Liberated (RCN): Response to the discussion document presented by Deputies BBK for the meeting with the GKV Subcommittee of the CanRC on April 19, 2012
Adopted and sent to BBK - Sept. 2012"** **Nov. 2012**

1. Regarding section 1. : Re: the role of deputies BBK

You write that you believe that "it is within the mandate of deputies BBK" to "bring these matters" (of concern and criticism) "to the attention of the next synod" (p. 51). This may be within the mandate of the CRCA, but it is not BBK's specified task to convey grave concern and criticism of sister-churches to the Synod, beyond our reporting on our relationship. If such concern and criticism is substantive, it should be conveyed directly to the Synod, not via BBK.

You defend your very critical words about our churches in the article in *Clarion* by saying that "such reports have been published" in the past "to keep the church members informed and involved." We applaud reports which keep church members informed, but such personal remarks, conveying severe criticism and using inflammatory language, not yet supported by one's own Synod, and without the possibility of the "accused" to defend themselves, is surely not the task of a subcommittee reporting about a sister-church. This is more than "only the observations and considerations of the committee," surely.

2. Regarding section 2: : Re: Hermeneutics... and Relations with the NRC

You say that the "growing cooperation with the NRC does not give reason for optimism" and with respect to the relationship between the RCN and the NRC, "we see some alarming trends" (p. 52). What do you mean by "alarming trends"? We hear only positive things about, for example, the full cooperation of the RCN (L) congregation and the NRC congregation in Zaandam, without any signs of them "going liberal." It seems the mere fact of cooperation is in itself grounds for rejection from your side.

3. Regarding section 3: Re: The accuracy of our reports...

You say that the chairman's remarks about not being able to handle a report without a proposed recommendation "felt like" him saying: "Thank you for your letter, but we are going to ignore it." However, the chairman made a remark about the proper course of the discussion, based on the existing rules for such discussion. It might "feel like" blatantly being "ignored," but that was not the point at all. What something "feels like" is further not something you should broadcast in *Clarion*. It is an abusive use of language and totally uncalled for. We repeat our request that you publically regret these remarks.



In your first report you say that "more bizarre things... are happening." We protested that this is not a way to typify our church life. You say now: "we expressed our concern that there is freedom for those liturgical experiments and for such doctrinal pilot-balloons. This goes beyond an innocent amount of diversity" (p. 52). Beyond innocent diversity means *unbiblical* diversity. We do not feel this does justice to the situation. As far as liturgical diversity, we do not think, for example, that using modern musical instruments and music in the church service is a "beyond innocent" and unbiblical practice.

You defend the use of the harsh expression "things are going off the rails." You mean that you see a "shift of hermeneutics" taking place in our churches, and Prof. De Bruijne as an example of that shift. We continue to deny that there is such a "hermeneutical shift" in our churches. You say now: "the thought that 'things are going off the rails' flows from what is mentioned in conclusion # 1 (the hermeneutical shift) and the first part of conclusion # 2," referring to seeing Paul's writings reflecting only the culture of his days. You say "if this continues, it won't take long that someone is going to say that some instructions in Paul's letters do not apply for us today" (p. 53). This is pure speculation about "what might happen if..." The recently completed series of New Testament commentaries, including all the letters of Paul, by Prof. J. van Bruggen and others, show by their exegetical approach, where Paul is seen as authoritative doctrinally and ethically, that our churches continue to value Paul's teaching as the Word of God for our time.

Informative articles for the *Clarion* ought not to contain tendentious phrases like "going off the rails." We hope that you will still publically regret these words.

4. Regarding the section "In Conclusion" (p. 53)

You say, "We find that much of the critical comments made by Deputies BBK has more to do with the wording and the tone... than with the actual content." We disagree. Using phrases like "we're going to ignore you" and "going off the rails" is abusive language, and totally uncalled for. *What* you say has a lot to do with *the way you say it*. They are not "informative" words at all, but needlessly cutting and tendentious.

You give thanks to God for a brotherly atmosphere during our discussions. We too, were thankful for our meeting. However, your reactions now lead us to question our own positive assessment of that meeting. We are sad about that.

We hope and pray that you will listen carefully to our reactions, expressed here.

APPENDIX II

To Deputies BBK

C/O Rev. J.M. Batteau

P.O. Box 499

8000 AL Zwolle

The Netherlands

21st of January, 2013

Dear brothers in the Lord

At its meeting of January 17 the sub-committee dealt with your letter of December 6, 2012. You had much to say to us, which is good. However we were somewhat disappointed and taken aback with the tone and vehemence of the correspondence. We considered how best to respond. A prolonged back-and-forth on specific matters in our opinion will not be helpful at this point of time, as our Synod convenes in May. It is unfortunate that Synod Harderwijk confirmed your position that it is not for the deputies BBK to discuss in detail decisions of synods and the direction synods are taken the churches by their decisions or not making decisions. This severely limits the opportunity for meaningful dialogue between our churches as outlined in the first rule for ecclesiastical fellowship, and the dialogue remaining is reduced to a bringing of greetings and well-wishes.

In your letter you express the opinion that our “report is unbalanced at many points, and paints a very black, and general picture of our churches.” It needs to be remembered that the sub-committee received a very specific mandate from Synod Burlington 2010 (Acts, Article 86, 4.4), which we shared with you in our first letter and again at our initial meeting in Harderwijk in 2011. It is within the confines of this mandate that we tried to do our work and structure our reports. This will no doubt result in what you consider “unbalanced”.

You further express concern about “publicity given to perceived unbiblical developments in our churches” in our reports and publications. We again would stress that all we have reported on are facts obtained from public documents, Acts of Synods and other broader assemblies, and from documents,

theses, and articles published by the persons we have mentioned in our report. In the past we have been urged not to go by what we hear from people but to base our report on what is published. This is exactly what we have endeavoured to do in our work.

Therefore it is somewhat ironic that you would mention that regarding the relationship between the RCN and the NRC you have heard only positive things, and as an example you give the full cooperation of the respective congregations in Zaandam, without any signs of them “going liberal”. This is something we would not hear about. We only based our observations on the published material on the specific developments from one Synod to the next.

We were most taken aback by your reference to Lord’s Day 43 of the Heidelberg Catechism to “not give false testimony against anyone”. This veiled accusation is not warranted, as you have not shown us where we specifically have given blatant false testimony against the RCN. It is understood that criticism is not always pleasant but it is sincerely offered in the spirit intended under the rules of ecclesiastical fellowship. The first rule for ecclesiastical fellowship commits the churches to assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith and doctrine, church polity, and liturgy, and be watchful for deviations. Brothers, we indeed hold you and the Dutch churches dear. And it is also for that reason that we speak out the way we have.

We continue to pray that our mutual efforts be to the benefit of the churches and to the glory of the head of the church, our Lord Jesus Christ.

With fraternal greetings on behalf of the CRCA Subcommittee

Gerard Nordeman

Secretary

APPENDIX III

Aan de Canadian Reformed Churches

G.J. Nordeman, secretary

3182 Sprucehill Ave.

Burlington, ON

Canada ,L7N 2G5

Zwijndrecht/Kampen, 26 maart 2012

Weleerwaarde en eerwaarde heren en broeders,

Op 9 maart 2011 hebt u een brief gezonden aan de deputaten BBK van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. In die brief maakt u op meerdere punten uw zorgen kenbaar over ontwikkelingen in de Gereformeerde Kerken, o.a. ook ontwikkelingen ten aanzien van het Schriftgezag zoals u die signaleert aan de Theologische Universiteit.

De Generale Synode Harderwijk 2011 betrok uw brief bij de behandeling van het rapport van het rapport van de Raad van Toezicht van de Theologische Universiteit en droeg de Raad van Toezicht op de voortgezette synode van Harderwijk te dienen met een rapportage over de afhandeling van uw brief.

Het gesprek over uw bezwaren begon al tijdens de synode van Harderwijk. In uw brief rept u ook over de Buitenlandweek van de synode van 28 maart tot 2 april 2011. Op 30 maart werd door de Theologische Universiteit in overleg met deputaten BBK een bijeenkomst georganiseerd in Kampen. Op die bijeenkomst werd door meerdere hoogleraren en docenten een presentatie gegeven van ontwikkelingen op hun vakgebied en hoe daar in Kampen onderwijs over wordt gegeven. Na de presentaties was er steeds ruimte om vragen te stellen en een discussie te voeren over bezwaren. Ook uw afgevaardigden ds. J. de Gelder en br. G. Nordeman waren op deze dag aanwezig. Wij hebben de overtuiging dat we op deze manier een goede bijdrage hebben geleverd aan zusterkerken elders in de wereld om inzicht te geven in de theologiebeoefening in Kampen. Gelet op het karakter van de presentaties die meestal aan de hand van aantekeningen gegeven werden, konden we niet ingaan op het verzoek van een van uw afgevaardigden na terugkeer in Canada om de bijdragen in schriftelijke vorm ter beschikking te stellen. Uw afgevaardigden hebben ongetwijfeld zelf zorg gedragen voor een goed verslag!

In onze brief gaan we niet in op de zorgen die u uitspreekt over behandeling door de synode van Zwolle 2008 met betrekking tot bezwaren over(emeritus)hoogleraren van de universiteit. We beperken ons als Raad van Toezicht en College van Bestuur tot de bezwaren die u noemt met betrekking tot de benoeming van dr. S. Paas en de dissertatie van dr. K. van Bekkum.

De benoeming van dr. S. Paas als universitair docent is aan de orde geweest op de Generale Synode van Harderwijk 2011. Bij de synode waren geen bezwaren ingebracht tegen de benoeming, maar op verzoek van het moderamen van de Generale Synode bracht de Raad van Toezicht een aanvullend vertrouwelijk rapport uit, waarin werd ingegaan op de belangrijkste overwegingen rond de benoeming van dr. S. Paas als universitair docent. We hechten veel belang aan een goede relatie met de kerken in Canada en ook met de zuster-instelling in Hamilton, maar het zou te ver gaan wanneer we een vertrouwelijk rapport voor de synode aan u ter beschikking stellen.

Als Raad van Toezicht en College van Bestuur menen we er wel goed aan te doen u op enkele hoofdpunten met een antwoord te dienen.

1. Allereerst moet worden vastgesteld dat Stefan Paas is gepromoveerd aan de Universiteit van Utrecht. Het proefschrift is opgezet volgens de daar geldende methoden. De promotie heeft plaatsgevonden in 1998, dus jaren voordat hij in Kampen werd benoemd. De benoeming in Kampen vond plaats mee op grond van zijn publicaties op het terrein van de missiologie. De dissertatie van Paas is een godsdiensthistorisch en niet een theologisch betoog (ook al vond de promotie plaats aan de theologische faculteit). Hierin bestrijdt hij op godsdiensthistorische gronden de gangbare schriftkritische wetenschap over de ouderdom van de bijbelse scheppingsvoorstellingen. Op verzoek van het College van Bestuur en de Raad van Toezicht is de Kamper oudtestamenticus prof. dr. G. Kwakkel ingegaan op de vragen die hierbij gesteld kunnen worden. Hij komt hierin tot de conclusie dat Paas zijn dissertatie heeft geschreven binnen het kader van de godsdiensthistorie, zonder zelf een geloofsstandpunt in te nemen. Dat laatste heeft hij wel gedaan in andere publicaties, waarin hij duidelijk laat zien dat hij zich door de Bijbelteksten zelf wil laten gezeggen. Paas heeft verklaard dat hij zich in de artikelen van Kwakkel gekend en goed weergegeven voelt. De keuze van Paas voor een puur godsdiensthistorische benadering is uiteraard voor discussie vatbaar, maar gegeven deze benadering en zijn expliciete verantwoording daarvan is de beschuldiging dat hij schriftkritische theorieën zou aanhangen ongegrond. Het verdient daarentegen waardering dat hij de moed had in een schriftkritische omgeving op een door die wetenschappers aanvaarde wijze aan te tonen dat het geloof in God als Schepper van veel oudere datum is dan algemeen wordt aangenomen.
2. Het onvoldoende in rekening brengen van het kader waarin Paas zijn dissertatie schreef en het voorbijgaan aan de beperktheid van zijn onderzoeksvraag (de profeten en niet de Tora) werken door in bezwaren die zijn ingebracht tegen het spreken over de historiciteit van de beschrijving van de uittocht en intocht van Israël in Exodus. Op basis van algemeen als oud erkende teksten en opgravingen komt Paas tot de conclusie dat de uittocht alleszins voorstelbaar is als historische gebeurtenis. Hij heeft de inhoud van Bijbelse teksten over de uittocht niet aan een historische analyse onderworpen en deze derhalve ook niet betwijfeld. Hij heeft juist op één

specifiek punt (de datering van uitspraken over God als Schepper) een bijdrage willen leveren aan het opkomen voor de historische betrouwbaarheid van het Oude Testament.

3. Iets dergelijks doet zich voor met betrekking tot het spreken over God. De stelling dat 'Jahweh waarschijnlijk een afsplitsing is van de Kanaänitische koningsgod El' zou in flagrante strijd zijn met wat God Zelf bekendmaakt in Zijn Woord. Wat Paas in zijn dissertatie hierover zegt is het maximale wat een godsdiensthistoricus krachtens de principes en methodes van zijn vak meent te kunnen zeggen. Dat zegt dus niets over de theologische vraag of Jahwe echt de enige God is en of Hij dat altijd geweest is. Iedere schriftgelovige beaamt dat God de enige God is en Paas doet dat ook in hartelijk geloof. Het zegt evenmin iets over de vraag hoe het *historisch* precies gezeten heeft. Het zegt alleen maar iets over wat men *binnen het kader van een bepaalde methode met alle beperkingen van dien* meent daarover te kunnen zeggen. Paas sluit zich dus in zijn dissertatie aan bij het wetenschappelijk jargon dat gangbaar is bij het publiek waarvoor hij destijds schreef.
4. U schrijft: "We would have expected that as a Reformed scholar he would have stated clearly that although he does not adhere to the religion-historical approach, he will use this approach in order to show that even on the basis of those presuppositions one can defend a creation belief in eight century prophets." (pag. 3) Het punt is dat dit precies is wat dr. Paas volgens zijn eigen getuigenis in zijn dissertatie in Utrecht heeft willen doen. Je kunt van mening verschillen over de vraag of Paas dat in 1998 in die context niet duidelijker had moeten markeren, maar het is op basis van zijn eigen verklaring volstrekt duidelijk dat dit zijn doelstelling was.
5. U noemt op pag. 5 ook het artikel van Paas in *Wapenveld*. In het kader van de benoemingsprocedure is met Paas hierover goed doorgesproken. Uit dat gesprek is op een voor ons bevredigende manier gebleken dat dr. Paas ook ten aanzien van Genesis 1 en 2 de Schrift wil verstaan naar haar door God gegeven bedoeling. Dat neemt niet weg dat je over de concrete invulling met elkaar van mening kunt verschillen.

De Raad van Toezicht en het College van Bestuur hebben de conclusie getrokken, dat de Theologische Universiteit in dr. Paas een waardevolle docent heeft ontvangen die diepe eerbied heeft voor de Schrift als Gods Woord en zich gebonden weet aan de gereformeerde belijdenis. Door aanhangers van schriftkritische theorieën met hun eigen wapens te bestrijden steunde hij in feite de Bijbelgetrouwe wetenschap.

In uw brief maakt u ook enkele opmerkingen over de dissertatie van dr. K. van Bekkum. In het bijzonder zegt u dat het onderscheid dat Van Bekkum maakt tussen truth claim en truth value "does not reflect a high view of Scripture and should be rejected."

Voor alle duidelijkheid: een Raad van Toezicht van een universiteit beoordeelt geen dissertaties. Ook het curatorium doet dat niet. Het wetenschappelijk oordeel is aan de beoordelingscommissie en de senaat. In wetenschappelijke tijdschriften wordt de discussie gevoerd over de resultaten van wetenschappelijk onderzoek en ook dissertaties die in Kampen zijn verdedigd, moeten de toets van die wetenschappelijke

kritiek kunnen doorstaan. Hypotheses en modellen die worden verdedigd, kunnen ook in die wetenschappelijke discussie worden weerlegd. De bijdrage over Jozua 10: 12-14 van E.A. de Boer en P.H. R. van Houwelingen die u noemt is niet gepubliceerd in een wetenschappelijk tijdschrift, maar is wel een illustratie van de discussie die gevoerd kan worden over resultaten van wetenschappelijk onderzoek. Ook zij vermelden overigens dat Van Bekkum niet ontkent dat God op het gebed van Jozua een wonder heeft gedaan.

De Theologische Universiteit in Kampen houdt zich aan de Nederlandse wet op het hoger en wetenschappelijk onderwijs. Dat houdt ook in dat de Raad van Toezicht geen oordeel uitspreekt over dissertaties. De Raad van Toezicht en het Curatorium beoordelen wel de criteria en uitgangspunten die de promotor en de senaat toepassen. Om uw vragen naar aanleiding van de dissertatie van dr. Van Bekkum te beantwoorden, nemen we de verklaring van de hoogleraar Oude Testament dr. G. Kwakkel in deze brief op:

1. Kern van gereformeerd bijbelonderzoek is – conform de door de Canadeze broeders geciteerde bijbelteksten alsmede art. 3 – 7 NGB – de vraag naar de bedoeling van de teksten. Wat willen de teksten feitelijk zeggen? In navolging van Long kun je dat formuleren als de vraag naar de ‘truth claim’: wat is precies de ‘truth’ die de tekst ‘claimt’ te communiceren? Daarbij hoort ook de vraag naar de aard van de ‘truth claim’; bijvoorbeeld: bedoelt de tekst een historische of een ethische waarheid te communiceren, een combinatie van die twee of nog iets anders? Over die vraag naar de inhoud en de aard van de ‘truth claim’ mag je zo lang en zo breed met elkaar discussiëren als je maar wilt, zolang je maar bereid bent serieus naar de teksten te luisteren.
2. Voor mij als gereformeerd theoloog staat het bij voorbaat vast dat als iets onder de feitelijke truth claim van de Schrift valt, dat het dan ook als waar, richtinggevend, normatief - want door God zelf ons geleerd - aanvaard moet worden. Discussie over de ‘truth value’ is in dat opzicht feitelijk niet meer nodig, want bij voorbaat ga ik ervan uit dat de ‘truth claim’ terecht is.
3. Alleen kan het in sommige gevallen nuttig zijn die ‘truth value’ alsnog te gaan onderzoeken, bijvoorbeeld door wat de Schrift over historische gegevens zegt te gaan vergelijken met archeologische onderzoeksresultaten. Zo’n aanvullend onderzoek, bijvoorbeeld in een dissertatie, heb ik dan niet nodig om voor mij zelf van de feitelijke ‘truth value’ van de concrete schrifttekst in kwestie overtuigd te raken. Het nut ervan is van andere aard en het is tweeledig:
 - a) De discussie met anderen die mijn ‘overtuiging bij voorbaat’ ten aanzien van de ‘truth value’ niet delen; ik kan hun dan tot op zekere hoogte laten zien dat voor die ‘truth value’ meer te zeggen valt dan zij denken (dat is wat Van Bekkum in zijn diss doet, maar dit tussen haakjes); of – wanneer het mij niet lukt meer te zeggen over de ‘truth value’ – realiseer ik mijzelf des te meer dat ik me echt baseer op de Schrift en op niets daarbuiten en dat hier dus het geloof echt de enige de factor is die alles beslist.
 - b) Een eventuele *aanleiding* tot controle van mijn opvatting over de aard en inhoud van de ‘truth claim’. Mocht namelijk blijken dat bijvoorbeeld de archeologie een heel ander plaatje geeft dan ik meen dat de bijbeltekst geeft, dan doe ik er goed aan nog eens een keer te controleren of ik de bedoeling van de bijbeltekst echt wel goed begrepen heb. Zo ja, dan

berust ik in voor mij op dat moment verder onoplosbaar verschil tussen bijbeltekst en buitenbijbels wetenschappelijk onderzoek. Zo nee, dan ben ik dankbaar dat ik verder gekomen ben in het verstaan van de Schrift. Maar in dit alles blijft staan dat ik de claims van de Schrift geloof en aanvaard om 'hunszelfs' wil, niet op grond van ander bewijs. (tot zover de verklaring van prof. dr. G. Kwakkel)

Geliefde broeders, u schrijft dat u zich zorgen maakt dat de Theologische Universiteit zich beweegt in een meer schriftkritische richting. Wij hopen u met onze schriftelijke reactie en op de studiedag op 30 maart 2011 in Kampen te hebben duidelijk gemaakt dat dat niet het geval is. Integendeel, Kampen houdt vast aan de oude koers dat de Schrift het Woord van God is dat gezaghebbend is voor ons en ook voor de manier waarop we de theologie beoefenen. Tegelijk zoeken hoogleraren en onderzoekers naar wegen om die positie in de huidige wetenschappelijke wereld te verdedigen en uit te werken. Dat vereist dat we die opstelling ook steeds weer toelichten naar de kerken in Nederland en ook elders in de wereld.

In het kader daarvan is de universiteit al enige tijd bezig een congres te beleggen in Hamilton om samen met uw theologen tot een goede wetenschappelijke gedachtewisseling te komen. Vanwege diverse omstandigheden is er sprake geweest van enige vertraging, maar wij hopen dat dit congres toch in 2013 gehouden kan worden. We hopen en bidden dat onze gedachtewisseling in de komende jaren weer geïntensiveerd mag worden en dat de theologen in Hamilton en Kampen samen met nog anderen een goede bijdrage kunnen leveren aan de gereformeerde theologie in de wetenschappelijke context van deze tijd.

Namens de Raad van Toezicht,

Ds. J. Ophoff, voorzitter

Namens het College van Bestuur,

Prof. dr. M. te Velde, voorzitter

CC aan deputaten BBK

Free Translation of APPENDIX III**Letter from the Theological University in Kampen**

To the Canadian Reformed Churches

G. J. Nordeman, secretary

3182 Sprucehill Avenue

Burlington, ON

Canada L7N 2G5

Zwijndrecht/Kampen, March 26, 2012

Esteemed brothers,

On March 9, 2011 you sent a letter to the deputies BBK [Deputies for Foreign Churches] of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. In that letter you make known your concerns on several points about developments in the Reformed Churches, among others, also, as you described them, developments with respect to the authority of Scripture at the Theological University.

The General Synod Harderwijk 2011 took your letter into consideration in the discussion of the report of the Supervisory Board of the Theological University and charged the Supervisory Board to serve the continuation of the Synod Harderwijk with a report on how the letter was dealt with.

The discussion about your concerns began already during Synod Harderwijk. In your letter you also mention the Foreigners Week at Synod from March 28 to April 2, 2011. The Theological University organized a conference in Kampen on March 30 in consultation with the deputies BBK. At this conference several professors and docents gave a presentation about the

developments in their area of expertise and how those areas are taught in Kampen. After the presentations there was always an opportunity to ask questions and to discuss concerns. Your delegates Rev. J. de Gelder and brother G. Nordeman were also present on that day. We are convinced that we have in this manner made a good contribution to enable our foreign sister churches to get an insight into how we do theology in Kampen. Because of the character of the presentations which were mostly delivered from notes, we were unable to grant the request of your delegates after they had returned to Canada to send written copies of these presentations to them. Your delegates had without any doubt made sure that they had a good report!

In our letter we are not dealing with the concerns you articulated about the way Synod Zwolle 2008 dealt with the objections brought against the professors (including an emeritus) of the university. We restrict ourselves as Supervisory Board to the objections which you mention with respect to the appointment of Dr. S. Paas and the dissertation of Dr. K. van Bekkum.

The appointment of Dr. S. Paas as university docent was on the agenda of General Synod Harderwijk 2011. At that synod, there were no objections to his appointment, but on the request of the executive of the synod the Supervisory Board submitted a confidential supplementary report which elaborated on the most important considerations concerning the appointment of Dr. S. Paas as university docent. We attach much importance to a good relationship with the churches in Canada and also with our sister institution in Hamilton, but it would go too far if we were to make a confidential report for our synod available to you.

As Supervisory Board and Board of Management, we do however think that it would be good to give serve with an answer on some main points.

1. It must first of all be noted that Stefan Paas graduated from the University of Utrecht. His dissertation was set up according to the methods that were operative there. His graduation took place in 1998, years before he was appointed in Kampen. His appointment in Kampen took place in part on the basis of his publications in the area of missiology. The dissertation of Dr. Paas is a religion-historical dissertation and not a theological one, even though he defended his dissertation in the theological faculty. In this work he combats current critical biblical scholarship with respect to the antiquity of biblical concepts of creation. He does so on the basis of religion-historical grounds. At the request of the Supervisory Board, the Old Testament professor in Kampen, Dr. G. Kwakkel has gone into the questions that can be raised about this. He comes to the conclusion that Paas wrote his dissertation within the framework of the history of

religion, without himself taking a position with respect to his own religious convictions. He did do so in other publications in which he clearly shows that he wants to listen to Scripture. Paas has declared that he recognizes himself in Kwakkel's articles and that his views were well presented. Now we can discuss Paas' choice of taking a purely religion-historical approach, but given this approach and his explicit accounting for it, the charge that he would favour Scripture critical theories is unsubstantiated. Over against this, it deserves our appreciation that within a Scripture critical environment and using methods acceptable to critical scholars, he had the courage to show that the belief in God the Creator is of much earlier date than is generally accepted.

2. Not taking into sufficient consideration the framework in which Paas wrote his dissertation and bypassing the limitations of his research question (the prophets and not the law) influence the objections submitted against the discussion of the historicity of Israel's leaving Egypt and entering Canaan in the book of Exodus. On the basis of texts generally regarded as old as well as archaeological excavations, Paas comes to the conclusion that the Exodus is in every respect imaginable as a historical event. He did not subject the content of the biblical texts about the Exodus to a historical analysis and he therefore also never doubted them. He wanted to make a contribution precisely on the specific point of the dating of utterances of God as Creator to defend the historical reliability of the Old Testament.
3. We see something similar with respect to the speaking about God. The thesis that "Yahweh apparently derives from the Canaanite god El" would be in flagrant conflict with what God himself has made known in his Word. What Paas says about this in his dissertation is the maximum what the history of religion scholar says by virtue of the principles and methods of his discipline. It therefore says nothing about the theological question whether Yahweh is really the only God and whether he has always been that. Every believer of Scripture assents that God is the only God and Paas also sincerely believes that. He also says nothing about the question how precisely this was historically. He only says something about what scholars can say about it within the framework of a certain method with all its restrictions. In his dissertation Paas therefore uses the current scholarly jargon that is current for the public for which he wrote at the time.
4. You write: "We would have expected that as a Reformed scholar he would have stated clearly that although he does not adhere to the religion-historical approach, he will use this approach in order to show that even on the basis of those presuppositions one can defend a creation belief in eight century prophets" (page 3). The point is that this is precisely what Dr. Paas had wanted to do according to his own testimony in his dissertation in Utrecht. You can differ about the question whether Paas could not have distinguished more clearly in that context in 1998, but it is absolutely clear on the basis of his own explanation that this was his purpose.
5. On page 5 you also mention the article of Paas in *Wapenveld*. Within the framework of the process of the appointment there has been a good thorough discussion about this point with Paas. From that discussion we were satisfied that Dr. Paas wants to understand Scripture according to the purpose God has for it, also with respect to Genesis 1 and 2. This does not take away that you can differ with each other about how you work that out concretely.

The Supervisory Board and the Board of Management have concluded that the Theological University has received a valuable docent in Dr. Paas who has a deep respect for the Scripture as the Word of God and who knows himself bound to the Reformed confession. By combating adherents of Scripture-critical theories with their own weapons he in fact supported scholarship that was faithful to Scripture.

In your letter you make some comments about the dissertation of Dr. K. van Bekkum. In particular, you say that the distinction that Van Bekkum makes between truth claim and truth value “does not reflect a high view of Scripture and should be rejected.”

To be clear: a Supervisory Board of a university does not judge dissertations. Also the Board of Governors does not do that. The review committee of the senate is responsible for judging scholarship. The results of scholarly research, including dissertations defended in Kampen, are discussed in scholarly journals and should be able to stand up to scholarly criticism. Hypotheses and models which are defended can also be responded to in such scholarly discussions. E. A. de Boer and P. H. R. van Houwelingen’s contribution about Joshua 10:12-14 which you mention is not published in a scholarly journal but it is an illustration of the discussion that can take place about the results of scholarly research. They also do mention though that Van Bekkum does not deny that God performed a miracle in response to the prayer of Joshua.

The Theological University of Kampen abides by the Dutch law for higher education. That means that the Supervisory Board does not give any judgment about dissertations. The Supervisory Board and the Board of Governors do judge the criteria and the points of departure which the dissertation advisor and the senate employ. In order to answer your questions about the dissertation of Dr. van Bekkum, we include in this letter the explanation of the professor of Old Testament, Dr. Kwakkel.

1. At the heart of Reformed study of Scripture (in conformity with the Bible passages cited by the Canadian brothers, as well as Art. 3 to 7 of the Belgic Confession) is the question of the purpose of the texts. What do the texts actually want to say? Following Long, you can formulate this as the question for the truth claim. What exactly is the “truth” which the text “claims” to communicate? With this also belongs the question about the nature of the “truth claim.” For example, does the text intend to communicate a historic or ethical truth, a combination of the two, or something else? You can discuss the question of the content and nature of the truth claim as much and as extensively as you like as long as you are ready to listen seriously to the text.
2. As a Reformed theologian it is for me certain that when Scripture claims something to be true, then it is true, gives direction, and is normative because what God teaches us must be accepted. A discussion about “truth value” is no longer necessary in that respect because I proceed from the presupposition that the “truth claim” is valid.
3. However, in some cases it can be beneficial to as yet investigate the “truth value.” For

example, one can compare what Scripture says about historical data with the results of archaeological investigations. Such a complementary investigation in, for example a dissertation, is then not necessary to convince myself of the real “truth value” of a concrete biblical passage. Its benefit is of a different nature and it is twofold.

- a. It benefits the discussion with others who do not share my presupposition with respect to the “truth value.” I can show them to a certain extent that more can be said for the “truth value” than they think. (That is what Van Bekkum does in his dissertation—but this in parentheses). Or, if I am not able to say more about the “truth value,” I realize all the more that I do indeed base myself on Scripture and on nothing outside it. Faith is here therefore the only real factor that is determinative.
- b. Another benefit is an eventual inducement to control my understanding of the nature and content of the “truth claim.” Should, for example, archaeology give a completely different picture than what I think the Bible gives, then it would be good for me to check once more whether I have indeed really understood the purpose of the biblical passage. If I remain so convinced, then I acquiesce in what is at that moment an unsolvable difference between the biblical passage and the extra-biblical scholarly research. If I am no longer convinced [of my original understanding of the passage], then I have come further in my understanding of Scripture. However, in all of this the fact remains that I believe and accept the claims of Scripture for its own sake and not on the basis of other proof. (So far the explanation of Prof. Dr. G. Kwakkel).

Dear brothers, you write that you are worried that the Theological University is moving into a direction that is more critical of Scripture. We hope that on the study day of March 30, 2011 in Kampen and with this written reaction we have made clear to you that this is not the case. To the contrary, Kampen holds fast to the old course that the Scripture, the Word of God, is authoritative for us and also for the manner in which we do theology. At the same time professors and researchers seek ways to defend and work out this position in the current academic world. That makes it necessary that we explain this approach to the churches in the Netherlands and elsewhere in the world.

Within that context, the university has been busy for some time to organize a conference in Hamilton in order to come to a good academic dialog with your theologians. Due to various circumstances there has been a delay, but we hope that this congress can still take place in 2013. We hope and pray that sharing our thoughts may be intensified in the coming years and that the theologians in Hamilton and Kampen, along with others, can make a good contribution to Reformed theology in the scholarly context of our time.

On behalf of the Supervisory Board

Rev. J. Ophoff, chairman

On behalf of the Board of Management

Prof. Dr. M. te Velde, chairman

cc. to deputies BBK