

Conference on the Essentials of a Church Federation
28-29 June 2019 at the Free Reformed Church Pretoria

Questions & Answers:

1. **Question to Dr. Ted van Raalte: In light of what Dr. Van Raalte has said in his lecture, would it be better if synods always consisted of delegates of all local churches and not delegated from the next minor assembly (classis – regional – synod).**

Dr. Ted van Raalte: The delegates elected are not necessarily from every single local church. They represent those churches. Now if all local churches elected delegates to the synod, and you had 40 churches, and each church elected 2, you would have 80 men at synod. Whereas, in our Canadian Reformed Church Order, and most Reformed churches, following the church order of Dordt, you probably have between 16 and 20 men at synod, so it is a different kind of representation. I would say, no, let's stick with what we have. If you have 2 delegates from every church, and your federation gets bigger, the major assembly becomes unwieldy. Many people, they can't speak their minds, and they end up voting on issues before deliberating on them. And so it becomes more a kind of vote-swinging assembly, rather than a fully deliberative assembly that strives to understand as well as possible all sides of a matter and comes to conclusions that satisfy all and as much as possible aims for consensus. And, of course, the other thing is, the church is not a democracy. We are not really aiming for the major assemblies to be democracies. The consistory has a direct authority from Christ, but as soon as the churches meet together, that meeting doesn't have direct authority from Christ. Meeting there as office bearers, they are delegated because

1. **Van Raalte: In die lig van wat dr. Van Raalte in sy lesing gesê het, sou dit beter wees as sinodes altyd uit afgevaardigdes van alle plaaslike kerke bestaan en nie uit die volgende mindere vergadering (klassis - streek - sinode) afgevaardig is nie?**

Die gekose afgevaardigdes kom nie noodwendig uit elke plaaslike kerk nie. Hulle verteenwoordig daardie kerke. As al die plaaslike kerke afgevaardigdes na die sinode verkies het, en u 40 kerke gehad het, en elke kerk 2 verkies, sou u 80 man by die sinode hê. Terwyl in ons Kanadese Gereformeerde Kerkorde en die meeste Gereformeerde kerke, volgens die kerkorde van Dordt, waarskynlik tussen 16 en 20 man by die sinode is. Dit is dus 'n ander soort afvaardiging. Ek sou sê, nee, ons hou wat ons het. As u twee afgevaardigdes van elke kerk het, en u federasie groter word, word die meerdere vergadering onhandelbaar. Dan is daar baie mense, hulle kan nie almal hul gedagtes uitspreek nie, en hulle stem uiteindelik oor kwessies waaroor hulle beraadslaag. En daarom word dit meer 'n soort stemmingsvergadering, eerder as 'n volledig beraadslagende vergadering wat daarna streef om alle kante van 'n saak so goed as moontlik te verstaan en tot gevolgtrekkings te kom wat almal bevredig en soveel moontlik konsensus wil bewerkstellig. En die ander ding is natuurlik dat die kerk nie 'n demokrasie is nie. Ons streef nie regtig na die groot vergaderings om demokrasieë te wees nie. Die konsistorie het 'n direkte gesag van Christus, maar sodra die kerke bymekaarkom, het die vergadering nie direkte gesag van Christus nie, en die

they are office bearers, but they are meeting there as representatives of the churches. If they are meeting as office bearers, it might make sense to make sure we churches are represented by them directly. But, actually, they are attending as representatives of all the churches, not just of their own local church. It is flexible how many men actually go, and you just try to think about the mechanics of the meeting and what makes for the best debates and decisions.

2. Can you explain how the spirit of 1816 worked through in the Dordt revivals of 1836 to 1944?

Dr. Dolf Britz: Dordt cannot revive itself ... That's the thing, and yet, churches went back to Dordt at these dates. So the question is, what really happened? All the Dordt church orders at these dates were adjusted to a certain state of affairs. That's why I posed the question. Was it Dordt, or was there a shift? Was there a shift from Christ's rule towards ecclesiastical authority? That's what I tried to convey, and I put it by way of a question, hoping that there might be one or two younger students that would be interested in the question. Think of 1944, and 1967 in The Netherlands, definitively there is an ecclesiastical trajectory of interpretation. That's what I mean. There is something there, and it should make us a little bit weary of the fact that we very easily start to think in term of ecclesiastical concepts, whilst, in reality, it's about the living Lord. Thank you for the question. It boils down to the real point that I wanted to make. And I think my idea was just to open our minds to think a little bit more about this.

3. Can local unity be attained without being part of one federation? Why focus so strictly on sister church relationship, why deputies contact with churches in SA?

ampsdraers wat daar vergader, word afgevaardig omdat hulle ampsdraers is, maar hulle vergader daar as verteenwoordigers van die kerke. As hulle as ampsdraers byeenkom, kan dit sinvol wees om seker te maak dat ons kerke direk deur hulle verteenwoordig word. Maar in feite is hulle aanwesig as verteenwoordigers van al die kerke, nie net van hulle eie plaaslike kerk nie. Dit maak nie saak hoeveel mans eintlik gaan nie, en u moet net nadink oor die meganika van die vergadering en wat die beste debatte en besluite oplewer.

2. Kan u verduidelik hoe die gees van 1816 deurgewerk het in die Dordt-herlewings van 1836 tot 1944?

Britz: Dordt kan homself nie laat herleef nie ... dit is die ding. En tog het kerke op hierdie datums na Dordt teruggekeer. Die vraag is dus: Wat het regtig gebeur? Al die Dordt-kerkordes op hierdie datums is aangepas vir sekere toedrag van sake. Daarom het ek die vraag gestel. Was dit Dordt, of was daar 'n verskuiwing? Was daar 'n verskuiwing van Christus se heerskappy na kerklike gesag, of was dit nog steeds Christus? Dit is wat ek probeer oordra het, en ek stel dit by wyse van 'n vraag in die hoop dat daar dalk een of twee jonger studente sou wees wat in die vraag sou belangstel. Dink aan 1944 en 1967 in Nederland, daar is definitief 'n kerklike trajek van interpretasie. Dit is wat ek bedoel. Daar is iets daar, en dit behoort ons 'n bietjie versigtig te maak om te maklik te begin dink in kerklike begrippe, terwyl dit in werklikheid oor die lewende Here gaan. Dankie vir die vraag. Dit kom neer op die wesenlike punt wat ek wou maak. En ek dink my idee was net om ons kop oop te maak om 'n bietjie meer hieroor na te dink.

3. Kan plaaslike eenheid verkry word sonder om deel te wees van een kerkverband? Waarom so streng fokus op susterkerkverhouding, waarom deputate kontak binnelandse kerke?

<p>Dr. Hannes Breytenbach: Our approach is most of the time thinking of churches as institutions, or organisations. I like the ideas of Martin Bucer, working from the spiritual reign of Christ. And with the preparation of the lecture I also find it is important to find agreement between church federations on the issue of Christ governing the church spiritually. We should discuss that. Why focus so strictly on sister church relationship? We have arrangements in our federation, in our agreements with each other as churches, but it is important that we have an openness towards other churches in our neighborhood that are also churches of the Lord. We are not the only churches of the Lord. Why deputies for contact with churches in SA? It is one of the instructions by synod that these deputies should give advice to guide local churches in the federation in their discussions with other churches and their outreach to other churches.</p> <p>4. Can a true church belong to more than one federation? Van Raalte: Being part of a federation means you agreed to follow the church order of that federation. If you are going to belong to two federations, they pretty well must have the same church order, otherwise you would agree to follow one, and agree to follow another, which is different. How can you agree to both, if they don't agree with each other? You have a problem if the one federation has one Psalm-singing book, and one Bible translation, and one liturgy, but the other federation has a different Psalm-singing book and a different translation and a different liturgy, which one are you using in your church? And if the two church orders are actually the same, then you should have one federation, not two.</p> <p>5. Question to Dr. Van Raalte: What is your view on church hopping?</p>	<p>Breytenbach: Ons benadering is meesal dat ons oor kerke dink as instellings, of organisasies. Daarom hou ek baie van die idees van Martin Bucer, vanuit die geestelike regering van Christus. En met die voorbereiding van die lesing dink ek ook: Is dit regtig die belangrike saak om eerstens 'n ooreenkoms tussen kerkverbande te probeer vind oor die kwessie van kerkverband, of gaan dit oor die saak van Christus wat sy kerk geestelik regeer? Ons moet dit bespreek. Waarom so sterk fokus op susterkerkverhouding? Ons het reëlins in ons kerkverband, in ons ooreenkomste as kerke, maar dit is belangrik dat ons 'n openheid het teenoor ander kerke in ons omgewing wat ook kerke van die Here is. Ons is nie die enigste kerke van die Here nie. Waarom deputate kontak binnelandse kerke? Dit is een van die opdragte deur die sinode dat hierdie afgevaardigdes advies moet gee om plaaslike kerke in die kerkverband te lei in hul besprekings met ander kerke en hul uitreik na ander kerke.</p> <p>4. Kan 'n ware kerk aan meer as een kerkverband behoort? Van Raalte: Om deel te wees van 'n kerkverband beteken dat u ingestem het om die kerkorde van die kerkverband te volg. As u aan twee kerkverbande gaan behoort, sal hulle dieselfde kerkorde moet hê, anders sou u instem om een te volg, en instem om 'n ander, wat anders is, te volg. Hoe kan u met albei instem as hulle nie met mekaar saamstem nie? Wanneer jy aan twee kerkverbande behoort, dan sal daardie kerkverbande dieselfde kerkorde moet hê, anders kom jy in konflik. U het 'n probleem as die een kerkverband een Psalmboek en een Bybelvertaling en een liturgie het, maar die ander federasie het 'n ander Psalmboek en 'n ander vertaling en 'n ander liturgie, watter gebruik u in u kerk? Dus, en as die twee kerkordes eintlik dieselfde is, moet u een kerkverband hê, nie twee nie.</p> <p>5. Vraag aan dr. Van Raalte: Wat is u siening oor 'church hopping'? Van Raalte: Ek neem aan dat die vraag beteken dat</p>
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Van Raalte: I assume that the question means that you are looking around at other churches and moving from one to another not because one is really sick and dying, but simply for your preference. I would say that's not right. Nr. 1, it's disobedient to your office bearers, nr. 2 it's breaking your own promises when you made profession of faith, and nr. 3 it is very detrimental to the spiritual wellbeing of your family, particularly your children. If children learn that your allegiance to a church is easily changed, they will even more easily change if they grow up.

6. How long should a congregation continue to strive for reformation in a federation that has become sick?

Van Raalte: I think this varies. It is not something that I can determine for my brother or my sister and say to them: Now you must leave. There are some situations I think where it really becomes clear, but in the time that churches are sick, some people leave at one time and other people wait for another ten years, so if I think of The Netherlands and the vrijgemaakte churches right now, one group left around 2003 and another group didn't leave till 2009, and the group from 2003 sometimes said: Why did you wait six more years? And, do you agree that we were acting faithfully to the Lord when we left? We should not have that kind of attitude towards each other. We should pursue the official way of calling our brothers and sisters and sister churches within our federation back to the Lord, and when those official ways are pursued, when you can reasonably say that you have done the most, then you have to say not that you are breaking from them, but that they really have broken the unity of the faith with you.

7. What matters should be sent to synod or classis, or which type of matters should and which ones should not?

u by ander kerke gaan kyk en van een na die ander beweeg, nie omdat een regtig siek en sterwend geword het nie, maar bloot na u eie voorkeur. Ek sou sê dit is nie reg nie. Nr. 1, is dit ongehoorsaam aan u ampsdraers, nr. 2 breek dit jou eie beloftes toe jy geloof bely het, en nr. 3 dit is baie nadelig vir die geestelike welstand van u gesin, veral u kinders. As kinders leer dat u trou aan 'n kerk maklik verander word, sal hulle selfs makliker verander as hulle ouer word.

6. Hoe lank moet 'n gemeente reformerend bly werk in 'n kerkverband wat siek geword het?

Van Raalte: Ek dink dit verskil. Dit is nie iets wat ek vir my broer of my suster kan bepaal en vir hulle kan sê: Nou moet u weggaan nie. Daar is 'n paar situasies waaraan ek dink, waar dit regtig duidelik word, maar in daardie tyd is die kerke siek, kan sommige mense op een slag vertrek en ander mense nog tien jaar wag, soos as ek aan Nederland en die vrygemaakte kerke dink. Op die oomblik het een groep omstreeks 2003 vertrek en 'n ander groep het eers in 2009 vertrek, en die groep uit 2003 het soms gesê: Waarom het u nog ses jaar gewag? En stem u saam dat ons getrou aan die Here opgetree het toe ons vertrek het? Ons moet nie die soort houding teenoor mekaar hê nie. Ons moet die amptelike manier nastreef om ons broers en susters en susterkerke in ons federasie terug te roep tot die Here, en wanneer daardie amptelike kanale maksimaal benut het, as u redelik kan sê dat u die beste na u vermoë gedoen het, moet u sê nie dat u breek van hulle af nie, maar dat hulle regtig die eenheid van die geloof met jou verbreek het.

7. Watter aangeleenthede moet na die sinode of klassis gestuur word, of watter tipe sake moet en watter nie?

Die basiese reël is dat die plaaslike kerk besluit oor

<p>Van Raalte: The rule is this: Everything is decided in the local church, except those things that require the consent of other churches.</p> <p>8. Is a federation broken up when a local church ordains women in the special offices?</p> <p>Van Raalte: if the church order is broken within your federation, in Reformed churches we have at least four different ways of addressing the problem, that is, when the church visitors come each year, they must inquire about this, and represent the other churches of the classis, and the church that invites the church visitors, is asking them to hold them accountable, that's part of your promise in the church order. So the church visitors must ask questions, and the Church Order says that they should fraternally admonish in good time anyone who is not abiding by their promises in the Church Order.</p> <p>Then, at each classis meeting, when the churches' representatives meet together, the chairman of classis is empowered by the churches that meet, to ask each church, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honored, whether the ministry of the local office bearers is being continued, and whether the church needs any help from the other churches, from classis for their government of their church?</p> <p>If that church says: Yes, we honor all the decisions, yes the ministry of the offices continues, no we don't need any help ... but the other churches know that that church is not following the Church Order, the delegates from the other churches may say: Mr. Chairman, I have a question for the delegate from that church: We know these things and we have been</p>	<p>alles ... maar ook dinge soos Bybelvertaling, dis 'n saak wat alle kerke raak, en dus moet dit ook gesamentlik, byvoorbeeld op die klassis, behandel word.</p> <p>8. Word 'n kerkverband verbreek as 'n plaaslike kerk vroue in die spesiale ampte bevestig?</p> <p>Van Raalte: as die kerkorde binne u federasie verbreek word, dan het ons in Gereformeerde kerke ten minste vier verskillende maniere om die probleem aan te spreek. Wanneer die visitatore elke jaar kom, moet hulle hieroor navraag doen en die ander kerke van die klassis, en die kerk wat die visitatore nooi, vra hulle om hulle aanspreeklik te hou, dit is deel van u belofte in die kerkorde. Dus moet die visitatore vrae stel, en die Kerkorde sê dat hulle vroegtydig moet vermaan elkeen wat nie hul beloftes in die Kerkorde nakom nie.</p> <p>Dan, tydens elke klassisvergadering, as die verteenwoordigers van die kerke bymekaarkom, word die voorsitter van klassis bemaagtig deur die kerke wat vergader, om elke kerk te vra of die besluite van die meerdere vergaderings nagekom word, of die bediening van die plaaslike ampsdraers voortgesit word, en of die kerk hulp nodig het van die ander kerke, van klassis vir die regering van hul kerk?</p> <p>As die kerk sê: Ja, ons kom al die besluite na, ja, die bediening van die ampte gaan voort, nee, ons het geen hulp nodig nie ... maar die ander kerke weet dat die kerk nie die Kerkorde volg nie, maar die afgevaardigdes van die ander kerke kan sê: Meneer die Voorsitter, ek het 'n vraag aan die afgevaardigde van die kerk: Ons weet van hierdie dinge en ons het probeer om hierdie dinge aan te spreek, maar die afgevaardigde sê dat hulle saamstem en die besluite volg wat ons in die</p>
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<p>trying to address these things, but that delegate says they agree with and follow the decisions that we took at the major assemblies, and they don't do that, so you challenge that church.</p> <p>But maybe more important than one of those two, is the office of all believers. The member of a church that is not following their own agreement in their Church Order, should write a letter to their consistory, they should ask questions, and then, when they don't get a suitable response, they may then say to the consistory: we feel compelled to appeal your response to the classis, and then the other churches make a judgment on the matter.</p> <p>There are some other possible ways of doing this, but they maybe are more complicated. At the end of the day, if these processes don't bear fruit, then the other churches simply don't accept the credentials of that church, because the credentials when they come to classis always say that we promise to abide by all the decisions that are in keeping with the Word of God and the Church Order. But the other churches say: but you actually aren't abiding by them now, we can't accept the credentials. Nobody is deposing those office bearers or taking them away from their church or congregation, they just simply say: you are not living by your promises, so, now you are not in our federation.</p> <p>Dr. Pieter Boon: One more point of clarity, that's a discussion also going on: when a local church would ordain women office bearers, they would argue: this is not against the Church Order or the Confession ... What would you say about that? Supposing the same Church Order is used as in the CanRC ... Van Raalte: You don't even have to go to the Church Order. Let's just use the</p>	<p>meerdere vergaderings geneem het, en dit doen hulle nie, dan konfronteer jy die betrokke kerk daarmee.</p> <p>Maar miskien is die amp van alle gelowiges belangriker as een van bogenoemde twee. Die lid van 'n kerk wat nie hul eie ooreenkoms in hul Kerkorde volg nie, moet 'n brief aan hul kerkraad skryf, vrae vra, en dan, as hulle nie 'n regte antwoord kry nie, kan hulle dan vir die kerkraad sê: ons voel verplig om ons te beroep o die klassis teen u antwoord, en dan doen die ander kerke uitspraak oor die saak.</p> <p>Daar is 'n paar ander maniere om dit te doen, maar dit is miskien ingewikkelder. Uiteindelik, as hierdie prosesse nie vrugte afwerp nie, aanvaar die ander kerke eenvoudig nie die geloofsbriewe van daardie kerk nie, want die geloofsbriewe as hulle by die klassis kom, sê altyd dat ons belowe om by al die besluite te hou wat ooreenstem met die Woord van God en die Kerkorde. Maar die ander kerke sê: maar julle hou julle nie daaraan nie, ons kan nie die geloofsbriewe aanvaar nie. Niemand neem die ampsdraers af of neem hulle weg van hul kerk of gemeente nie, hulle sê net: julle leef nie volgens julle beloftes nie; nou is julle nie in ons federasie nie.</p> <p>Boon: Nog 'n punt van duidelikheid, dit is ook 'n besprekingpunt: die vraag: wanneer 'n plaaslike kerk vroulike ampsdraers sou orden, sou hulle redeneer: dit is nie teen die Kerkorde of die Geloofsbelydenis nie ... Wat sou u daarvan sê? Veronderstel dieselfde kerkorde word gebruik as in die CanRC ... Van Raalte: Jy hoef nie eers na die Kerkorde te gaan nie. Laat ons net die Geloofsbelydenis gebruik. Alle dinge moet wettig en in orde geskied wanneer mans gekies word volgens die reël van</p>
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Confession of Faith. All things should be done lawfully and in good order when men are chosen in accordance with the rule of the apostle Paul, given to Timothy – it's in BC 30 / 31 / 32, one of the three. So that means that in the Confession we tell ourselves we believe we should go back to what the apostle Paul says and he speaks of the office bearer being the husband of but one wife. He never says: the wife of but one husband ... It is clearly assumed that these are men. And it is taught in the passage just before, that women do not have authority in the church. That would be my first response. It is fairly simple, the Confession refers to the Word of God and the Word of God is clear. It is interesting that in the Christian Reformed Church about 20 years ago, actually even less, they had churches that were ordaining women to office, which was contrary to their Church Order, but they were doing it anyway. So then at a certain point the synod decided to declare that the word 'male' in the Church Order was – they said – inoperative, or something like that. It was there, that didn't take it out, but it didn't mean anything anymore.

9. Why do we only speak about believers, and not about true believers? In the old covenantal people there were those who were keeping the law of Moses, but were not true believers.

Van Raalte: In our confession of faith, BC 29, we speak of the marks of the true church, and we speak of the marks of Christians. It doesn't say: true Christians. So even though the Confession itself doesn't resort to that language very quickly, but I have no objection to using it.

Boon: the Belgic Confession speaks of Christians, but the BC also speaks of hypocrites who may be in the church. I think we should take note of that too. I might also refer back to my lecture. The fact that from Scripture we find a clear

die apostel Paulus, wat aan Timótheüs gegee is - dit is in NGB 30/31/32, een van die drie. Dit beteken dus dat ons in die Belydenisskrif bely dat ons moet teruggaan na wat die apostel Paulus sê, en hy skryf dat die ampsdraer die man van net een vrou is. Hy sê nooit: die vrou van maar een man nie ... Dit word duidelik aanvaar dat dit mans is. En daar word in die gedeelte net daarvoor geleer dat vroue nie gesag in die kerk het nie. Dit sou my eerste antwoord wees. Dit is redelik eenvoudig, die belydenis verwys na die Woord van God en die Woord van God is duidelik. Dit is interessant dat hulle ongeveer 20 jaar gelede, selfs nog minder, in die Christian Reformed Church, daar kerke was wat vroue tot die amp georden het, wat strydig met hul kerkorde was, maar hulle het dit in elk geval gedoen. Toe besluit die sinode op 'n sekere tydstip om te verklaar dat die woord 'manlik' in die Kerkorde - sê hulle - buite werking gestel is, of iets dergeliks. Hulle het dit nie uitgehaal het nie, maar dit het niks meer beteken nie.

9. Waarom praat ons net van gelowiges en nie van ware gelowiges nie? In die ou verbondsvolk was daar diegene wat die wet van Moses onderhou het, maar nie ware gelowiges was nie.

Van Raalte: In ons geloofsbelydenis, NGB 29, praat ons van die merke van die ware kerk, en praat ons van die merke van Christene. Dit sê nie: ware Christene nie. Dus, al gebruik die Belydenis self nie baie vinnig daardie taal nie, ek het geen beswaar om dit te gebruik nie.

Boon: Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis praat van Christene, maar die NGB praat ook van hipokriete wat daar in die kerk kan wees. Ek dink ons moet ook daarvan kennis neem. Ek kan ook na my lesing terugverwys. Die feit dat ons in die Skrif 'n duidelike antitese vind tussen die kerk en die wêreld, maar daarbo op, die Skrif openbaar ook 'n

<p>antithesis between the church and the world, and in addition, Scripture also reveals an antithesis between the true believers and the church members who have become worldly in doctrine and life. That distinction we find in the Bible. Hypocrites are not easy to distinguish.</p> <p>Britz: I do not think one can disclose the question or the issue raised in terms of the quality of the person believing. It's linked to what the Lord Jesus Christ actually in reality is imparting unto us. He is gathering, defending and preserving for Himself by his Spirit and Word in the unity of the true faith, not based on the quality of persons, or Christians. I think truth, even the true church, is embedded in what Christ does. Otherwise we make the norm ourselves and say: the church should comply with the norms, and you detach it from Christ, then you become Arminian, then you have to choose, and the One who chooses, is pushed to the background. So I think, this is as far as I am concerned, important, just to disclose this issue in terms of what Christ is actually in reality doing.</p> <p>Boon: The true church is defined on the basis of true doctrine, not on the basis of true believers, and in every church there will be hypocrites, there will also be those who are not true believers.</p> <p>10. When dealing with John 17, why was there no reference to Mark 12, where we read that he is my brother, sister and mother, who is doing the will of the Father?</p> <p>Boon: When we talk about the church of Christ, when we talk about federating together, there are many passages in the Bible that are applicable. I agree with this, Mark 12 is also very applicable. I had a time limit, I could not deal with all of them. This is a beautiful text indeed: He who does the will of my Father, he is my ...</p>	<p>antitese tussen die ware gelowiges en die kerklidmate wat wêrelds geword het in leer en lewe. Daardie onderskeid vind ons ook in die Bybel. Hipokriete is nie maklik om te onderskei nie.</p> <p>Britz: Ek dink nie 'n mens kan die kwessie benader in terme van die kwaliteit van die persoon wat glo nie. Dit hou verband met wat die Here Jesus Christus in werklikheid aan ons gee. Hy versamel, verdedig en bewaar vir Homself deur sy Gees en Woord in die eenheid van die ware geloof, nie gebaseer op die kwaliteit van persone of Christene nie. Ek dink die waarheid, selfs die ware kerk, is ingebed in wat Christus doen. Anders stel ons die norm self en sê: die kerk moet aan die norme voldoen, en jy maak dit los van Christus, dan word jy Arminiaans, dan moet jy kies, en die Een wat kies, word op die agtergrond gedruk. Ek dink dus, dit is wat my betref belangrik, net om hierdie kwessie te benader in terme van wat Christus in werklikheid doen.</p> <p>Boon: Die ware kerk word gedefinieer op grond van die ware leer, nie op grond van ware gelowiges nie, en in elke kerk gaan daar ook hipokriete wees, gaan daar ook nie ware gelowiges wees.</p> <p>10. Waarom is daar by Johannes 17 nie verwys na Markus 12 waar ons lees dat hy my broer, suster en moeder is wat die wil van die Vader doen nie?</p> <p>Boon: As ons praat oor die kerk van Christus, as ons praat oor die vorming van 'n kerkverband, is daar baie gedeeltes in die Bybel wat van toepassing is. Ek stem hiermee saam, Markus 12 is ook baie toepaslik. Ek het 'n tydsbeperking gehad, ek kon nie almal behandel nie. Dit is inderdaad 'n pragtige teks: Hy wat die wil van my Vader doen, hy is my ...</p>
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11. Regarding the first conclusion, in practice even those with whom we have significant doctrinal differences, they usually claim also to adhere to Sola Scriptura and Tota Scriptura. How do we solve this dilemma?

Boon: I think this is a dilemma that already existed in the NT. Paul says: even if an angel from heaven teaches something else, do not accept him. So that is why we build on the rock of God's Word alone, and as we confess it in the forms of unity. This is our point of view, and even though people shout so loudly that they totally agree with everything, but if their actions, or what they publish, or what they say do not match with this, then one must also draw your conclusions. That's just the reality. I don't think there has ever been a heretic in history who said he denies Christ. It is a reality that we as a church of Christ live with, and we should not be fooled. Every heretic has his letter.

Britz: I think in such a case, why not let a person explicate Scripture in terms of his or her point of view. I think of the so called issue of women in office. Let them preach before the classis on relevant applicable texts. Then I think you have got a substantiated platform to adjudicate. It is no longer a theological opinion. It's preaching of Scripture. And then talk about it.

Boon: I think we are faced with the reality that the moment someone goes astray, they start to duck and dive. They start hiding away and talking nicely, emphasizing that we must maintain the mutual bond of peace. So to get an explicit debate is difficult. We saw it already in the times of the Reformation, those religious debates, the heretics constantly recanted from it. Because they know that if the field is level, and there are debates based on Scripture, that they are going to be

11. Wat die eerste subkonklusie betref: In die realiteit is daar altyd hulle waarmee ons beduidende leerstellige verskille het, maar wat beweer dat hulle heeltemal agter die Sola Scriptura beginsel staan en die Tota Scriptura beginsel. Hoe los mens hierdie dilemma op?

Boon: Ek dink hierdie is 'n dilemma wat daar alreeds in die NT was. Paulus sê: Selfs al sou 'n engel uit die hemel iets anders leer, moet hom nie aanvaar nie. Dit is hoekom ons bou op die rots van God se Woord alleen, soos ons dit ook bely in die formuliere van eenheid. Dit is ons standpunt, en al skreeu mense hoe hard dat hulle heeltemal saam met alles stem, maar as hulle dade, of dit wat hulle publiseer, of dit wat hulle sê, nie daarmee ooreenstem nie, dan moet mens ook jou konklusies trek. Dit is gewoon die realiteit. Ek dink nie daar was al ooit 'n ketter in die geskiedenis gewees wat gesê het hy verloën Christus nie. Dit is 'n realiteit waarmee ons as kerk van Christus lewe, en ons moet ons nie om die bos laat lei nie. Elke ketter het sy letter.

Britz: Ek dink in so 'n geval, waarom nie iemand toelaat om die Skrif te verklaar in terme van sy of haar standpunt nie. Ek dink aan die sogenaamde kwessie van vroue in die amp. Laat hulle voor die klassis preek oor toepaslike tekste. Dan dink ek dat u 'n gemotiveerde platform het om te beoordeel. Dit is nie meer 'n teologiese mening nie. Dit is die prediking van die Skrif. En praat daaroor.

Boon: Ek dink ons sit met die realiteit dat die oomblik as iemand dwaal, dan begin hulle ook wegkruip. Hulle begin hulle in hulle hokkie toesluit en mooi praat en benadruk dat ons die onderlinge band van vrede moet handhaaf. So om 'n eksplisiete debat te kry is moeilik. Ons sien dit ook in die tyd van die Reformasie, die kettters het heeltyd vir die godsdiensgesprekke teruggedeins. Want hulle weet dat as die speelveld gelyk is, en daar is debatte op grond van die Skrif, dat hulle die onderspit gaan delf. Gevolglik word daar dan eerdere van kerkpolitiek gebruik gemaak, dan word allerlei dinge gedoen om dit te voorkom.

Britz: dit het by Dordt gebeur. Hulle moes kom en die Skrif kom uitlê aan die sinode, daardie tekste

<p>exposed, so then we get into church politics, then all kinds of things are done to prevent it.</p> <p>Britz: It happened at Dordt. They had to come and explain the Scriptures to the synod, those texts that were compromised. I find this a good way of working. If they don't come, you know. Come and explain the texts in terms of the preaching of the Gospel. It's not a theological opinion, based or related to the Bible, that we want to listen to. It's not foreign to our own tradition, because that happened at the synod of Dordt 1618.</p> <p>Van Raalte to Britz: do you mean that the classis would invoke the subscription form and say to the pastor: You subscribed to the Word of God as summarized in the confessions, and we want a further explanation, we like you to do it in the form of "Thus says the Lord" ... I never thought of using it that way in saying: Preach a sermon, instead of just asking questions, but that helps bring out the issue. I like that. Thank you.</p> <p>12. Translation: Churches can find one another in the ICRC on the basis of Scripture and confession. But why cannot this happen in the same country? Because the unity in Christ should bind us together, or not?</p> <p>Breytenbach: We are often so much stuck in structures and history, and traditions, that it is difficult for neighbours to come to ecclesiastical unity, while with a federation in another country or outside our tradition that is far away, that's easier. The problem is you have to find each other not in structures, but in Jesus Christ. If we are in the ICRC then we come to the meeting, afterwards we go our own way again. If you have a church in the same town or city that is in the Reformed tradition, have the same Reformed Confession, then it is more difficult,</p>	<p>wat in die gedrang gebring is. Dit vind ek 'n goeie werkswyse. Kom hulle nie, dan weet jy mos. Kom verduidelik die tekste in terme van die verkondiging van die Evangelie. Dit is nie 'n teologiese opinie, op 'n manier gebaseer op die Bybel, waarna ons wil luister nie. Dit is nie vreemd aan ons eie tradisie nie, want dit het by die sinode van Dordt 1618 gebeur.</p> <p>Van Raalte aan Britz: Bedoel u dat die klassis die ondertekeningformulier sal aanhaal en vir die predikant sê: U het geteken vir die Woord van God soos opgesom in die belydenisskrifte, en ons wil 'n verdere uiteensetting hê, ons wil graag hê dat u dit doen in die 'n vorm van 'So sê die Here' ... Ek het nooit daaraan gedink om dit so te gebruik om te sê: 'n preek hou in plaas daarvan om net vrae te stel nie, maar dit help om die saak aan die orde te stel. Ek hou daarvan. Dankie.</p> <p>12. Kerke kan sig vind in die ICRC op grond van Bybel en belydenis. Hoekom kan dit nie in dieselfde land plaasvind nie? Die eenheid in Christus bind ons tog saam?</p> <p>Breytenbach: Ons sit dikwels so vas in strukture en geskiedenis, en tradisies dat dit moeilik is vir bure om tot kerklike eenheid te kom, terwyl dit in 'n ander land of buite ons tradisie wat ver weg is, dit miskien makliker is. Die hele probleem is dat mens mekaar nie in strukture moet vind nie, maar in Jesus Christus. As ons in die ICRC is, dan kom ons na die vergadering, daarna gaan ons weer ons eie pad. As jy in jou eie land in dieselfde dorp of stad 'n kerk het wat in die Gereformeerde tradisie is, Gereformeerde belydenis, dan is dit weer moeiliker, want daar is 'n geskiedenis daaragter, daar is ook 'n geskiedenis van gesprekke met mekaar, van onvermoë om mekaar te vind, en ja, ons probeer kerklik by mekaar uitkom, maar ons moet altyd onthou, dit gaan daaroor dat ons eenheid in Jesus Christus is.</p>
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<p>because there is a history behind it, there is also a history of conversations with each other, of inability to find each other, and yes, we try to come together in one church federation , but we have always to remember, it's about our unity in Jesus Christ.</p> <p>Boon: I can only agree. I think this is a reality everywhere in the world and also in our country. There is a history of ecclesiastical traditions, church related traditions, own culture within church federations - that is one side. I think it's important what Dr. Breytenbach says, the unity must grow organically, it must be in Christ. It does not help that the top structure, which is not a Dordt concept anyway, but people experience it so that the top structure achieves organizational unity, but in the meantime it does not live in the congregations. It is a counterfeit unity, a fake unity, so to speak. It must grow from the bottom.</p> <p>Currently in SA, there are three church federations that are members of the ICRC. I'm pretty sure most of you sitting here know two of them, but the third one you might not know. So it shows you what is the reality at ground level. Who's the third one? Apart from the FRCSA and the RCSA, it is the Free Church of Southern Africa, which originated from the Free Church of Scotland's missionary work, especially in the Eastern Cape. From that a church federation emerged that currently functions with a number of congregations. I was privileged to attend their Assembly last year, but yes, the contacts are limited. We have to be a hand and a foot to each other. This is just an example to show what Dr. Breytenbach said: separate history or historical developments lead to being unknown to each other. This makes the calling from John 17 very relevant. On the other hand, of course, there are things that complicate it. In particular in regards to contacts between</p>	<p>Boon: Ek kan net daarby aansluit. Ek dink dit is 'n realiteit orals in die wêreld en ook in ons land, dat daar 'n geskiedenis van kerklike tradisies is, kerkverbandelike tradisies, eie kultuur binne kerkverbande - dit is die een kant. Ek dink dit is belangrik wat Dr. Breytenbach sê, die eenheid moet organies groei, dit moet in Christus wees. Dit help nie dat die topstruktuur, wat in elk geval nie 'n Dordtse begrip is nie, maar mense beleef dit so, dat die topstruktuur organisatoriese eenheid bereik, maar dat dit nie leef in die gemeentes nie. Dit is 'n namaak-eenheid. Dit moet groei van onder af.</p> <p>Tans in SA is daar drie kerkverbande wat lid is van die ICRC. Ek is redelik seker dat die meeste van u wat hier sit, twee van hulle ken, maar die derde een ken u nie waarskynlik nie. So dit wys mens wat is die realiteit op grondvlak. Wie's die derde een? Behalwe vir die VGKSA en die GKSA, is dit die Free Church of Southern Africa, en dit is 'n kerkverband wat ontstaan het vanuit die Free Church of Scotland se sendingswerk, veral in die Oos-Kaap. Daaruit het 'n kerkverband voortgekom wat tans funksioneer met 'n hele aantal gemeentes. Ek was bevoorreg om laasjaar hulle Assembly by te woon, maar ja, die kontakte is beperk. Ons moet 'n hand en 'n voet vir mekaar wees. Dit is slegs 'n voorbeeld om te verduidelik wat Dr. Breytenbach gesê het: Aparte geskiedenis of geskiedkundige ontwikkelings lei tot onbekendheid. Dit maak die roeping uit Joh 17 wel baie aktueel.</p> <p>Aan die ander kant is daar natuurlik dinge wat dit kompliseer. Ek dink in besonder aan samesprekings wat daar is tussen gemeentes van die VGKSA en GKSA. Daar is naamlik in die GKSA ook kerke wat openlik die standpunt huldig dat hulle mag afwyk van die Kerkorde, byvoorbeeld dat hulle wel vroue in die besondere ampte mag bevestig. So dit is 'n kompliserende faktor. Soos Dr. Van Raalte gesê het: kan een kerk deel wees van twee kerkverbande? Wel, as die twee Kerkordes dieselfde is. Maar dan moet daardie twee kerkverbande dus eintlik mos een wees? Die Kerkordes van die VGKSA en die GKSA is nagenoeg dieselfde is. Maar die kompliserende faktor is die nalewing van daardie Kerkorde. Dis nie dieselfde nie. So dinge is op papier dalk dieselfde, maar in</p>
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<p>congregations of the FRCSA and RCSA. There are currently churches in the RCSA that openly hold the view that they may deviate from the Church Order, for example that they may indeed ordain women in ecclesiastical offices. That is a complicating factor. Like Dr. Van Raalte said: can one church be part of two church federations? Well, if the two Church orders are the same. Now we are faced with the situation that the Church Orders of the FRCSA and the RCSA are almost the same. But the complicating factor is the observance of that Church Order. That is not the same. So things may be the same on paper, but in practice things are not the same for all RCSA congregations. This is the complicating factor.</p> <p>Van Raalte: With the ICRC, the churches have a forum, a way of meeting each other and talking about these things, and it is expected to happen, but if you don't have a similar type of broadly ecumenical meeting in SA, you don't really have a forum to discuss those things. If you don't have such a forum, maybe you should explore having it, and then I guess the other question is, what if in your own federation things are taking place that are contrary to the church order, how much do we love our brothers and sisters in the churches of the federation so that we are acting on the right motivation, because I can ask myself the same question. We have a few things in the CanRC that we are addressing in the public press, in our magazines, but yes, we have to ask ourselves, are we doing our most personally, if we put so much effort in chastising the Dutch churches.</p> <p>Boon: Let me add in this regard, the ICRC has regional conferences, which are also taking place, but the reality is that the regional conferences are struggling here in Africa. It's struggling to get off the ground. A lot of work still lies ahead of us. The</p>	<p>praktyk is dinge nie dieselfde wat alle gemeentes van die GKSA betref nie. Dit is die kompliserende faktor.</p> <p>Van Raalte: In die ICRC het die kerke 'n regionale forum, 'n manier om mekaar te ontmoet en oor hierdie dinge te praat, en dit sal na verwagting gebeur, maar as u nie 'n soortgelyke soort het nie van 'n breë ekumeniese vergadering in SA nie, het jy nie regtig 'n forum om hierdie dinge te bespreek nie. As u nie so 'n forum het nie, moet u dit miskien ondersoek om dit te kry, en dan dink ek dat die ander vraag is: wat as daar in u eie federasie dinge plaasvind wat strydig is met die kerklike orde, hoe lief is ons vir ons broers en susters in die kerkverband sodat ons met die regte motivering optree, want ek kan myself dieselfde vraag stel. Ons het 'n paar dinge in die CanRC wat ons in die openbare pers, in ons tydskrifte, aanspreek, maar doen ons werklik moeite intern ook, as ons soveel moeite doen om die Nederlandse kerke te tugtig.</p> <p>Boon: Ek kan dalk in hierdie verband sê, die ICRC het regionale konferensies, wat ook plaasvind, maar die realiteit is dat die regionale konferensies hier in Afrika sukkel. Dit sukkel om van die grond te kom. Daar lê nog heelwat werk vir ons en wag. Die regionale konferensies in Amerika, ek dink bv. aan NAPARC, dit gebeur op 'n jaarlikse basis. Maar hier gebeur dit nie. As ons gelukkig is, kry ons een elke vier jaar. Daar is beplanning vir 'n volgende regionale konferensie van al die lidkerke in Afrika, daar is dink ek 5-10 lidkerke in Afrika van die ICRC, en as alles uitwerk sal die volgende een volgende jaar in Nairobi plaasvind in Kenia.</p>
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regional conferences in America, I think e.g. of NAPARC, happen on an annual basis. But this is not happening here. If we are lucky, we get one every four years. There are prospects for a next regional conference of all the member churches in Africa, I think there are 5-10 member churches in Africa of the ICRC, and if all works out, the next one next year will take place in Nairobi in Kenya.

13. Does the Westminster Confession fare better in terms of the distinction between ecclesiastical church rule and specific biblical injunction?

Van Raalte: I would think that the question requires that we actually have the Westminster Confession in front of us, and everybody would have to have a copy and we need to look at it more. I couldn't answer that.

14. Translation: Can there be a sister church relationship with congregations who do not allow black people in their worship services?

Van Raalte: No.
Breytenbach: No.
Britz: No.
Boon: No.

15. Translation: Should we sever ecclesiastical fellowship when a sister church synod decided to ordain women office bearers? And if yes, why should we sever?

Van Raalte: I will begin. This is a very relevant question because of the decisions in the GKV. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia have said that they must sever ecclesiastical fellowship. The ICRC have said that the GKV are no longer going to be members. They have maybe two years where they are still on some committees, but if they don't change, then they are out for sure. And the CanRC in their synod in May 2019 also severed their ties. The churches didn't do this quickly and they

13. Is die Westminster Confession beter wat betref die onderskeid tussen kerklike regering en spesifieke bybelse begrotings?

Van Raalte: Ek sou dink dat die vraag vereis dat ons eintlik die Westminster Confession voor ons het, en dat almal 'n eksemplaar moet hê en dat ons meer daarna moet kyk. Ek kan dit nie beantwoord nie.

14. Kan daar 'n susterkerkverhouding wees met gemeentes wat nie swartmense in die eredienste soek nie?

Van Raalte: Nee.
Breytenbach: Nee.
Britz: Nee.
Boon: Nee.

15. Moet 'n susterkerkverhouding verbreek word wanneer daardie susterkerk se sinode besluit het om vroue in die ampte toe te laat? En hoekom moet die susterkerkverhouding verbreek word?

Van Raalte: Ek sal begin. Dit is 'n baie relevante vraag as gevolg van die besluite in die GKV. Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke van Australië het gesê dat hulle kerklike korrespondensie moet verbreek. Die ICRC het gesê dat die GKV nie meer lid sal wees nie. Hulle het miskien twee jaar waar hulle nog in sommige komitees is, maar as hulle nie verander nie, is hulle seker uit. En die CanRC in hul sinode in Mei 2019 het ook hul bande verbreek. Die kerke het dit nie vinnig gedoen nie en hulle het hul susterkerk gewaarsku oor die laaste 3 sinodes en hulle besoek. Canada het 'n spesiale komitee gehad net om die situasie in die Nederlandse kerke te hanteer. In die geval van die CanRC het hulle nie

warned their sister church over the last 3 synods I think and visited them. Canada even had a special committee only to deal with that situation in the Dutch churches. In the case of the CanRC they have not extended ecclesiastical fellowship to any group that has left the GKv. I foresee that, the Lord willing, that may happen, but you must honor the relationship you have and maintain it until it is gone and then after that we can talk to the other churches that have left. When it is clear that the churches as a federation have taken this decision, and some time has been given for appeals within their church federation and you have had time to admonish them and discuss it with them, then the time comes that you have to break fellowship, I'm convinced of that.

Is it right to wait to build ties with those congregations or churches that have seceded, until the official relationship with eg. the GKv is broken. Is that right? Is it brotherly?

Van Raalte: I think that's a very good question. In principle we look at them and say, they surely seem to be our faithful brothers and so we make sure that we talk to them. We also give them our prayers and support, but we also acknowledge our official relationships (as with the GKv), and I think we should be careful about that, officially speaking. My heart is with you, because just before our last synod, I wanted to argue, maybe with some public writing, that our committee on relations with churches abroad should have been more positive about the GKN (that's the 2009 group), and then I reflected more and I thought, no, I think the committee on relations with churches abroad is being careful not to move too quickly, because we still have a relationship with the GKv. You end up speaking out of two sides of your mouth, if you have a relationship with both the GKv and those who left them – I mean an ecclesiastical relationship

kerklike gemeenskap uitgebrei na enige groep wat die GKv verlaat het nie. Ek voorsien dat die DV kan gebeur, maar u moet die verhouding wat u het, respekteer en onderhou totdat dit verdwyn het, en daarna kan ons met die ander kerke wat oor is, praat. As dit duidelik is dat die kerke as federasie hierdie besluit geneem het, en daar 'n geruime tyd tyd gegee is vir appèlle binne hul kerkverband, en u tyd gehad het om hulle te vermaan en met hulle te bespreek, dan kom die tyd dat u die bande moet breek, ek is daarvan oortuig.

Is dit korrek om te wag met bande bou met daardie gemeentes of kerke wat afgestig het, totdat die amptelike verhouding met bv. die GKv verbreek is. Is dit wel reg? Is dit wel broederlik?

Van Raalte: Ek dink dit is 'n baie goeie vraag. In beginsel kyk ons na hulle en sê dat dit sekerlik ons getroue broers is en daarom sorg ons dat ons met hulle praat. Ons gee hulle ook ons gebede en ondersteuning, maar ons erken ook ons amptelike verhoudings (soos met die GKv), en ek dink ons moet versigtig daarvoor wees. My hart is met u, want net voor ons laaste sinode wou ek, miskien met 'n skrywe in die pers, dat ons komitee vir betrekkinge met kerke in die buiteland positiewer kon wees oor die GKN, dit is die groep van 2009, maar toe het ek weer gedink en, nee, ek dink die komitee vir betrekkinge met kerke in die buiteland is versigtig om nie te vinnig te beweeg nie, want ons het nog steeds 'n verhouding met die GKv. U praat uiteindelik met twee monde, as u 'n verhouding het met beide die GKv en diegene wat hulle verlaat het - ek bedoel 'n kerklike verhouding - so lyk dit vir my net omdat dit 'n periode van verandering is en dinge is vloeibaar en nie alles kan onmiddellik besluit en onmiddellik duidelik word nie, en ons moet daarmee saamleef, al is dit 'n bietjie moeilik.

– so it seems to me. It is a period of change and it's in flux and not everything can be immediately decided and immediately clear, and we have to live with that, even if it is a bit difficult.

16. Rev. Boon stacks up a great, written kind of truth, but he, like all synodically, reformed people who wrongly concluded that there should be synods.

Boon: It's not a question, but an assessment of my lecture, that I make such a wrong conclusion, but I personally think it might be better if I didn't defend myself, but maybe one of you can do this question, want like this is the case, I also have to change my reading.

Breytenbach: What I was trying to say last night is that I agree with reformers like Martin Bucer who emphasize *Christ's direct spiritual government of his church and that in the line of Calvin you see synods as means by which the spiritual government of Christ in the church is promoted and defended*. So you can come together regularly, or in other circumstances not regularly, you come together as churches to promote Christ's government and that is for protection, in the sense of us as churches. I agree with this and then, like Prof. Van Raalte also said referring to the Reformation history of the French churches, that in those matters that also affect other churches, there we have to consult each other, and if matters can not be resolved locally, matters that we have to make decisions on locally, then we also come together as churches to help and deliberate together, to make decisions together.

Van Raalte: I hope I don't repeat anything that Hannes said, but all of the texts in the NT reflect a time, when the apostles lived and worked. The apostle Paul could say, that, as the churches of Galatia are doing – saving money every Sunday, as I told them - so you Corinthians, you do the same (1 Cor 1:1,2). Dr. Boon used texts like that, and they are given with this apostolic authority, and they have an authority that extends over many churches. Now the Roman Catholic Church and any church that's episcopalian today, claims that that

16. Ds Boon stapel 'n geweldige hoeveelheid skriftuurlike waarhede op, maar hy maak soos alle sinodaal Gereformeerde mense die verkeerde gevolgtrekking dat daar sinodes moet wees.

Boon: Dit is nie 'n vraag nie, maar 'n beoordeling van my lesing, dat ek dus 'n foutiewe gevolgtrekking maak, maar ek dink persoonlik dis dalk beter dat ek nou nie myself verdedig nie, maar miskien kan een van u dit beantwoord, want as dit die geval is, moet ek my lesing verander.

Breytenbach: Wat ek gisteraand probeer sê het, is dat ek saamstem met hervormers soos Martin Bucer wat die klem lê op *Christus se geestelike regering van sy kerk en dat in die lyn van Calvyn jy sinodes sien as middele waardeur die geestelike regering van Christus in die kerk bevorder en beskerm word*. So jy kan saamkom gereeld, of in ander omstandighede nie gereeld nie, jy kom saam as kerke om Christus se regering te bevorder en dit is tot beskerming, in die sin van ons as kerke. Ek stem saam hieroor en dan, soos Prof. Van Raalte ook gesê het, dat die sake waar dit ook die ander kerke raak, daar moet ons mekaar raadpleeg, en as sake nie plaaslik opgelos kan word nie, sake waarvoor ons besluite moet neem plaaslik, dan kom ons ook as kerke bymekaar om mekaar te help en saam te beraadslaag, saam tot besluite te kom.

Van Raalte: Ek hoop dat ek niks herhaal wat Hannes gesê het nie, maar al die tekste in die NT weerspieël 'n tyd waarin die apostels gewoon en gewerk het. Die apostel Paulus kon sê, net soos die kerke van Galasië doen, het ek vir hulle gesê, om elke Sondag geld te spaar, dat julle Korintiërs dieselfde doen (1 Kor 1: 1,2), en tekste soos dié wat dr. Boon gebruik het, word met hierdie apostoliese gesag gegee, en hulle het 'n gesag wat oor baie kerke strek. Nou beweer die Rooms-Katolieke Kerk en enige kerk wat vandag episkopaal is, dat die apostoliese gesag voortduur en dat daar mans is wat deur God georden is wat

apostolic authority continues and that there are men ordained by God who can command churches and ministers to do things. But, we now come to the time when the apostolic order is completed, and I spent quite some time with the students earlier this week, going through all the texts that showing how the apostolic office was unique, and that it has ended. That's fundamental to Reformed church polity, that now no church may lord it over another church, and no office bearer over another office bearer. So now all those churches must work together in the way that the apostle laid out for them, as he set out the foundation for us to work together. I think the conclusion is correct. We just have to account for the ending of the apostolic office, and we could go through Acts 15, which is a really interesting account of how a problem in the early church was dealt with. Just in brief, the church of Jerusalem had men that went from Jerusalem, these men from Jerusalem asserted that unless you are circumcised according to the law of Moses, you cannot be saved. They went to Antioch. And the church of Antioch was greatly disturbed, so the church of Antioch said: we are going to appoint two men and we are going to send them to Jerusalem and ask the Jerusalem leaders: did these teachers teach what you want them to teach? The church of Jerusalem says in its concluding letter, in Acts 15:24, that these men were not authorized by us. They did not teach what we teach, and it is not true that the Gentiles have to keep the law of Moses. When Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem, the Jerusalem council met, that is, the apostles and the elders of Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas put the question to them, because there they are the sending church, you see something there of the authority of the local church, but it is still combined with the apostles, and then they make their decision, and they send their letter out to the churches. They send it to more churches than Antioch, because they acknowledge in their letters that these false teachers had also gone to Syria and Cilicia and Antioch, so three churches at least, churches that the apostle Paul had started already. You see a very interesting interacting of two local churches that consult each other and ask, did you give the sending and the authority for this teaching, and

kerke en predikante kan beveel om dinge te doen. Maar ons kom nou tot die tyd toe die apostoliese orde voltooi is, en ek het vroeër die week 'n geruime tyd saam met die studente deurgebring, en deur al die tekste gegaan wat getoon het hoe die apostoliese amp uniek was en dat dit geëindig het. Dit is fundamenteel vir die Gereformeerde kerkreg, dat geen kerk nou mag heers oor 'n ander kerk nie, en geen ampsdraer oor 'n ander ampsdraer nie. Dat al hierdie kerke nou voortaan moet saamwerk op die manier soos die apostel die grondslag vir hulle gelê het. Ek dink die gevolgtrekking is korrek. Ons moet net rekenskap gee van die beëindiging van die apostoliese amp, en ons kan Handeling 15 deurgaen, wat 'n baie interessante weergawe is van hoe 'n probleem in die vroeë kerk hanteer is. Kortom, die kerk van Jerusalem het manne gehad wat van Jerusalem af vertrek het. Hierdie manne het beweer dat, tensy u besny word volgens die wet van Moses, kan u nie gered word nie. Hulle is na Antiochië. En die kerk van Antiochië was baie verontrus; daarom het die kerk van Antiochië gesê: ons gaan twee mans aanstel, en ons sal hulle na Jerusalem stuur en die leiers in Jerusalem vra: het hierdie leraars geleer wat u wil hê? Die kerk van Jerusalem sê in hulle finale brief, in Handeling 15:24, hierdie manne is nie deur ons gemagtig nie. Hulle het nie geleer wat ons leer nie, en dit is nie waar dat die heidene die wet van Moses moes onderhou nie. Toe Paulus en Barnabas na Jerusalem vertrek, vergader die Raad van Jerusalem, wat die apostels en die ouderlinge van Jerusalem was. Paulus en Barnabas stel die vraag aan hulle, want hulle is die sendende kerk. Mens sien daar iets van die gesag van die plaaslike kerk, maar dit word steeds gekombineer met die apostels, en dan neem hulle hul besluit, en hulle stuur hul brief na die kerke toe, en hulle stuur dit na meer kerke as Antiochië, omdat hulle in hul briewe erken dat hierdie valse leraars ook na Sirië en Silicië and Antiochië gegaan het, so drie kerke in elk geval, kerke wat die apostel Paulus begin het. U sien 'n baie interessante interaksie van twee plaaslike kerke met mekaar beraadslaag, en aan mekaar vra: Het u hulle gestuur en die gesag vir hierdie lering gegee, en dan saam met die apostels word 'n besluit geneem wat al die kerke dan kan weet: Nee, dit is nie 'n leer wat ons onderskryf nie.

then, together with the apostles make a decision that all the churches can then know: No, that is not a teaching that we endorse. And at the same time it has this apostolic authority to cover more than one church.

Boon: I might just add one thing myself, which I mentioned in the lecture, is that we find the seed in the NT, and it starts to grow and become a flower. I think Van Raalte beautifully explained the salvation-historical context of the apostolic office and that it came to an end. What we find in the seed, it has to start flowering and I think it is very important that we go back to the Scriptures to see what the seed looks like. I think it is a danger that, as we now live in the 21st century, there has been noise over time. By noise I mean that when we go back to the Scriptures and when we talk about contemporary institutions, so much has happened in the meantime, take for example a word like synod - that word has got connotations for us all, which makes it a loaded term. I think it can sometimes frustrate communication. I also mentioned that although we are part of a 'Dordt Revival' movement, so to speak, we descend from the Secession, Doleantie, the Vereeniging, the Liberation, it can easily happen that we are in our thinking about the synod still influenced by the *Algemene Reglement*. It can happen very easily, and I think that's an important point mentioned. So when we talk about synod, then we have to define the word correctly, and maybe we just have to go back to the original meaning, originally it means *gathering*, nothing more. It is not, as the General Rule says, the highest authority of the church. It is not a permanent organ. There is no permanent moderation. You have to eliminate all that noise. So we have to go back to what is the original intention, and I think Dr. Breytenbach also explained this: churches that are in Christ, find each other. They are not just in isolation, they are looking for each other and they come together - *gathering*. And there they talk to each other and make appointments about things of mutual interest. So that's just what I wanted to add.

En terselfdertyd het dit hierdie apostoliese gesag om meer as een kerk te dek.

Boon: ek wil dalk self net een ding toevoeg, wat ek genoem het in die lesing, is dat ons die saadjie in die NT vind, en dit begin groei en 'n blom te word. Ek dink Dr. Van Raalte het mooi die heilshistoriese konteks verduidelik van die apostoliese amp en dat dit tot 'n einde gekom het. Dit wat ons in die saadjie vind, dit moet begin blom en ek dink dis baie belangrik dat ons teruggaan na die Skrif, om te sien hoe lyk die saadjie. Ek dink dit is wel 'n gevaar dat daar, ons leef nou in die 21e eeu, deur die loop van die tyd ruis opgetree het. Met ruis bedoel ek dat as ons teruggaan na die Skrif en as ons praat oor hedendaagse instellings, daar het so baie gebeur in die tussentyd, neem byvoorbeeld 'n woord soos sinode – daai woord het vir ons almal konnotasies gekry, wat dit 'n baie gelaaide term maak. Ek dink dit kan soms ook die kommunikasie frustreer. Ek het ook genoem dat hoewel ons deel is van 'n 'Dordt Revival' beweging, om dit nou maar so te noem, ons stam af uit die Afskeiding, die Doleantie, die Vereeniging, die Vrymaking, kan dit maklik gebeur dat ons in ons denke tog nog dink oor byvoorbeeld die sinode in die terme van die Algemene Reglement. Dit kan baie maklik gebeur, en ek dink dis 'n belangrike punt wat hy genoem het. So as ons praat oor sinode, dan moet ons die woord wel reg definieer, en miskien moet ons gewoon teruggaan na die oorspronklike betekenis, oorspronklik beteken dit *samekoms*, niks meer nie. Dit is nie soos die Algemene Reglement sê, die hoogste gesagsorgaan van die kerk nie. Dis nie 'n permanente orgaan nie. Daar is nie 'n permanente moderatuur nie. Jy weet, al daardie ruis moet jy uitskakel. So ons moet teruggaan na wat is die oorspronklike bedoeling, en ek dink Dr. Breytenbach het dit ook uitgelê: kerke wat in Christus is, vind mekaar. Hulle is nie in isolasie net gemeente nie, hulle soek mekaar op en hulle kom saam – samekoms. En daar praat hulle met mekaar en maak hulle afsprake oor dinge van gesamentlike belang. So dis net wat ek wou byvoeg.

17. Joh 17: Christus bid dat gelowiges een mag

17. John 17: Christ prays that believers may be one, not become one. Was that prayer heard? Surely this is Christ's prayer? Will it only be heard when synods come into being? Can you please comment on the terminology *kerkverband*, *verbond* in Afrikaans and *federation* in English, which comes from *foedus* (Latin).

Britz: The prayer is answered. And you can see the answer in Revelation 2 and 3. Christ is the bond between the churches. This is how I understand it. He is walking within and between the churches. He is actually 'the bond'. I know there is a big problem whether federation is really based on *foedus*, – what is that? – those are concepts that have been shaped by our own history. In Afrikaans you cannot actually use the word federation – '*federasie van kerke*'. The FAK you can put into a *federation*, but not the churches. This is our own context again with the word '*federation*', it doesn't make any sense in our culture and understanding of it. In English it makes perfect sense, but not in Afrikaans. You've also got the old '*federasie*', federated Dutch Reformed Churches, in which the 4 and later 5 Dutch Reformed Churches joined in a federal concept that was called '*die gefedereerde NG Kerke*' until 1962, when the federation was replaced by a general synod, translated into Afrikaans as the '*almagtige sinode*'. All decisions are compulsory. Nowadays all committee decisions are compulsory. The authority and identity of the church is far far away from the prayer, the answer of the prayer and who is really the 'bond' between churches. And He does it in a certain way. Dort has 5 pillars, die Catechism has 3 – gathers, protects and maintains. From these the offices emerge, the sacraments, order, ministry of Scripture. So, the prayer is definitively answered.

Boon: Perhaps I should just clarify a little bit to Dr. Van Raalte the term '*federation*'. There is a bit of an allergy against it in the Afrikaans language. We don't criticize the term in English, but that term was used in the apartheid era to separate between churches on the basis of their skin color, or political views, and then they called that *federation*. So we rather use the word

wees, nie word nie. Is daardie gebed verhoor? Dit is tog Christus se gebed? Word dit pas verhoor as sinodes tot stand kom? Kan u asb. kommentaar gee op die terminologie *kerkverband*, *verbond* in Afrikaans en *federation* in Engels, wat kom van *foedus* (Latin).

Britz: Die gebed is verhoor. En u kan die antwoord in Openbaring 2 en 3 sien. Christus is volgens my die band / verbinding tussen die kerke. Dit is hoe ek dit verstaan. Hy stap binne en tussen die kerke. Hy is eintlik 'die verband'. Ek weet dat daar 'n groot probleem is of federasie regtig gebaseer is op foedus, kerkverband - wat is dit? - dit is konsepte wat gevorm is deur ons eie geskiedenis. In Afrikaans kan u nie eintlik die woord federasie - federasie van kerke - gebruik nie. Die FAK kan u in 'n federasie plaas, maar nie die kerke nie. Dit is weer ons eie konteks met die woord 'federasie', dit maak nie sin in ons kultuur en begrip daarvan nie. In Engels werk dit, maar nie in Afrikaans nie. U ken ook die ou 'federasie', federale NG Kerke, waarin die 4 en later 5 Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke, NG Kerke, by 'n federale konsep aangesluit het wat 'die gefedereerde NG Kerke' genoem is tot 1962, toe die federasie vervang is deur 'n algemene sinode, vertaal in Afrikaans as die '*almagtige sinode*'. Alle besluite is verpligtend. Deesdae is alle komiteebesluite verpligtend. Die gesag en identiteit van die kerk is ver weg van die gebed, die antwoord van die gebed en wie die 'band' tussen die kerke is. En Hy doen dit op 'n sekere manier. Dort het 5 pilare, die Kategismus het 3 - versamel, beskerm en onderhou. Hieruit kom die ampte na vore, die sakramente, orde, bediening van die Skrif. Die gebed is dus definitief beantwoord.

Boon: Miskien moet ek net 'n bietjie vir Dr Van Raalte die term 'federasie' verduidelik. Daar is 'n bietjie van 'n allergie in die Afrikaanse taal teen die term. Ons kritiseer nie die term in Engels nie, maar die term is in die apartheidsera gebruik om kerke te skei op grond van hul velkleur, of politieke sienings, en hulle het daarvoor die woord federasie gebruik. Ons gebruik dus eerder die woord 'kerkverband' in plaas van 'federasie'.

'kerkverband' in stead of 'federasie'.

19.If churches are called to live in a federation together, how do we do that in the Moot area where the five churches recognize each other? There was organic growth between local churches, and pulpit exchange, but how do we have to proceed? Have we exploited all the possibilities that there are already with regards to cooperation, cooperation in mission for example. The five congregations have a certain agreement together. I think that we as a single congregation have more opportunity to interact with each other and see where we can be of assistance of each other, whilst at the moment I get an idea of it is stalemate, we do not actually intensify our agreement, so its falling away. We have it on paper, and how can we interact from the authority of being a *ecclesia completa* that we find other means to be of assistance to each other, like in the mission field, or in the theological training field. There are many areas where we could interact with each other that must be investigated, to make it a more proper interacting with each other.

Breytenbach: I think we have in principle a *bond* here, because based on our confession in Christ, one confession of faith, we have a connection, and that is our challenge. We must address it in faith.

Van Raalte: It seems to me that the Lord has granted you an opportunity to recognize each other in the unity of the faith. If there were more Free Reformed Churches in other cities of SA, they might be able to do the same thing that you do locally here, because they might find that there are also Reformed churches there with whom they would be very close in faith. But as was discussed earlier, there would be other Reformed churches with whom they couldn't do it. And perhaps if the Free Reformed Church federation was as big as the Reformed federation is, it would also have as much diversity. It's just a reality that seems to set in that the greater the number of churches in a federation, the greater diversity starts to happen. And then we have to grapple with these questions. It seems to me that you need to proceed in a very organic way. We do this in Canada with some of

19.As kerke geroep word om in 'n verband saam te lewe, hoe doen ons dit in die Moot area waar daar vyf kerke mekaar erken? Dit gaan ook oor die optimalisering van die samewerking tussen die vyf gemeentes. Elke kerk is 'n *ecclesia completa*, maw tot waar kan ons gaan as lokale kerke in die samewerking met mekaar. Daar is baie gebiede waar ons nie eers aan geraak het nie. Ons het maar net begin om mekaar te vind. Maar kan ek byvoorbeeld iemand vra om my te help met die sending? Daar is heelwat vlakke wat nog braak lê, wat ons vanuit ons eie selfstandigheid wel kan onderneem. Die organiese groei moet jy op een of ander manier self stimuleer en 'n hand en 'n voet vir mekaar wees. Daar is miskien meer geleenthede waaraan ons nog nie eens gedink het nie.

Breytenbach: Ons het hier in beginsel 'n verband, want op grond van ons belydenis in Christus, in ons belydenis in die een geloof, het ons 'n verbintenis, en dit is ons uitdaging. Ons taak is om dit in die geloof te pak.

Van Raalte: Dit lyk vir my dat die Here julle die geleentheid gegee het om mekaar in die eenheid van die geloof te erken. As daar meer Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in ander stede van SA was, sou hulle moontlik dieselfde ding kan doen as wat u hier plaaslik doen, omdat hulle dalk vind dat daar ook Gereformeerde Kerke is waarmee hulle geloofseenheid ervaar. Maar soos vroeër bespreek, sou daar ander Gereformeerde Kerke wees waarmee hulle dit nie kon doen nie. En miskien, as die VGKSA sou doen wat die GKSA doen, sal daar ook soveel diversiteit hê. Dit blyk net 'n werklikheid te wees dat hoe groter die aantal kerke in 'n federasie, hoe groter diversiteit begin gebeur. En dan moet ons worstel met hierdie vrae. Dit lyk vir my dat u op 'n baie organiese manier moet voortgaan. Ons doen dit in Kanada saam met sommige van die United Reformed Churches; ons het al gesamentlike klassisvergaderings gehou, dus word die agenda van hul kerke en die agenda van ons kerke saam

the United Reformed Churches, we actually have held joint classis meetings, so the agenda of their churches and the agenda of our churches are dealt with together and the office bearers from the United Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches make decisions together. This has happened at a number of classes now, and this is then an expression of local unity that we enjoy in Canada more than the United Reformed Churches in the United States enjoy with us. It should be explained that the United Reformed Churches have the unusual thing, like the Christian Reformed Churches in North America, that they are both in Canada and the United States. The Canadian Reformed Churches, however, are only in Canada (we have three American Reformed Churches that belong to our federation, but the idea is that if they grow they form their own federation). Anyway, that is a slightly different question, but you see how the classes come together, Christian schools, the children get sent to the same schools, the young people have events, and they invite the other young people ... conferences happen like this conference. You mentioned theological training ... at CRTS we have now three students from the United Reformed Churches, and one of our graduate students, who was Canadian Reformed, is serving in the URC, having graduated from the seminary, so there is a cross pollination happening. When that kind of organic unity grows, you will come to a time, when the churches that enjoy that unity, look at each other and say: we experience such a unity of faith together with each other, that we are not experiencing over here with some of the churches in our own federation. So if I think of this in terms of two circles, the Free Reformed is the smaller one, the Reformed is the bigger one, and they overlap just a little bit, right here, but if the Reformed churches from the bigger federation say: our unity of the faith with the Free Reformed is more meaningful to us spiritually than our unity with the rest of the Reformed, at a certain point they ask the question: where do we really belong? It may be that when – we pray that that never happens – in the Reformed Churches some have ordained women in office, and they don't abide by the promises that the churches have made in their

behandel. saam neem die ampsdraers van die URC en die CanRC besluite. Dit het nou in 'n aantal klassisse gebeur, en dit is dan 'n uitdrukking van plaaslike eenheid wat ons in Kanada meer geniet as wat die URC in die VSA geniet. Die URC het die ongewone omstandigheid, soos die Christian Reformed Churches in Noord-Amerika dat hulle beide in Kanada en die Verenigde State is. Die Kanadese Gereformeerde Kerke is egter net in Kanada (hoewel, ons het drie Amerikaanse Gereformeerde Kerke wat aan ons federasie behoort, maar die idee is dat as hulle groei, hulle hulle eie gaan vorm.) Hoe dit ook al sy, dit is 'n effense ander vraag, maar jy sien hoe die klassisse bymekaarkom, Christelike skole, die kinders na dieselfde skole gestuur word, die jongmense hou geleenthede, en hulle nooi die ander jongmense uit ... konferensies vind plaas soos hierdie konferensie, teologiese opleiding is genoem ... Ons het nou drie studente van die URC, en een van ons nagraadse studente, wat Kanadese Gereformeerde was, dien in die URC nadat hy van die kweekskool afgestudeer het, so daar is kruisbestuwing, en wanneer daardie soort organiese eenheid groei, sal u op 'n tyd kom, wanneer die kerke wat daardie eenheid geniet, na mekaar kyk en sê: ons ervaar so 'n eenheid van geloof saam met mekaar, wat ons nie in ons eie verband beleef nie. Dus as ek hieraan dink in terme van twee kringe, dan is die Vrye Gereformeerdes die kleiner, die Gereformeerdes die groter, en hulle oorvleuel net 'n bietjie hier, maar as die Gereformeerde gemeentes van die groter verband sê: ons eenheid van die geloof met die Vrye Gereformeerdes is geestelik meer betekenisvol vir ons as ons eenheid met die res van die Gereformeerdes, op 'n sekere punt stel hulle die vraag: waar hoort ons eintlik? En dit mag wees dat, en ons bid dat dit nooit sal gebeur nie, maar dat u in die Gereformeerde Kerke vroue in die amp moet orden, en dat hulle nie die beloftes nakom wat die kerke in hul Kerkorde gemaak het, en watter besluite ook al geneem is nie by die sinode, dan groei die ander eenheid. So dit klink vir my julle het 'n goeie ding, maar julle moet geduld hê, en gaan aan die gang, en laat dit nie stagneer nie, maar doen 'n aantal van hierdie dinge, maar ook moenie dit van bo af druk nie en so probeer te laat gebeur. Dit sal dan

Church Order, and don't abide by whatever decisions were taken by their synod, then that other unity grows with the Free Reformed. It sounds to me you have a good thing happening between your Free Reformed Churches and some of the Reformed Churches, but you have to have patience, and you keep going, and don't let it stagnate, but do a number of these things together. Yet, don't push the unity from the top, and try to make it happen. That will almost always backfire. We look at each other in Canada, in the United Reformed and the Canadian Reformed, and nobody can deny that we are enjoying a great unity, even though at this point we are separate federations, and we just continue to pursue unity organically. I would urge you do the same, and look for all those what I call organic opportunities to let the unity grow as the Lord wants it to grow by his Spirit. The true unity of faith will come out more and more in the true unity of practice. Have patience and keep going.

20. What if local RCSA congregations have practices deviating from Scripture and confession, i.e. allowing women in office, or not allowing black people as members.

Van Raalte: well, at this point your unity is not with the whole federation of Reformed Churches, it is with particular ones, and I don't know exactly what your synod has decided. But I do understand that your two classes consulted the rest of the churches at synod, so I think that is very important. That way no church is doing anything secretly or quietly. And then, since you don't have unity with the whole federation, and if another church in that federation is doing something problematic, that is the concern of the churches inside the Reformed federation, and it is not your concern yet. In a smaller way it is your concern – you might ask your churches in Pretoria or Cape Town that you have fellowship with: what's happening? Can you give us a report? What are you doing about it? And we should keep in mind that typically Reformed churches in their rules for ecclesiastical fellowship or sister church relations usually include the rule that third-party relationships matter. So if you have ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Churches as a

amper altyd misluk. Ons kyk na mekaar in Kanada, die URC en die CanRC, en niemand kan ontken dat ons 'n groot eenheid geniet nie, alhoewel ons afsonderlike kerkverbande is, en ons moet net aanhou streef, en ek sou aandring dat julle dieselfde doen, en soek na al wat ek organiese geleenthede noem, om die eenheid te laat groei soos die Here wil hê dat dit deur sy Gees moet groei, aangesien die ware eenheid van die geloof al hoe meer sal uitkom in die ware eenheid van die praktyk. As u twyfel en vrae het, moet u geduld hê en aanhou.

20. Wat as plaaslike gemeentes van die GKSA praktyke het wat afwyk van die Skrif en belydenis, bv. vroue in die amp toelaat, of nie swart mense as lede toelaat nie.

Van Raalte: wel, op hierdie punt is u eenheid nie met die hele verband van Gereformeerde Kerke nie, dit is met spesifieke gemeentes, en ek weet nie presies wat u sinode besluit het nie ... maar ek verstaan wel dat die klasse geraadpleeg is - die res van die kerke. Ek dink dit is baie belangrik, sodat niemand iets in die geheim of stil doen nie. En dan, omdat u nie eenheid met die hele kerkverband het nie, en as 'n ander kerk in daardie verband iets problematies doen, is dit die kommer van die kerke in die Gereformeerde kerkverband, en dit is nog nie u bekommernis nie. Dit is u bekommernis - u vra miskien u kerke in Pretoria of Kaapstad waarmee u 'n ooreenkoms het: wat gebeur? Kan u vir ons 'n verslag gee? Wat doen julle daaraan? En ons moet in gedagte hou dat tipies Gereformeerde kerke volgens hul reëls vir susterkerkverhoudinge gewoonlik insluit dat derdeparty-verhoudings saak maak. As u dus kerklike gemeenskap met die Gereformeerde Kerke as geheel het, en hulle dan besluit om kerklike gemeenskap te hê met die CRC van Noord-Amerika bv., meestal is dit so in kerklike gemeenskap dat derdeparty-verhoudings

whole, and they then decide to have ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church of North America or something, usually in ecclesiastical fellowship that third-party relationship matters. So it would become a point of discussion, and such matters have prevented other church federations from establishing ecclesiastical fellowship. But, what if the local church right in Pretoria, that you have this fellowship with, takes decisions that you can no longer agree with? You will address them according to whatever protocol you have agreed upon with those churches. If you are going to have some fellowship with each other, and you allow their ministers in your pulpit and your ministers in theirs, immediately there must be some kind of mutual supervision of doctrine. I hope your agreement has some kind of way of addressing something like that. It should be part of it.

21. Question on the General Synod of the GKSA. How do you prevent the meeting becoming too big, too many people, and struggling to remain faithful to God's Word?

Britz: That's our problem. I just referred to the Dutch Reformed Church. It gets too clumsy, then the meeting is reduced with more authority. I myself think to turn it around: more classes, more part synods, and just a general synod would it be needed. And as for the delegation: I personally am not sold out to the stepped delegation system. I mean, you are delegating fewer people to more important meetings. Less and less elders, and more and more authority to ministers and deputies. See, that's the problem we're dealing with, so I think we need to fix it in the classes, to finish things we can handle there. That's where you need to start fixing it, before addressing the problem of numbers at a supreme church meeting. The churches did very well when there was no general synod. Because why do you want it? The confession is there, Scripture is there. You create a new meeting by shaking out an agenda first, which does not come out of the churches. I think you can address that here, where you go with five churches. Rather, nothing than an expensive church meeting every three years. I sit in the Reformed church myself. The question always

saak maak. Dus sou dit 'n besprekingspunt word, en dit het al verhoed dat kerklike gemeenskap tot stand gekom het. Maar wat as die plaaslike kerk in Pretoria, met wie u hierdie 'n ooreenkoms het, besluite neem waarmee u nie meer kan saamstem nie? U sal hulle aanspreek volgens die protokol wat u met daardie kerk ooreengekom het. As u 'n ooreenkoms met mekaar gaan hê, en hulle predikers op u kansel toelaat, en u predikante op hulle s'n, moet daar onmiddellik 'n soort onderlinge toesig oor die leer wees. Ek hoop dat u ooreenkoms 'n soort manier het om so iets aan te spreek. Dit moet deel daarvan wees.

21. Vraag oor die GKSA Algemene Sinode. Hoe verhoed 'n mens dat die vergadering te groot word, te veel mense om getrou aan God se Woord te bly?

Britz: Dit is ons probleem. Ek het netnou na die NG Kerk verwys. Dit raak te lomp, dan word hy verklein met al meer gesag. Self dink ek om dit om te draai: meer klassies, meer partikuliere sinodes, en net 'n algemene sinode sou dit nodig wees. En wat die afvaardiging betref: ek persoonlik is nie uitverkoop aan die getrapte afvaardigingsstelsel nie. Ek bedoel, dat jy al minder mense na al belangriker vergaderings afvaardig. al minder ouderlinge, en al meer seggenskap aan predikante en deputate. Sien, dis die probleem waarmee ons sit, so ek dink ons moet dit regmaak by die klassies, om sake af te handel wat ons daar kan afhandel. Dis waar jy dit moet begin regmaak, voordat jy die probleem van getalle aanspreek by 'n hoogste kerklike vergadering. Dit het baie goed gegaan met die kerke toe daar geen algemene sinode gesit het nie. Want hoekom wil jy dit? Die belydenis is daar, die Skrif is daar. Jy skep 'n nuwe vergadering, deur vir hom 'n agenda iewerste uit te skud, wat nie uit die kerke uitkom nie. Ek dink mens kan dit aanspreek hier, waar julle met vyf kerke op weg gaan. Liewer niks as elke drie jaar 'n geïnstitueerde duur kerkvergadering. Ek sit self in die Dopperkerk. Die vraag kom altyd op: maar dit raak te duur. Ek

comes up: but it gets too expensive. I say: brothers, that's not the solution. It should not be there. Only if necessary. That's where my own thinking lies on this point. In our own context, we can't take Canada's context into this, or the Netherlands, it's another game they're playing. With us, it gets very expensive anyway. Fix it where we can fix it. Have part synods, if a part synod receive an agenda to complete.

Boon: Synod is not the most important meeting. But that's often the perception. Stick to church councils as much as possible. The major assemblies are not a qualitative term, but a quantitative one. So where multiple churches are represented, only things need to be done, which are very necessary to do together.

On the one hand, we are living with the situation all around us that synods have become top heavy, especially the typical example of the Dutch Reformed Church, and perhaps that it tends to go in that direction in the RCSA as well. You have to counter that movement.

That's one side. I just want to mention the other side too, and this is e.g. to appreciate the fact that the ICRC exists. We must not forget that isolation can also be dangerous. People sometimes think, if there are no synods, all problems are solved. It's just like when people think, if there is no government in a country, then everyone will live together in peace. It's also a mistake. Isolation is also dangerous. There are well-known examples from history where isolation has led to enormous aberrations. I came across different examples in my own studies, also here in SA. And in the 1700-1800s there was a group of Protestants who emigrated from Germany to Moldova. There they could find cheap agricultural land. But decades later the community was no longer Protestant, but Muslim. Why? Because they lived in isolation, within immense pressure around them. I think there are more examples from history where isolation led to aberrations, like the Mormons in America and the Jehovah's Witnesses in the 19th century. It was isolation in a huge country. sometimes also self-imposed isolation, and that led to huge aberrations. It is important that the

sê: broers, dis nie die oplossing nie. Hy moenie daar wees nie. Net as dit nodig is. Dis waar my eie denke lê van daai kant af. In ons eie konteks, ons kan nie Canada se konteks hierby intrek nie, of Nederland s'n nie, dis 'n ander spel waarmee hulle speel. By ons raak dit in elk geval baie duur. Maak dit reg waar ons dit kan reg maak. Maak part sinodes. As 'n part sinode 'n agenda kry om af te handel.

Boon: Die sinode is nie die belangrikste vergadering nie. Maar dis dikwels die persepsie. Hou soveel moontlik by die kerkrade. Die *meerdere* vergaderings is nie 'n kwalitatiewe term nie, maar 'n kwantitatiewe. Dus waar meerdere kerke verteenwoordig is, moet daar slegs dinge gedoen word, wat bitter noodsaaklik is om saam te doen.

Dis die een kant, ons lewe met die situasie orals rondom ons dat sinodes topswaar geword het, veral die tipiese voorbeeld van die NG Kerk, en miskien dat dit in die GKSA ook in daardie rigting neig. Mens moet daardie beweging teengaan.

Dis die een kant. Ek wil die ander kant net ook noem, en dit is bv. ter waardering van die feit dat die ICRC bestaan. Ons moenie vergeet dat isolasie ook gevaarlik kan wees. Mense dink soms, as daar geen sinodes is nie, is alle probleme uit die wêreld. Dis net soos wat mense dink, as daar geen regering in 'n land is nie, dan leef almal in vrede saam. Dis ook 'n denkfout. Isolاسie is ook gevaarlik. Daar is bekende voorbeelde uit die geskiedenis waar isolasie tot geweldige skeefgroei gelei het. Ek het in my eie studies verskillende voorbeelde teëgekomp, ook hier in SA. In die 1700-1800's was daar 'n groep Protestante wat uit Duitsland geëmigreer het na Moldavië, waar hulle goedkoop landbougrond kon kry. 'n Klomp dekades later was daardie gemeenskap nie meer Protestants nie, hulle Moslim. Hoekom? Omdat hulle in isolasie geleef het, binne geweldige druk om hulle heen. Ek dink daar is meer voorbeelde uit die geskiedenis waar isolasie gelei het tot dwaling. Byvoorbeeld die Mormone in Amerika en die Jehovah's Getuies in die 19de eeu. Dit was isolasie in 'n geweldige groot land, soms ook selfopgelegde isolasie, en dit het gelei tot geweldige dwalings. Dit belangrik dat

worldwide church of Christ stays connected, we should not underestimate the importance of this. We all tend to err. Especially under the pressure of the world we live in.

22. All our structures are undermining the core business of the church. Are we concentrating on the core business of the church? That is the Word of God, preaching, mission, etc. We are driving away from the Word of God to things that concern us in terms of all our agendas, all our mission, all our etc.

Boon: Al die meerdere vergaderings moet nie die kerntaak van die kerk in die wiele ry nie. Dit moet die kerntaak dien. Dit moet ons bewaar by die Evangelieverkondiging.

Van Raalte: The church in Jerusalem in the Scriptures had difficulties with the Judaisers and they had to take care of those problems, but at the same it sent out men to spread the Gospel. And we have to be careful not to put one thing over against another. We have a calling to do everything the Lord asks us to do, so he also says that we have to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, so how do we do that? Maybe the way that we need to evaluate whether we are overemphasizing something is by looking at the pastor's workload. How much time does he spend on his sermons, and how much time does he spend on his meetings? I would venture to say that the bulk of the time is probably still going to his sermons and his pastoral work.

Boon: I think many pastors long to be excused from consistory meetings, but I'm afraid that's not negotiable.

23. After all is said and done, what does it imply for the situation in South Africa and especially in Pretoria in respect of the division of the FRC and the RCSA? Should they merge or remain together?

Boon: Maybe I can only mention one thing from my involvement as pastor of the Maranata

die wêreldwye kerk van Christus met mekaar in verbinding bly, ons moet dit nie onderskat nie. Ons is almal geneig om te dwaal. Veral onder druk van die wêreld waarbinne ons lewe.

22. Al ons strukture ondermyn die kerntaak van die kerk. Konsentreer ons op die kerntaak van die kerk? Dit is die Woord van God, prediking, sending, ens. Ons dryf weg van die Woord van God na dinge wat ons besighou in terme van al ons agenda's, al ons sending, al ons ens.

Boon: All the major assemblies should not disrupt the core task of the church. It must serve the core task. They have to guard the preaching of the Gospel.

Van Raalte: Die kerk in Jerusalem in die Skrif het probleme ondervind met die Judaïste en hulle moes aan daardie problem aandag skenk, maar terselfdertyd het hulle mense uitgestuur om die Evangelie te versprei. En ons moet oppas om nie een ding teen 'n ander uit te speel nie. Ons het die roeping om alles te doen wat die Here ons vra om te doen, daarom sê hy ook dat ons die eenheid van die Gees in die band van die vrede moet bewaar; hoe kan ons dit doen? Miskien is die manier waarop ons moet kyk of iets te veel benadruk word, is om te kyk na die werklading van die predikant. Hoeveel tyd spandeer hy aan sy preke, en hoeveel tyd spandeer hy aan sy vergaderings, en dieselfde met die ouderlinge, en ek sou dit waag om te sê dat die grootste deel van die tyd waarskynlik nog steeds na sy preke en sy pastorale gaan werk.

Boon: Ek dink baie predikante verlang daarna om verskoon te word van kerkraadsvergaderings, maar ek is bang dat dit nie onderhandelbaar is nie.

23. Wat beteken dit alles vir die situasie in Suid-Afrika en veral in Pretoria ten opsigte van die verdeeldheid tussen die VGKSA en die GKSA? Moet hulle saamsmelt of saambly?

Boon: Miskien kan ek net een ding noem vanuit my betrokkenheid as predikant van die Maranata gemeente, een van die gemeentes hier in die Moot. Ons het benadruk dat die samewerking

congregation, one of the congregations here in the Moot. We emphasized that the collaboration has to grow organically. It is important for us that this should grow to a point that we also attain federational unity. It should not be that we recognize each other, and work together on certain points, but that we are not interested in working on federational unity. We must strive, and we hear what Dr. Ted says, we must also be patient, the things must grow, but one must also strive for that federational unity. What federational unity? That question is open. We also said in discussions with the RCSA congregations: at this stage we are not putting pressure on them to come to the FRCSA, nor do we want to experience pressure from them to come over to the RCSA. We work together, and our goal is federational unity, even if the Lord creates something new. We don't know.

24. Does pluriformity refer to doctrinal differences or practical differences, meaning differences of implementation?

If there is a difference in implementation, like whether we sing the Apostolic Creed or not, or whether we park our cars inside or outside, and if we don't do that the same way, then we are pluriformists ... Does pluriformity refer to the implementation of the doctrine?

Van Raalte: Pluriformity is a term that most Reformed Christians do not know. It is used in the context of the GKv and their daughter churches, I think, and comes from the reaction against this view that there is just a range of churches from more pure to less pure, and just different forms of the church of Christ. Schilder and others reacted against it – br. Schuring will probably say this better than I can – and they said that is not the proper understanding of what we confess in the Belgic Confession of the true church and the false church. But then some others pointed out that when the Westminster Confession speaks of more or less pure churches, it is actually doing that *within* the category of the true churches.

Boon: It depends on the context in which

organies groei. Die punt dat ons ook kerkverbandelike eenheid bereik, is vir ons 'n belangrike punt. Dit moet nie so wees dat ons mekaar erken, en saamwerk op sekere punte, maar dat ons nie belangstel om verder daaraan te werk, om 'n vervolg daaraan te gee nie. Ons moet streef, en ons hoor wat Dr. Ted sê, ons moet ook geduldig wees, die ding moet ook groei, maar mens moet ook streef na daardie kerkverbandelike eenheid. Watter kerkverbandelike eenheid? Daardie vraag is oop. Ons het ook in die gesprekke met die gemeentes van die GKSA gesê: Ons plaas op hierdie stadium nie 'n druk op hulle om oor te kom na die VGKSA nie, en ons wil ook nie 'n druk van hulle ervaar om oor te kom na die GKSA nie. Ons werk saam, en ons doel is wel kerkverbandelike eenheid, selfs as die Here iets nuuts skep. Ons weet nie.

24. Verwys pluriformiteit na leerstellige verskille of praktiese verskille, dit beteken verskille wat betref implementering?

As daar 'n verskil in implementering is, soos of ons die Apostoliese Geloofsbelydenis sing of nie, of ons motors binne of buite parkeer, en as ons dit nie op dieselfde manier doen nie, dan is ons pluriformiste ... Verwys pluriformiteit na die implementering van die leer?

Van Raalte: Pluriformiteit is 'n term wat die meeste Gereformeerde Christene nie ken nie. Ek dink dit word gebruik in die konteks van die GKv en hul dogterkerke, en kom uit die reaksie teen hierdie siening dat daar net 'n verskeidenheid kerke bestaan van meer suiwer tot minder suiwer, en net verskillende vorme van die kerk van Christus, en Schilder en ander het daarteen gereageer, br. Schuring sal dit waarskynlik beter kan sê as wat ek kan, maar hulle het gesê dat dit nie die regte begrip is van wat ons bely in die NGB oor die ware kerk en die valse kerk nie. Maar sommige ander mense het daarop gewys dat wanneer die Westminster Confession van min of meer suiwer kerke praat, dit binne die kategorie van die ware kerke gebeur.

pluriformity is used. Historically, in the tradition of Reformed people who came from the Netherlands, it is understood that differences in doctrine can be tolerated under one umbrella.

What often happens is that you have a certain term (we spoke already about the term *synod*), now the term *pluriformity*, and that people attach a certain connotation to the term, from their theological past and experience, but other people listen differently to that term, attaching a different connotation to the term pluriformity, meaning merely that each local church is not a carbon copy of the other. Nothing is wrong with that. The one sings the *amen*, the other one says the *amen*, the other one listens to the *amen*, the one sings the Apostolic Creed, the other listens to it. In Soshanguve, they clap hands during the service, we don't do that.

25.NT = OT. Difference or the same different? The projects. The Word of God are better in life than in church. Why? Why? If I were an unbeliever, and I put myself in his or her shoes, and I sat anywhere in this hall, and listen to what was going on, I would say: What are you talking about? This comes back to the core business ... I've been working in positions for forty years in my life. I've been involved in church governance, I like the word governance, I've also been involved in the governance of organizations, up to the top of organizations. And if I may say, if I'm and unbeliever, I would say, the real world or organisations etc etc, and I mean organizations like Unilever, like universities, like state departments, like armies, etc etc, my conclusion will be that the world of the unbeliever in terms of governing, what God has given us to anybody here, that those people are more successful in terms of governance than the church.

Boon: The question is clear and your view is also clear. I think we can critically reflect on this, what would an unbeliever say about this meeting? Let's go back to what was highlighted in the lectures, and I think each of us should judge it. Is what was taught in the lectures, based on

Boon: Dit is maar die konteks waarin pluriformiteit gebruik word. Histories in die tradisie van Gereformeerdes wat uit Nederland gekom het, word dit opgevat as die neiging dat verskille in leer onder een sambreel getolereer kan word.

Wat gereeld gebeur, is dat daar 'n sekere term is (ons het reeds gepraat oor die term *sinode*), nou die term *pluriformiteit*. Mense heg 'n bepaalde konnotasie aan die term, vanuit hul teologiese verlede en ervaring, maar ander mense luister anders na die term pluriformiteit, bloot in die sin dat nie elke plaaslike kerk identies aan 'n ander is nie. Niks is daarmee verkeerd nie. Die een sing die *amen*, die ander sê die *amen*, die ander luister na die *amen*, die een sing die Apostoliese Geloofsbelofenis, die ander luister daarna. In Soshanguve klap hulle hande tydens die diens, ons doen dit nie.

25. NT = OT. Verskil of dieselfde? Die projekte. Die Woord van God is beter in die lewe as in die kerk. Hoekom? Hoekom? As ek 'n ongelowige was en myself in sy of haar skoene geplaas het, en ek êrens in hierdie saal sou sit en luister na wat aangaan, sou ek sê: waarvan praat jy? Dit kom terug na die kernbesigheid ... Ek werk al veertig jaar in posisies. Ek was betrokke by kerklike bestuur, ek hou van die woord bestuur, ek was ook betrokke by die bestuur van organisasies, tot die top van organisasies. En as ek kan sê, as ek 'n ongelowige is, sou ek sê, die regte wêreld of organisasies, ens., En ek bedoel organisasies soos Unilever, soos universiteite, soos staatsdepartemente, soos leërs, ens., Sal my gevolgtrekking wees dat die wêreld van die ongelowige in terme van regering, wat God ons hier aan iemand gegee het, dat hierdie mense meer suksesvol is met betrekking tot bestuur as die kerk.

Boon: Die vraag is duidelik en u siening is ook duidelik. Ek dink ons kan krities hieroor nadink, wat sou 'n ongelowige oor hierdie vergadering sê? Kom ons gaan terug na wat in die lesings na vore

Scripture, or does it deviate from Scripture? And I think if it is based on Scripture ... at the end of the day, we shouldn't think - what does the world think of us. If at the end of the day, the big corporates of the world think the church is ridiculous, but if we please Christ, that's what it's all about. That is our purpose on earth.

Van Raalte: The real meetings of the church take place in the consistory rooms, that's where the decisions are made, and let the unbeliever come into the consistory room and see whether the consistory loves and care for the congregation, and sees to it that the true doctrine is preached, and so on, and let the unbeliever come into the worship service and hear the Word of God preached. What we are busy with here at this moment is a meeting of the mature, if you will, who are discussing some very particular issues, so I don't follow the critique. I think a bit differently. I don't disagree that we have to ask the question that you are asking and that we have to think about our core mission, but there is also a place for this meeting.

Boon: The Lord Jesus says that in the world there is a certain way how governance takes place, and the one lords over the other. But he says to his disciples: with you it should be different. The greatest among you should be the servant of all. I think there is a clear distinction.

From the audience: I disagree that in how the world is governed, that it is better than in the church. Just think of what is happening in this country.

26. Are synods top-down or bottom-up?

Breytenbach: The most important and essential meeting is the church council, reasoning from Christ who is directly governing His church in a spiritual way, through His Word and Spirit. For this He gives the authority of the keys of heaven to the office bearers as the means by which He governs.

Britz: The significance of the synod is linked to the omnipotence of Christ. It is neither up or down ... I comes from a synodical church. It is neither up or down. It is linked to Christ's presence.

gebring is, en ek dink elkeen van ons moet dit beoordeel. Is dit wat in die lesings gebring is gegrond op die Skrif, of wyk dit af van die Skrif. En ek dink as dit op die Skrif gegrond is ... aan die einde van die dag moet ons nie dink – wat dink die wêreld van ons nie. As aan die einde van die dag die groot 'corporates of the world' dink die kerk is 'n belaglik, maar ons behaag Christus, dis waaroor dit gaan. Dit is ons doel op aarde.

Van Raalte: Die werklike vergaderings van die kerk vind plaas in die kerkraadskamer, dit is waar die besluite geneem word, en laat die ongelowige in die kerkraadskamer kom en kyk of die kerkraad die gemeente liefhet en versorg, en sorg dat die ware leer verkondig word, ensovoorts, en laat die ongelowige in die erediens kom en die Woord van God hoor preek. Waarmee ons nou besig is, is 'n vergadering van 'volwassenes', met permissie, wat 'n paar besondere kwessies bespreek, en daarom volg ek nie die kritiek nie. Ek dink 'n bietjie anders. Ek stem saam dat ons die vraag moet stel en dat ons oor ons kernopdrag moet nadink, maar daar is ook plek vir hierdie vergadering.

Boon: Die Here Jesus sê daar 'n sekere manier in die wêreld hoe daar geregeer word, die een heers oor die ander. Maar Hy sê vir sy dissipels: by julle moet dit anders wees. Die grootste onder julle moet die dienskneg van almal wees. Ek dink daar is 'n duidelike onderskeid.

Uit die gehoor: ek stem nie saam dat hoe daar in die wêreld bestuur word, dat dit beter is as in die kerk nie. Dink net aan wat in hierdie land aangaan.

26. Is sinodes 'top-down' of 'bottom-up'?

Breytenbach: Die kerkraad is die belangrikste en essensiële vergadering, beredeneer van Christus wat sy kerk direk op 'n geestelike wyse regeer, deur sy Woord en Gees. Hiervoor gee Hy die gesag van die sleutels van die koninkryk aan die ampsdraers as die middel waardeur Hy regeer.

Britz: Die sinode se betekenis hou verband met die

Van Raalte: Because some of our forefathers were suspended and deposed by synods, they said, that's contrary to our Reformed church polity. After this, a lot of careful thought went into this, and I don't think anyone would deny that we all seek the presence of Christ and his Holy Spirit at our synods. However, in my view, the authority by which the decisions are made at a broader assembly is not the authority that Christ gives to men in their special office, but the authority that the churches give to them to make the decisions on behalf of the churches. Thus, my little diagram here has at the top our Lord Jesus Christ, who has direct rule over to every single congregation, to the elders, and the pastors and deacons. Those congregations now form classes to make decisions together and then regional and general synods. So Christ at the top, and then the consistories, and then flowing out from them the other assemblies in which those churches meet each other for matters in common.

27. How do you evaluate the idea of the three sister churches in SA in light of what we have heard on this conference.

Boon: I don't know if Dr. Van Raalte is familiar with the idea of the 'three sister churches' in SA. It was a tradition in the 20th century that there were three Afrikaans speaking sister churches: the DRC, the Nederduits Hervormde Kerk, and the Dopper Churches. They were different federations, but because they were all three Afrikaans speaking, they called themselves "the three sister churches".

Britz: They also identify themselves as the three 'Hollandse kerke', the moment they received an Afrikaans translation of the Bible in the 1930's. And then they became – I can't explain why – 'Hollandse kerke'. But I think that is part of the history of the church in SA, and it is extremely complicated. The federations, by the end of the 19th century, tried to meet one another in a differentiated structure. I think one is seeing that the federation is essential to the life of a so-called local church. We should participate in all the means that we have to meet, to join, to form classes, in the end. Because I think the classes is

almag van Christus. Dit is nie op of af nie ... Ek kom uit 'n sinodale kerk. Dit is nie op of af nie. Dit hou verband met Christus se teenwoordigheid.

Van Raalte: Omdat sommige van ons voorvaders deur sinodes geskors en afgesit is, en hulle het gesê, dit is in stryd met ons Gereformeerde kerkreg. Hierna is hierdie saak baie noukeurig deurgedink, en ek dink nie iemand sal ontken dat ons die teenwoordigheid van Christus en sy Heilige Gees by die sinode soek nie. Maar ek is van mening dat die gesag waardeur die besluite geneem word op 'n meerdere vergadering, nie die gesag is wat Christus aan hulle in hulle spesiale amp gee nie, maar die gesag wat die kerke aan hulle gee om namens die kerke besluite te neem. Dus is my klein diagram hier het aan die bokant ons Here Jesus Christus, en sy direkte heerskappy is oor elke gemeente, die ouderlinge, en die predikante en diakens. Hierdie gemeentes vorm nou klassisse om saam besluite te neem en dan streeks- en algemene sinodes. Dus is Christus aan die bokant, en dan die kerkrade, en dan vloei die ander vergaderings daaruit voort, waarin daardie kerke mekaar ontmoet oor sake van gesamentlike belang.

27. Hoe beoordeel u die tradisionele idee van die drie susterkerke in Suid-Afrika in die lig van wat ons op hierdie konferensie hoor.

Boon: Ek weet nie of Dr Van Raalte vertrou is met die idee van die 'drie susterkerke' in SA nie. In die 20ste eeu was daar 'n tradisie dat daar drie Afrikaanssprekende susterkerke was: die NG Kerk, die Nederduits Hervormde Kerk en die Dopperkerke. Hulle was verskillende kerkverbande, maar omdat hulle al drie Afrikaanssprekend was, noem hulle hulself "die drie susterkerke".

Britz: Hulle identifiseer hulself ook as die drie 'Hollandse kerke', op die oomblik toe hulle in die dertigerjare 'n Afrikaanse vertaling van die Bybel ontvang het. En toe word hulle - ek kan nie verklaar waarom nie - 'Hollandse kerke'. Maar ek dink dit is deel van die geskiedenis van die kerk in

the most important meeting, the coming together of churches, not the part synods, more to the classes. It's a historical question and I can take hours to explain it. Our own tradition and history shaped our thinking of what the *kerkverband* is and should be. All three these churches have the same confessional confessions and separate, different church orders. But they are adopted and adapted to our state of affairs.

Boon: Perhaps I can give a little bit background from the side of the deliberations of the deputies for contacts with churches in South Africa. Over the years, much effort has been made to gain more clarity on what is called the three sister churches. The FRCSA have always struggled to get clarity: what exactly does it mean? Is it a term that merely refers to cultural connectedness, although there are profound differences theologically? But in fact, clarity came on the previous synod and the synod before that of the RCSA, by means of the decision taken in regards to the Memorandum of Cooperation with the Dutch Reformed Church. That Memorandum makes explicit what the relationship is between these so called 'sister churches'. The Memorandum provides for pulpit exchange, attestation to one another, and for members to be admitted to one another's sacraments. So actually, we got clarity with that Memorandum, that at the end of the day the term 'three sister churches' does indeed indicate a complete sister church relationship between e.g. the RCSA and the DRCSA, because that Memorandum makes provision for all these things ... So clarity has now come at last. The next step, of course, is the question: How do you justify this? Because there are such profound theological differences between these church federations? But well, that's a discussion for another time.

28. In the 18th century the state dominated the church order. Today individualism dominates. Is that not as dangerous as state dominance?

Van Raalte: Everything has its own kind of danger.

SA, en dit is uiters ingewikkeld. Die kerkverbande het aan die einde van die 19de eeu mekaar in 'n gedifferensieerde struktuur probeer ontmoet. Ek neem waar dat die kerkverband noodsaaklik is vir die lewe van 'n sogenaamde plaaslike kerk. Ons moet op die ou end deelneem aan al die middele waar ons kan ontmoet, klassisse vorm. Omdat ek dink dat die klassisse die belangrikste byeenkoms is, is die samekoms van kerke, nie die sinodes nie, meer as die klassisse. Al drie hierdie kerke het dieselfde belydenisskrifte en aparte, verskillende kerkordes. Maar hulle is aangepas by ons toedrag van sake.

Boon: Miskien kan ek 'n bietjie agtergrond gee van die kant van die deputate vir kontak met kerke in Suid-Afrika. Daar is deur die jare baie moeite gedoen om meer duidelikheid te kry oor wat genoem word die drie susterkerke. Die V GK het altyd gesukkel om duidelikheid te kry: Wat hou dit nou presies in? Is dit 'n term wat maar net dui op die kulturele verbondenheid, hoewel daar teologies diepgaande verskille is? Uiteindelik het daar wel duidelikheid gekom op die vorige sinode én die sinode daarvoor van die GKSA, oor die besluit wat geneem is oor die Memorandum van Samewerking met die NG Kerk. In daardie Memorandum word eksplisiet gemaak wat hulle verhouding is. Die Memorandum maak voorsiening vir kanselruil, attesting na mekaar toe, en dat lidmate ook tot mekaar se sakramente toegelaat word. So eintlik het ons met daardie Memorandum duidelikheid gekry, dat aan die einde van die dag daardie term *drie susterkerke* inderdaad dui op die volledige susterkerkverhouding tussen die GKSA en die NGKSA, want daardie Memorandum maak voorsiening vir al hierdie dinge. Die volgende stap is natuurlik nou die vraag: Hoe begrond mens dit? Omdat daar sulke diepgaande teologiese verskille is tussen daardie kerkverbande. Maar goed, dis 'n diskussie vir 'n ander keer.

28. In die 18de eeu het die staat die kerk oorheers. Vandag oorheers individualisme. Is dit nie net so gevaarlik soos die oorheersing van die staat nie?

Van Raalte: Alles het sy eie soort gevaar. Of dit net

Whether it is just as dangerous I am not going to say, but it is the present Western danger. The only moral law that remains, agreed upon presumably by everyone in the liberal left in North America is that point of *consent*: did you individually personally consent to this? If you consented, then it is ok. If you didn't consent, then the other person is doing harm to you, even if it is only in words. Furthermore, the individual will is so supreme, that if you decide ... If I decide that I am only 1.2 metres tall and am a Chinese woman, then it is so. Just as if, if I say that I am female, then the world has to acknowledge me. If I tell you that my pronoun is Zir, then you are supposed to acknowledge me as Zir. That is the individualism that is reigning. The seeds of destruction are within it, so don't be afraid of it. Let me explain: When you have gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer all put together, the gays, the lesbian and the bisexuals depend on a binary definition of gender: male and female. You're either gay or your lesbian, that's male or female. Bisexual, there are two. But transgender destroys the other three. You can be any fluid gender you want. You might as well be anything ... Actually, some people have willed not to be human. E.g., they self-identify as a robot. Well, if you *will* not to be human, you no longer *will*, because you don't have a *will* anymore. So, then you don't fall any more under the human rights codes. This is the kind of nonsense that is happening. It is a great danger and it infiltrates the churches, because people start to think in a very individualistic manner, they don't want church discipline; they say you have no right to tell them anything. We must be aware of it. Whether it is as great a danger as state dominance, I'm not sure, but it is the prevalent danger today.

29. What is the ratification right? Has the consistory the right, the authority, to ratify? Is the consistory above synod, or is synod above consistory? Please answer on the basis of Reformed church polity.

Van Raalte: In my understanding – and I acknowledge that we have a sister church that follows a process of ratification – but in my understanding of Reformed church polity, the

so gevaarlik is, gaan ek nie sê nie, maar dit is die huidige Westerse gevaar. Die enigste morele wet wat oorbly, wat waarskynlik die hele die liberale links in Noord-Amerika oor saamstem, is die punt van toestemming: het u persoonlik daartoe ingestem? As u ingestem het, dan is dit in orde. As u nie daartoe ingestem het nie, doen die ander persoon skade aan u, al is dit net in woorde. Verder is die individuele wil so hoog, dat as u besluit ... As ek besluit dat ek slegs 1.3 meter lank is en 'n Chinese vrou, dan is dit so. As ek sê dat ek vroulik is, moet die wêreld my erken. As ek vir u sê dat my aanspreekvorm Zir is, is u veronderstel om my as Zir te erken. Dit is die individualisme wat regeer. Die saad van sy eie vernietiging is reeds daarin, so moenie daarvoor bang wees nie. Laat ek verduidelik: As u gay, lesbies, biseksueel, transgender en queer almal saamgestel het, is die gays, die lesbiese en die biseksuele afhanklik van 'n binêre definisie van geslag: manlik en vroulik. Jy is gay of lesbies, dit is manlik of vroulik. Biseksueel, daar is twee. Maar transendente vernietig die ander drie. U kan enige vloeibare geslag wees wat u wil hê. Dit kan net so goed enigiets wees. Sommige mense wil eintlik nie menslik wees nie. Byvoorbeeld hulle identifiseer hulleself as 'n robot. Wel, as u nie 'n mens wil wees nie, kan jy nie meer wil nie, want dan het jy nie meer 'n wil nie. So, dan val jy nie meer onder die menseregte kodes nie. Dit is die soort nonsens wat gebeur. Dit is 'n groot gevaar en dit infiltreer die kerke, omdat mense op 'n baie individualistiese manier begin dink, hulle wil nie kerklike tug hê nie, hulle sê dat jy geen reg het om hulle iets te vertel nie. Ons moet daarvan bewus wees. Of dit net so 'n groot gevaar is as die oorheersing deur die staat, ek is nie seker nie, maar dit is die heersende gevaar vandag.

29. Wat is die reg van ratifikasie? Het die kerkraad die reg, die gesag, om te ratifiseer? Is die kerkraad bo die sinode, of is die sinode bo die kerkraad? ntwoord asseblief op grond van die Gereformeerde kerkreg.

Van Raalte: Na my begrip, en ek erken dat ons 'n susterkerk het wat 'n proses van ratifikasie volg, maar na my begrip van die Gereformeerde kerkreg, die liggaam wat die broers delegeer om na 'n vergadering te gaan en besluite te neem,

body that delegates the brothers to go to an assembly and make decisions promises beforehand to abide by the decisions. In the credentials the delegating body says: we will abide with all the decisions that are taken in agreement with the Word of God, and we have instructed our delegates to abide by the same. That promise means that, as long as it fulfils those conditions, you are abiding by that decision – it is a decision of your church as well, since your church is represented by the delegates there, whether it is classis, regional synod or general synod, and ratification actually has no place. Ratification undermines the authority of the major assembly and the meaning of the credential, the promise that is on the credentials, so we don't need it.

Boon: Just to make it clear, so in the CanRC, when synod took decisions, the local churches will not go through a process of ratification?

Van Raalte: Correct, there is no process of ratification. The understanding is, if you disagree with the decision, you will appeal it.

From the audience: The Latin text does not speak of *ratificare*, but of *ratum habere*. The churches must be involved in the pre-process, before the decisions, prior to the synod, and then accept decisions as binding unless it contravenes art. 31. That is how it is in our Church Orde. It must be considered binding and accepted, instead of waiting for another act of the church council to ratify it.

Boon: I know there are different traditions as for this process, it is good to think about it.

Van Raalte: Just something very interesting, the sister churches of ours that have ratification are the United Reformed Churches of North America. I have no doubt at all that they are influenced by a more democratic spirit, but what that means is that it is actually much harder for them to change their church order or to make major decisions. For the CanRC to change their church order, all they need is a proposal that goes through the assemblies and receives a majority vote. Now our

belowe vooraf om hulle aan die besluite te hou. In die geloofsbriewe word gestel: ons sal hou by al die besluite wat geneem word in ooreenstemming met die Woord van God, en ons het ons afgevaardigde opdrag gegee om daarby te hou. Die belofte beteken dat u, solank dit aan hierdie voorwaardes voldoen, aan die besluit voldoen - dit is ook 'n besluit van u kerk, omdat u kerk deur die afgevaardigdes daar verteenwoordig word, of dit nou klassis, streeksinode of algemene sinode is. En ratifikasie het eintlik geen plek nie. Ratifikasie ondermyn die gesag van die meerdere vergadering en die betekenis van die geloofsbrief, die belofte wat op die geloofsbriewe bestaan, sodat ons dit nie nodig het nie.

Boon: Net om dit duidelik te maak, sal in die CanRC die plaaslike kerke, wanneer die sinode besluite neem, nie deur 'n proses van ratifikasie gaan nie?

Van Raalte: Korrek, daar is geen proses van ratifikasie nie. Die afspraak is dat as u nie met die besluit saamstem nie, sal u appèl aanteken.

Die Latynse teks praat nie van *ratificare* nie, maar van *ratum habere*. Die kerke moet in die voorproses, voor die besluite, voorafgaande aan die sinode, betrek wees, en besluite dan as bindend aanvaar, tensy dit in stryd is met art. 31. Dit is hoe dit in ons Kerkorde staan. Dit moet as bindend beskou en aanvaar word, pleks van om nog op 'n daad van die kerkraad te wag wat dit bekrachtig.

Boon: Ek weet dat daar verskillende tradisies mbt hierdie proses is, dit is goed om daarvoor na te dink.

Van Raalte: Die susterkerke van ons wat die proses van ratifikasie het, is die United Reformed Churches of North America. Ek twyfel glad nie dat hulle deur 'n meer demokratiese gees beïnvloed word nie, maar wat dit beteken, is dat dit vir hulle baie moeiliker is om hul kerkorde te verander of om belangrike besluite te neem. Vir die CanRC om hul kerkorde te verander, is dit net 'n voorstel wat deur die meerdere vergaderings gaan en 'n meerderheidstem ontvang. Ons begeerte is nou

desire is for complete agreement – consensus – but we accept a simple majority. So in the Canadian Reformed Churches you could have a change to the church order with 51%. In contrast, the URC require a super-majority for any change to the church order. That make's it very hard to change it – you need 75% I think in favor, and then all the consistories have to ratify it as well. It actually turns out to be much more bureaucratic.

Boon: I think in the FRCSA, during the course of years we have shifted from the way you do it, towards more the way the URC are doing it.

om volkome instemming, konsensus te hê, maar mens ons aanvaar ook 'n meerderheid. In die Canadian Reformed Churches kan daar dus 'n verandering aan die Kerkorde aangebring word met 'n meerderheid van 51% hê. Die URC benodig 'n super-meerderheid vir enige verandering aan die kerkorde. Dit is baie moeilik om dit te verander, ek dink 75% is nodig, en dan moet al die kerkrade dit ook bekragtig. Dit blyk eintlik baie meer burokraties te wees.

Boon: Ek dink in die FRCSA het ons deur die jare beweeg van die manier waarop u dit doen, na die manier waarop die URC dit doen.