

16.18 BESWAARSKRIF KLASSIS PRETORIA MOOT TEEN 'N BESLUIT VAN SINODE 2015 OOR BANDE MET NGK

16.18 PETITION OF PROTEST CLASSIS PRETORIA MOOT AGAINST A OF DECISION SYNOD 2015 RE LINKS WITH DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH

<p>1. Besluit waarteen beswaar gemaak word Die besluit waarteen beswaar gemaak word, kom voor in die Handeling van die Derde Algemene Sinode Januarie 2015 n.a.v. Rapport 2: Deputate Ekumenisiteit Binnelands – Verhouding met NGK en NHKA (Art 27), (Acta 2015:149). <i>“4.3 Vir besluitneming: Aanbevelings 4.3.1 Die Sinode keur die voorgestelde Memorandum goed as beskrywing van die ekumeniese verhouding tussen die twee kerkgemeen-skappe.”</i></p> <p>2. Beswaargronde en motiverings</p> <p>2.1 <i>Beswaargrond 1</i> Die besluit van die Sinode is in stryd met KO, art 52 en relevante besluite geneem tydens Sinode 2000 (Acta:210, 2.3). <u>Motivering</u> Kerklike korrespondensie word deur Sinodes gereël in terme van KO, art 52. Sinode 2000 (Acta:210, 2.3) het drie vlakke van ekumeniese gesprek goed-gekeur, naamlik:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ekumeniese kontak, • Ekumeniese bande en • Ekumeniese eenheid. <p>Die onderskeie vlakke van gesprek word deurgaans bepaal deur eenheid op grond van Skrif, Belydenis en Kerkorde. Ekumeniese eenheid kom neer op een kerkverband (Acta 2000:210, 2.3.1) deur erkenning van attestate, kanselruil en oor en weer beroepingsmoontlikhede. Deur aanvaarding van die Memorandum van ekumeniese verhouding met die NGK word erken dat daar <u>onvolledige eenheid</u> is (pt 2 van die Memorandum) maar in dieselfde Memorandum, (pt 4 en Bylae) word <u>kerklike eenheid</u> gekonstateer. Die besluit van Sinode 2015</p>	<p>1. Decision to which is objected The decision to which is objected, is found in the Acta of the Third General Synod January 2015 referring to Report 2: Deputies Ecumenically Domestic – Relationship with Dutch Reformed Church and NHKA (Article 27), (Acta 2015:149). <i>“4.3 For decision-making: Recommendations 4.3.1 The Synod approves the proposed memorandum as descriptive of the ecumenical relationship between the two church denominations.”</i></p> <p>2. Grounds for Objection and Motivations</p> <p>2.1 <i>Objection Ground 1</i> The decision of the Synod conflicts with CO, art 52 and relevant decisions reached by Synod 2000 (Acta:210, 2.3). <u>Motivation</u> Church correspondence is arranged by Synods in terms of CO, art 52. Synod 2000 (Acta:210, 2.3) approved three levels of the ecumenical discussion, being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecumenical contact • Ecumenical ties and • Ecumenical unity. <p>The respective levels of discussion are determined throughout by unity founded on Scripture, Creed and Church Order. Ecumenical unity amounts to being one denomination (Acta 2000:210, 2.3.1) including recognition of attestation, pulpit exchange and reciprocal opportunities of calling. Although the acceptance of the Memorandum of Ecumenical Relation with the Dutch Reformed Church recognises that there is <u>incomplete unity</u> (point 2 of the Memorandum), the same Memorandum (point 4 and Addendums) state <u>church unity</u>. The decision of Synod 2015 thus</p>
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<p>bewerk dus 'n vierde soort korrespondensie, wat nie ooreenkom met een van die vlakke van ekumeniese gesprek wat goedgekeur is nie.</p> <p>2.2 <i>Beswaargrond 2</i> Die besluit van die Sinode misken historiese werklikhede wat dui op die afwesigheid van kerklike eenheid. <u>Motivering</u> Oor baie jare sedert 1958 kon die TKK min of geen wesenlike vordering maak in gesprekke oor eenheid. Die wesentlike rede hiervoor was die groot onderlinge verskille tussen die GKSA en die NGK veral tov Kerkregering en Skrif-beskouing. As voorbeelde van verskille in Skrifbeskouing en Kerkregering kan gewys word op die volgende voorbeelde:</p> <p>2.2.1 Tydens die Algemene Sinode 2015 van die NGK word 'n Beskrywingspunt aanvaar wat dit vir Streeksinodes moontlik sal maak om ander Belydenisskrifte, soos die Belydenis van Belhar, deel van die Sinode se belydenisgrondslag te maak. In die beredenering van die saak word dan verwys na die Memorandum van Ekumeniese Verhouding tussen die NGK en GKSA met die volgende aanhaling: "Die aanvaarding van nuwe Belydenisskrifte bring nie die ekumeniese verhouding noodwendig in gedrang nie. Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika het hierdie Memorandum aanvaar en onderteken welwetende dat die NG Kerk toe met sy Artikel 1-proses besig was." Dit word in die besluite duidelik gemaak dat die verandering in Art 1 van die Kerkwet inhou dat daar Streeksinodes kan wees wat die Belydenis van Belhar as Belydenisskrif aanvaar. Intussen het die AS op grond van drie Appèlle die besluit nie gehandhaaf of</p>	<p>creates a fourth type of correspondence, which does not align with one of the levels of ecumenical discussion which was approved.</p> <p>2.2 <i>Objection Ground 2</i> The decision of the Synod denies historical realities which indicate absence of church unity. <u>Motivation</u> Over numerous years since 1958, the Inter Church Commission (Afrikaans: Tussenkerklike Kommissie: TKK) could not make notable progress with discussions about unity. This materially resulted from the huge mutual differences between the Reformed Churches in South Africa and the Dutch Reformed Church mainly regarding Church Governance and Scriptural View. As examples of the differences in Scriptural View and Church Governance, the following examples can be referenced:</p> <p>2.2.1 During the General Synod 2015 of the Dutch Reformed Church a motion was accepted which would enable regional Synods to accept Confessions of faith into the confessional founding of the Synod. In the reasoning of the issue reference is made to the Memorandum Ecumenical Relations between the Dutch Reformed Church and Reformed Churches in South Africa with the following quotation: "The acceptance of new confession statements does not necessarily disrupt the ecumenical relationship. The Reformed Churches in South Africa accepted and signed this Memorandum knowing well that the Dutch Reformed Church was then in process of changing Article 1". It is clarified in the decisions that the change in Article 1 of the Church Law have the result that Regional Synods may accept the Confession of Belhar as creed. The General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church meanwhile have not accepted nor rejected the decision but referred it for further</p>
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<p>afgewys nie. Daar is aanbeveel dat verdere studie gedoen moet word oor die aard en rol van Belydenisskrifte in die kerk.</p> <p>2.2.2 Ook die besluit van die Algemene Sinode 2016 van die NGK oor homoseksualiteit wek kommer, in die lig van die Memorandum wat verdere eenheid in die vooruitsig stel. Vergelyk hiervoor die besluit van die Sinode: “Punt 4. Die AS 4.9 besluit dat dieselfde Christelik-etiese standarde met betrekking tot leer en lewe geld vir die legitimasië en ordening van alle persone, <u>ongeag seksuele oriëntasie.</u>”</p> <p>2.2.3 Leerstellige eenheid is ook in gedrang wanneer die NGK se besluite oor Kindernagmaal en ‘n oop Nagmaaltafel in gedagte gehou word, waardeur toesig deur die ouderlinge oor die tafel van die Here misken word. Oor kinders by die Nagmaal is die bekende besluit van die AS 1998:515, 8.13 dat: “...gedoopte kinders wat in Jesus Christus glo, aan die vereistes van 1 Kor 11 voldoen, en begeerte het om Nagmaal te gebruik tot die Nagmaal toegelaat mag word”.</p> <p>Ten opsigte van die viering van die Nagmaal word ook besluit dat die Nagmaal ook wel buite die erediens gevier kan word. (AS Besluiteregister 1994:34, BI 432 en 434, 1–4.4) en ten opsigte van die Nagmaaltafel: (AS Besluiteregister p34, pt 27.6; 1–4, p434) “dat besoekers uit ander erkende Protestantse kerke wel die Nagmaal mag gebruik, op voorwaarde dat hulle toegang en vrymoedigheid in hulle eie gemeentes het.”</p> <p>2.3 <i>Beswaargrond 3</i> Die konkretisering van kerklike eenheid tussen die NGK en die GKSA waarop gewys word in punt 4 van die Memorandum en wat die Bylae ook skynbaar ondersteun, wys op Sinode-besluite wat buite konteks aangehaal</p>	<p>study on the role and character of confessions in the church.</p> <p>2.2.2 Furthermore the decision of the General Synod 2016 of the Dutch Reformed Church regarding homosexuality creates concern, in view of the Memorandum which envisages further unity. Compare in this regard the decision of the Synod: “Point 4. The General Synod ... 4.9 decide that the same Christian-ethical standards regarding doctrine and life standards applies for legitimation and ordaining of all persons, regardless of sexual orientation.”</p> <p>2.2.3 Doctrinal unity is also disrupted when the Dutch Reformed Church’s decisions about the participation of children in Holy Communion and an open Holy Communion table is considered, through which the supervision of the table of the Lord by elders is denied. About children at the Lord’s Supper, the well-known decision of GS (General Synod) 1998:515, 8.13 is that: “... baptised children who believe in Jesus Christ, comply with the requirements of 1 Cor 11 and desire to partake in Lord’s Supper, may be admitted to the Lord’s Supper”.</p> <p>Regarding the celebration of the Lord’s Supper it was further decided that the Lord’s Supper can also be celebrated outside church service (GS Register of Decisions 1994:34, BI 432 and 434, 1–4.4) and with regard to the table of the Lord’s Supper (GS Register of decisions p34, pt 27.6; 1–4, p434) that visitors from other recognised Protestant churches may partake in Holy Communion, provided that they have admittance and confidence in their own congregations.</p> <p>2.3 <i>Objection Ground 3</i> The concretisation of church unity between the Dutch Reformed Church and the Reformed Churches in South Africa to which is referred in point 4 of the Memorandum and which the Addenda appears to support, refers to</p>
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<p>is.</p> <p><u>Motivering</u></p> <p>2.3.1 Die besluit oor attestate/lidmaatskap van 1958 wat aangehaal word, is geneem nav 'n Beskrywingspunt oor 'n besluit van Sinode 1936 dat "'n Bewys van Lidmaatskap nie bestaan in die Gereformeerde Kerke nie." Eerder as ondersteuning vir aanvaarding van "attestate" uit ander kerkverbande, word beklemtoon dat attestering slegs kan geskied binne die GKSA. Hierdie besluit kan daarom nie dien as gronde vir aanvaarding van attestate uit ander kerkverbande nie, maar beklemtoon wel dat attestering slegs kan geskied binne die GKSA.</p> <p>2.3.2 Met die besluit van 1945 oor die plaaslike kerk wat oor elke partikuliere geval sal besluit oor die doop van kinders, was die konteks die doop van kinders van wie die ouers hulleself weer laat doop het. Die besluit bevestig dus bloot dit wat in KO, artt 56 tot 60 gereël word, en is beslis geen goedkeuring van die doop van kinders oor kerkgrense heen nie.</p> <p>2.3.3 Tov wie toegelaat word aan die Nagmaal, word in die Memorandum die besluite van 1961 en 1997 tov KO, art 61 aangehaal. Net in die vorige punt 3.2.2.2.2, p533 van 1997 se besluit, word dit egter duidelik gestel dat KO, art 61 nie sake tussen kerkverbande reël nie maar tussen plaaslike kerke. KO, art 61 kan bowendien nie los gesien word van KO, artt 59 en 82 nie, wat reël dat toegang tot die Nagmaal geskied langs die weg van doop, belydenis van Gereformeerde gods-diens en 'n vrome lewenswandel. Ook die aanhaling van hierdie Sinodebesluit ter ondersteuning van die oor en weer gebruik van Sakramente, geskied daarom buite konteks.</p> <p>2.3.4 Tov kanselruil word die besluit van 1882 en 2009 aangehaal. Die staande besluit oor kanselruil is egter</p>	<p>decisions of the Synod which were quoted out of context.</p> <p><u>Motivation</u></p> <p>2.3.1 The decision about attestation/membership of 1958 which is quoted, was made relative to a motion about a decision of Synod 1936 that "A proof of Membership does not exist within the Reformed Churches". Rather than being supportive to acceptance of "attestations" from other denominations, it is emphasised that attestation can occur only within the Reformed Churches in South Africa. This decision can thus not serve as grounds for acceptance of attestations from other denominations, but emphasise that attestation can occur only within the Reformed Churches in South Africa.</p> <p>2.3.2 With the decision of 1945 regarding the local church which will decide each individual case about the baptism of children, the context was the baptism of children of whom the parents had let themselves being re-baptised. This decision thus only confirms what is arranged in CO, arts 56 and 60, and is no approval of baptism of children across denominational lines.</p> <p>2.3.3 Regarding who can attend the Lord's Supper, decisions of 1961 and 1997 about CO, art 61 are quoted in the Memorandum. Just the preceding point to the quotation, 3.2.2.2.2, p533 of the 1997 decision, clearly state however that CO, art 61 does not arrange matters between denominations, but between local churches (congregations). CO, art 61 can anyway not be viewed separately from CO, arts 59 and 82, which determines that admittance to the Lord's Supper occurs by baptism, confirmation in the Reformed faith and a pious life. Thus, the quote of this decision of Synod in support of the use of Sacraments in different churches, is made out of context.</p> <p>2.3.4 Regarding the exchange of preachers between denominations, the decisions of 1882 and 2009 are quoted. The</p>
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<p>die van 1985 (2.3.1.4, p677, 678) waarteen 'n beswaar in 1991 afgewys is (Handelinge 1991:482-490). In die besluit van 1985 word dit duidelik gestel dat: "Die toesig en beoordeling van 'n predikant uit 'n ander kerk (verband) (vgl KO, art 9) met die doel om hom tot die Woordbediening toe te laat, is nie die verantwoordelikheid van net een plaaslike kerk nie. ... Daar bestaan geen wesentlike verskil oor die vraag of so 'n predikant een of meer kere in 'n Gereformeerde Kerk preek nie. Plaaslike kerke lewe kragtens (onder meer) KO, art 86 reeds met mekaar in kerkverband en het daarmee ooreengekom dat hulle nie op independentistiese wyse die reg voorbehou om 'n predikant buite eie kerkverband te laat preek of te beroep of af te wyk van waaroor ooreengekom is nie" (Handelinge 1985:677 en 688).</p>	<p>standing decision about pulpit exchange is however that of 1985 (2.3.1.4, p677, 678) against which an objection was denied in 1991 (Acta 1991:482-490). In the decision of 1985 it is clearly stated that: "The supervision and judgement of a minister from another church (denomination) (compare CO, art 9) with the purpose of admitting him to the service of the Word, is not the responsibility of only one church (congregation)...". No material difference exist about the question whether such minister preaches once or more times in a Reformed Church. Local churches (congregations) live in terms of (inter alia) CO, art 86 with each other in a denomination and has thus agreed that they do not in independent fashion reserve the right to admit a minister from outside own denomination to preach or to be called or to deviate from what has been agreed to" (Acta 1985:677 and 688).</p>
<p>2.4 <i>Beswaargrond 4</i> Die Sinode neem die besluit, hoewel daar nie op korrekte wyse uitvoer gegee is aan die opdrag van Sinode 2012 om die Memorandum in oorleg met die Deputate Leerstellig te hersien nie.</p> <p><u>Motivering</u></p> <p>2.4.1 In die Rapport (4.2.6, p146) word wel vermeld: "Met die opstel van die Rapport is die gesprek met Deputate Leerstellig oor hierdie Memorandum nog nie afgehandel nie. Indien nodig sal hieroor aanvullend gerapporteer word." Geen Rapport van die Deputate Leerstellig het egter voor die Sinode gedien nie.</p> <p>2.4.2 Die Deputate was volgens getuienis slegs geken in die finale goedkeuring van die inhoud van die Memorandum, sonder dat hulle enigsins leerstellige inset te kon lewer.</p>	<p>2.4 <i>Objection Ground 4</i> The Synod made the decision despite that the instruction of Synod 2012 was not effected in the correct manner to revise the Memorandum with the Deputies Doctrine.</p> <p><u>Motivation</u></p> <p>2.4.1 In the Report (4.2.6, p146) it is indeed stated: "With the compilation of the Report, the discussion with the Deputies Doctrine with regard to this Memorandum was not yet concluded. If required, there will be ancillary reporting about this." No report of the Deputies Doctrine was however brought before the Synod.</p> <p>2.4.2 The Deputies were according to statement only consulted in the final approval of the contents of the Memorandum, without opportunity for them to provide any doctrinal inputs.</p>
<p><u>Slot</u> Beswaardes erken dat samewerking met die NGK tot voordeel is vir gelowiges van albei kerkgemeenskappe op baie terreine, soos die Memorandum ook aantoon in punt 1 tot</p>	<p><u>Closing Statement</u> Objectors acknowledge that co-operation with the Dutch Reformed Church is advantageous to both denominations in many areas, as the Memorandum indeed</p>

3. Sulke samewerking en 'n soeke na groter sigbare eenheid, moet steeds geskied in gehoorsaamheid aan die Here. Dit is daarom ook op geen wyse die bedoeling van die beswaar om alle bande met die NGK te verbreek of "ons broers die deur te wys nie."

Die beswaar is egter teen punt 4 van die Memorandum en die skynbare eenheid in Skrif, Belydenis en Kerkregering, wat veronderstel word en gevolglik moet dien as uitgangspunt vir verdere verhoudinge.

Dit is daarom ons oortuiging dat bande met die NGK voortgesit moet word, maar dat punt 4 gewysig moet word om soos volg te lui:

"Die konkretisering van eenheid word nie beperk tot bogenoemde samewerking nie. Indien bande tussen plaaslike gemeentes van die GKSA en die NGK gevorder het tot die vlak van eenheid in leer diens en tug en die nodige instemming van die Klassis verkry is om voort te gaan met 'n volgende vlak van kerklike korrespondensie, moet daaruit ook groter sigbare eenheid groei".

Toeligter:

indicates in points 1 to 3. Such co-operation and a search for increased visible unity must occur in obedience to the Lord. It is therefore also in no way the intention of the objection to cut all relations with the Dutch Reformed Church or "to show our brothers to the door".

The objection is however against point 4 of the Memorandum and the ostensible unity in Scripture, Creed and Church Governance which is supposed and consequentially must serve as point of departure for furthered relations.

It is thus our conviction that relations with the Dutch Reformed Church must be continued, but that point 4 must be altered to read as follows:

"The concretisation of unity is not confined to above mentioned co-operation. When relations between local congregations of the Reformed Churches in South Africa and the Dutch Reformed Church has progressed to the level of unity in doctrine, service and discipline, and the required agreement of the classis was obtained to commence with the next level of church correspondence, increased visual unity must grow from there".

Elucidator: