

110. THE DOLEANTIE 1886 and UNION 1892

As a result of the Secession in 1834, the Netherlands Reformed Church lost thousands of her best members; those who upheld the sound reformed doctrine, those who were most active in the congregations and often had leading positions.

But this did not deter the liberal and modern church governments in the least. It did not douse their hatred and enmity towards those who profess the sound doctrine at all.

Yet there remained a group within the Netherlands Reformed Church (NRC), who didn't join the Secession, but who continued the battle against liberalism from within the NRC. They kept appealing to church government bodies against the unsound preaching. But nothing helped.

They simply ignored every appeal.

The liberal way of thinking became more dominant, and the church governments supported that. The consequences were terrible.

When the Lord Jesus instituted baptism, He commanded that children must be baptised in the name of 'the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.'

But the 'liberals' dared to baptise children in the name of: 'faith, hope and love!'

We all understand that such a baptism is not valid!

But the liberal ministers dared to baptise children in the name of 'faith, hope & love'

Children baptised in 'faith, hope and love' were not *really* baptised. In some churches, children were baptised again, this time in the name of the Trinity. Rightly so!

In 1863 a society was formed called 'Friends of the Truth'. They fought for renewal from within the Netherlands Reformed Church.

The 'Friends of the Truth' would organise prayer meetings before every synod. But they did more: some of these church members began to 'preach' and catechise the youth in the true doctrine.

Though they did their best, all effort was frustrated by the unwillingness and wicked stubbornness of the church governing bodies. This situation led to yet another schism. We want to tell you something about that in this chapter.

ABRAHAM KUYPER

Abraham Kuyper was the main leader in this church struggle against liberalism.



Abraham Kuyper at his desk

He was born in 1837 at Maassluis. His father was a minister. When Abraham was only three years old, his father accepted a call to Middelburg (south of the Netherlands), and Abraham spent his youth in that city. At the age of eighteen, he enrolled as a student at the University of Leiden. As he was very bright, Abraham passed his exams with honours and became eligible for a call.

His first congregation was in Beesd, a village in the middle of The Netherlands. He began his ministry promoting the liberal theology in line with the education he had received in Leiden.

However, the little town of Beesd was in an area where many people still believed the sound doctrine. By associating with the ordinary people

of his congregation, Rev Kuyper changed! He was impressed by their knowledge of the true doctrine and the way they *lived* this doctrine.

One of those members was a lady called Pietje Baltus. She didn't agree with his liberal preaching. One day she goes to her local butcher and buys a fake sausage which the butcher used for his meat displays. She gives this sausage to Rev. Kuyper and tells him:

"This is what your sermons are like: Appetising from the outside but unpalatable inside"

As a result of his discussions with her and others, he sees the error of his liberal thinking!



Pietje Baltus. The lady who helped Abraham Kuyper to see the error of his liberal thinking.

From Beesd he accepts a call to Utrecht.

After some years In Utrecht, he accepts a call to Amsterdam.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

In Amsterdam, he had abandoned his liberal thinking entirely and devoted much energy on reforming the Netherlands Reformed Church from within.

Already in his first sermon in Amsterdam Rev. Kuyper said:

"We must either rebuild or move!"

Do you know what he meant by that? He meant: Things must change in the Netherlands Reformed Church. We can no longer tolerate the burden of the liberal church governments. We must do our best to bring about those changes. If we don't succeed, we'll be compelled to move, that means we must withdraw ourselves from that dominion. Then we must leave the church!

The exceptionally talented Rev. Kuyper threw himself into this battle with all his energy.

At his instigation, the Amsterdam consistory passed a motion to only call non-liberal ministers into classis Amsterdam.



*Abraham Kuyper
1837 - 1929*

So, when a modern minister left Amsterdam, a Reformed minister would be called to take his place. As a result, it was not long before the Reformed

had the majority in the Amsterdam Classis!

But more happened...

At most universities in The Netherlands, liberal professors taught the new theology to the students. Kuyper said:

"This must change because in that way, all young ministers will become liberal-minded."

For that reason, Kuyper established the 'Free University' in 1880.

A 'Free University'? What does that mean?

It simply means 'free' from Government regulation. The government paid the salaries of the professors at the other universities. But those teaching at the 'Free University' would not be paid by the Government: the *churches* had to pay for this, and they organised collections for this purpose.

All this means that they can appoint their non-liberal, reformed thinking, professors. This is how Rev.

Kuyper tries to break the power of the liberals! The students taking lessons at this university are taught and grounded in the *Reformed doctrine*.



Most families of the Reformed churches had one of these money boxes. Any loose change was put in this tin for Abraham Kuyper's 'Free University.'

This was not to the liking of the liberal-minded synod. The liberals understood Kuyper's strategy

very well. In response, the liberals stipulate that students who complete their studies at the Free University are not be recognised as 'qualified' ministers within The Netherlands Reformed Churches.

THE SITUATION ESCALATES

The struggle becomes more intense. When a liberal minister preaches in Amsterdam, the Reformed elders and deacons do not attend that service; they stay home. Nor do they celebrate the Lord's Supper with the liberal ministers.

When catechism students wish to make profession of faith, the consistory tests their knowledge to make sure they understand what they promise when they say their 'I do's'. If their knowledge is not sufficient or not according to the confessions, then the consistory refuses their request. This process stops liberal-thinking-students from making profession of faith! That was right; it was their task to uphold the true doctrine.

Do you know how the liberal ministers respond?

They tell the liberal-thinking catechism students: "Just go to another congregation somewhere else where they have a liberal minister. They will let you make profession of your faith! Once done, you can come back to Amsterdam and become a communicant member there!"

Problem solved!

No, not quite...

There was a little hurdle to overcome. Students who wished to go to a liberal congregation to profess their faith need an attestation! But...Amsterdam consistories *refuse* to write attestations for students who are not sound in doctrine!

How to overcome this hurdle?

The liberal ministers decide to take the issue to synod for a ruling.

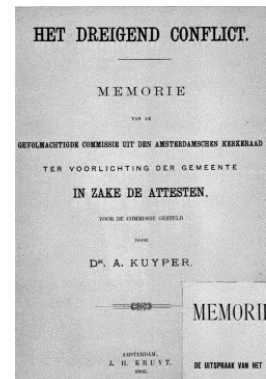
The matter was investigated and . . . the synod sends a letter to the Consistory of Amsterdam

telling them that they *must* issue those attestations ASAP!

Amsterdam responds: "No, we *may* not do that!"

The tension between Amsterdam and the synod is at breaking point!

Amsterdam fears the worst! If they ignore and disobey synod decisions, the same might happen to them as to the other ministers some decades ago: Rev Scholten and Rev de Cock and others. Remember that? Synod suspended and dismissed them!



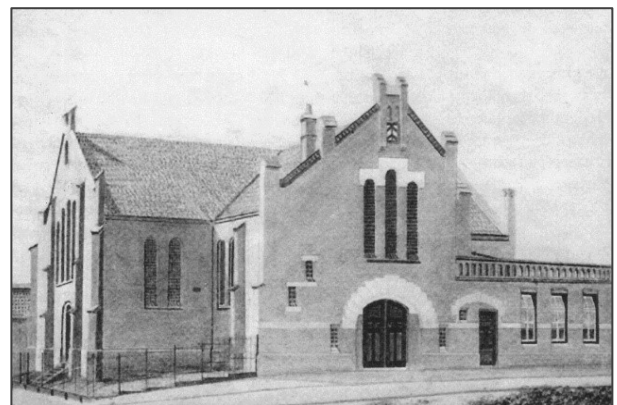
The attestation issue caused a lot of friction between the churches. Dr Kuyper wrote a little booklet about it.

And what happened to the seceders will happen to them as well: all church properties will be confiscated!

They quickly think of a way to avoid *that* from happening.

AMSTERDAM'S PLAN FAILS

The Amsterdam churches had a lot of properties: church buildings, manses, meeting halls etc. A maintenance committee manages all these properties, and this building committee is accountable to the consistories. This arrangement was put in place in 1810 already, during the time of Napoleon.



Church in Amsterdam. All church properties would be confiscated.

Although the government has the final say about the Church's real estate, the maintenance of these properties is the responsibility of the churches who use these buildings.

So, what will happen if synod suspends the Amsterdam consistory? The consistory will lose its authority over the building committee, and this committee will automatically fall under the jurisdiction of synod/government.

The churches would lose their buildings! They must try to prevent this from happening! So the Amsterdam consistory schedules an urgent meeting.

They decide that in case of suspension, the building committee will remain under the authority of the suspended consistory! With the building committee under their authority, the buildings will remain in their possession as well.

That's what they think!

But this is *not* what happens!

Five ministers, forty-two elders and thirty-three deacons, a total of eighty office bearers, vote in favour of that new motion. Some consistory members vote against, including Reverend Vos. Straight after the meeting, this minister contacts some classis members and tells them about the motion which has been adopted that evening.

Instantly, the classis suspends those eighty consistory members.

Why?

Not because of the struggle for the sound confession,

Not because they refuse to issue an attestation to 'liberal' catechism students,

But because they try to secure their church properties in the event of a break!

All this happened in the year 1886.

Sadly, with the suspension, they lose access to all their churches, manses, and meeting halls. Ministers are not allowed to preach in 'their' church buildings. They need to rent other halls for their church services. Strictly speaking, they are

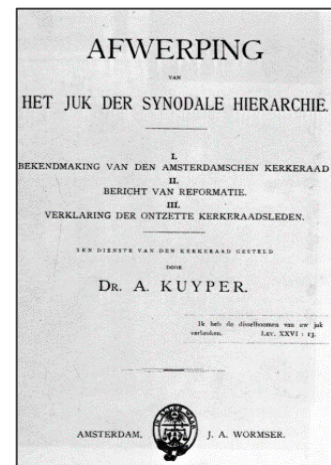
not even allowed to preach as they are suspended!

Because they keep preaching anyway, they are all soon deposed as well.

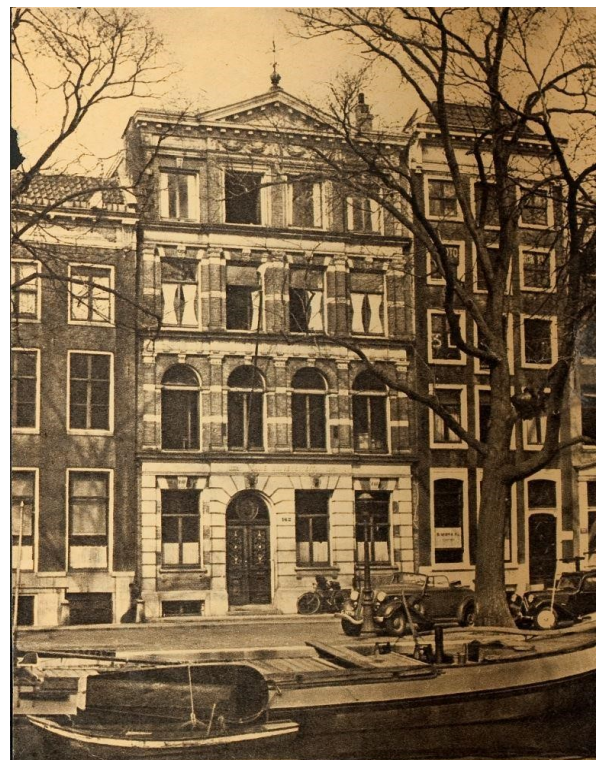
So now the break is a fact.

The synod has in effect excommunicated 80 faithful consistory members!

The Secession of 1886 is known in history as the Second Secession or the 'Doleantie' (This word means 'dissenting'. The 'dissenters' = complaining about false doctrine.)



In this little booklet Rev Kuyper explained why they left The Netherland Reformed Church. He used Lev 6: 13 as text: 'I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you walk upright'



Free university in Amsterdam established in 1880

This Secession had enormous consequences. Many congregations in The Netherlands joined

the 'Doleantie' (dissenters). A total of 200 congregations and 76 ministers left the Netherlands Reformed Church.

Rev. A. Kuyper and his followers were more prepared for a Secession than the ministers of the first Secession in 1834. They had realised beforehand that it was unavoidable. Their ongoing struggle to uphold the reformed confessions and church order caused too much friction between faithful consistories and the church authorities for the relationship to continue fruitfully.

The establishment of a 'Free University' had only added fuel to the fire. Students, graduating from the Free University had no congregation to go to, as their qualifications were not recognised. This created more dilemmas: what could those candidate ministers do? If nothing was done, the Free University might as well close its doors! This situation also forced them towards a secession.

They still try to place their students as ministers in the Netherlands Reformed Church. This happens in the little village of Kootwijk.

The consistory of the Reformed Church at Kootwijk calls a candidate from the Free University to be their minister. As soon as the classis hears this, they suspend the Kootwijk consistory. Result?

The next day the congregation of Kootwijk secedes.

MOVING FORWARDS

As the Doleantie (dissenters) grew, all candidates from the Free University became ministers in the Doleantie congregations. Within a few years, thirty-seven candidates were ordained as ministers in the Doleantie Churches who had no minister. This way, the Free University could continue to operate.

The Doleantie Churches also experienced much hatred, ridicule and enmity from the synodical governments and the Dutch people, although they were not persecuted to the same extent as the Seceders of 1834.

The Doleantie was somewhat different than the Secession. The Secession of 1834 was very much an act of faith. Rev. de Cock of Ulrum, Rev. Scholte and all the others did not push for a secession. They fought, appealed, and suffered till the Synod suspended them.

The Doleantie of 1886 was an act of faith as well but they were more prepared for the inevitable. Remember how Dr A. Kuyper said in his first sermon

“We must either rebuild or move”? They ended up ‘moving’. But all went quite differently to what they had expected. Life is often like that, isn't it?

Six years later, in 1892, the Christian Reformed churches from 1834 and the Doleantie Churches from 1886 united. After this union they continued as 'The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.'

Not every congregation joined this union of 1892.

Some churches from the First Secession remained as the Christian Reformed Churches. These few congregations continued to grow and still exist today. This means that since 1892 there are two very closely related bonds of churches: The Reformed Churches of The Netherlands (1892) and the Christian Reformed Churches 1869.



Acts of Synod 7-17 June 1892 which decided for both the Secession churches to unite as The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

QUESTIONS

1. How did the Liberals in the Reformed Church in the Netherlands change the institution of baptism?
2. Why did some churches rebaptise those who had been baptised according to the new procedure?
3. Identify the society "Friends of the Truth." What did they do?
4. State the background of Abraham Kuyper.
5. What change occurred in him while serving the congregation of Beesd?
6. Explain his comment, "We must either rebuild or move!"
7. How did the Amsterdam consistories attempt to gain a Reformed majority?
8. What was the "Free University"?
9. How did the Reformed synod oppose this effort?
10. Explain the difficulties that arose regarding confession of faith.
11. Why did the Consistory of Amsterdam refuse to give attestations?
12. What is an attestation?
13. Why were the eighty consistory members suspended?
14. State the main difference between the Secession of 1834 and that of 1886.
15. Give another name for the Secession of 1886.
16. Give two reasons why many congregations joined the Doleantie.
17. What union took place in 1892?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

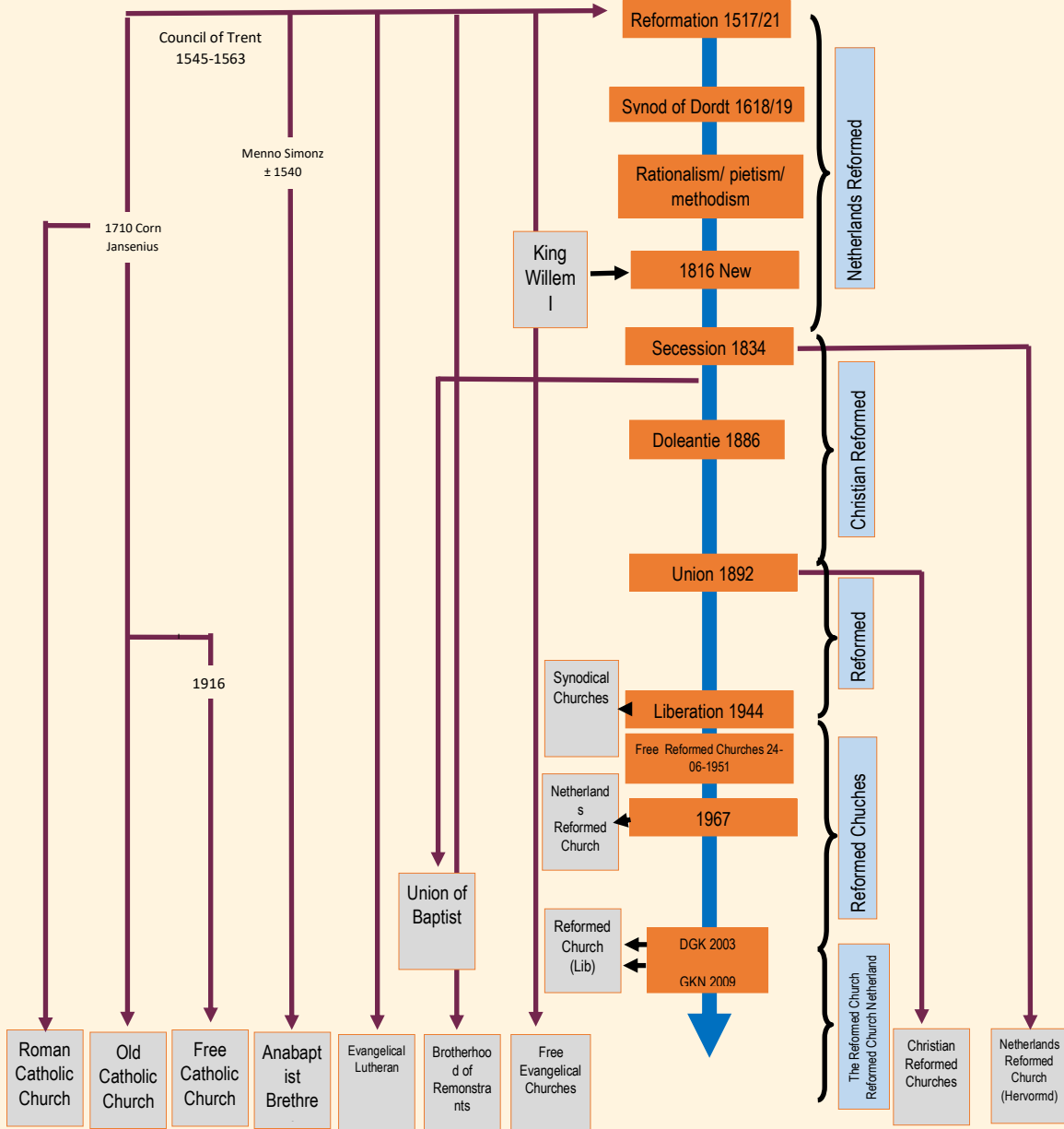
1. Do we accept baptisms from other churches?
2. Why do the Baptists rebaptise those who were baptised as infants?

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against her"

Math. 16:18

Martin Luther 1483-1545
 Ulrich Zwingly 1484-1531
 John Calvin 1509-1564
 Genevan Psalter ± 1550
 Belgic Confession Guido de Bres 1561
 Heidelberg Catechism 1563
 Canons of Dordt 1618-1619

- ± 100 Ignatius of Antioch
- ± 200 Apostles Creed
- ± 350 Athanasius from Alexandria
- ± 381 Nicene creed
- ± 393 Canonising of the Bible
- ± 300 Arius
- ± 400 Pelagius
- ± 432 Patrick—Ireland
- ± 500 Clovis I
- ± 600 Athanasian Creed
- ± 600 Gregory the Great
- ± 700 Willibrord
- ± 725 Boniface
- ± 800 Karel the Great
- ± 1360 John Wycliffe
- ± 1400 John Huss
- ± 1450 Thomas a Kempis
- ± 1500 Erasmus



Groen van Prinsterer
 Hendrik de Cock
 S. van Velzen
 A. van Raalte
 A Brummelkamp
 H.P. Scholte
 King Willem I
 Hofstede de Groot
 Groninger School

A. Kuyper
 K. Schilder
 S. Grevdanus