A GOODLY HERITAGE

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The Secession of 1834 and Its Impact on Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and North America

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Contents

Preface

I was born in 1937 in Scheveningen, near The Hague, the Netherlands, and was baptized and raised in the Gereformeerde Gemeenten (known in North America as Netherlands Reformed Congregations). Shortly before our family immigrated to Canada, we began to attend a local congregation of the newly instituted Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk (Free Reformed Church [FRC]), where I heard preaching that made a lasting impression on my life and that greatly helped me understand both the necessity of the new birth and the marvel of God's love in sending His Son to save sinners like me. Looking back to those early years I remember how my sins greatly troubled me and that I knew I could not die the way I was born but that I had to be born again. This often made me feel distressed and frustrated because despite all my confessions of sin and efforts to change my ways, I could not stop sinning.

Yet there were also moments when I received real encouragements from sermons that stressed the unconditional promises of the gospel and God's willingness to save. The preaching emphasized that the covenant promises were meant for sinners—all of them, not just for the elect but for the whole congregation. They took seriously what the Canons of Dort teach so clearly—namely, that "the promise of the gospel that whosoever believes in Christ crucified, shall not perish but have everlasting life" should "together with the command to repent and believe…, be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel" (2.8).

When during the late 1940s and early 1950s many Reformed people immigrated to North America, members of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (CGKN) were among them. They came with little money but big dreams. They were seeking a better country and life for themselves and their children. Yet they were concerned not only with the material

well-being of their children but also their spiritual needs. Would they receive the same spiritual care in North America as they had been getting in the Netherlands? That was the question on the minds of many pioneers.

Most of the original immigrants who later formed the Free Reformed churches came from their sister churches in the Netherlands, the CGKN, while a sizable minority had their roots in the conservative wing of the Dutch Reformed (National) Church known as the Reformed Alliance. A handful of families who joined the FRC had been raised in the Gereformeerde Gemeenten (NRC). Despite the variety in backgrounds, it is safe to say that most who eventually became part of the FRC denomination came from churches known for their experiential emphasis in preaching and pastoral care. They had been taught clearly defined views on the covenant, baptism, the congregation, the necessity of the new birth, saving faith, true conversion, and Christian lifestyle: in short, "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).

In the early years of the Free Reformed churches, these convictions and principles were faithfully preserved, preached from the pulpit, taught in the catechism classes, and upheld in the families. For the first two or three decades, Free Reformed congregations remained more or less religious ghettos, isolated from North American churches and even from other Dutch Reformed denominations, the latter because Free Reformed people remembered them from the Netherlands as churches that taught presumptive regeneration, a doctrine they considered unscriptural and misleading.

As time went on, however, it was discovered that there were also non-Dutch Reformed pastors here and there in North America whose preaching sounded very similar to what Free Reformed people had been used to hearing: preaching that stressed God's sovereign grace in salvation, the need to be born again by the Holy Spirit, and godly living. These pastors mostly had Presbyterian and Baptist backgrounds, holding to what later was understood to be Puritan theology.

At that time, however, few of us knew anything about the Puritans. This began to change when we heard during the mid-1950s that Puritan books were being reprinted in England by Banner of Truth Trust and in America by Jay Green and others. The first Puritan work I laid my hands on was Thomas Watson's *Body of Divinity*, which was given to catechism students by my pastor, Rev. Jetse Hamstra. I also remember as a teenager finding a used copy of J. C. Ryle's *Practical Religion* in a local bookstore. When I saw that the author was a bishop, I was ready to put it back on the shelf; after all, what good could

come from a bishop? But after reading a few pages I was impressed with the book's spiritual contents, so I decided to buy it, and as it turned out, the Lord used this book to bring me to understand the gospel in a saving way. Next to the Bible, Ryle's *Practical Religion* became the first book to open my eyes to the riches of God's grace in Jesus Christ so freely offered to sinners, one and all.

As time went on, I and many others who were looking for sound biblical and Reformed literature in English purchased works by Puritan authors. I believe that the Lord blessed the reading of these godly authors to many lives, and not a few can trace their conversion to the Puritans, including in my own church circles. Today not only FRC pastors but also many consistory and ordinary church members have bookshelves graced with the works of Watson, Flavel, and Bunyan as well as their more modern disciples, such as Charles Spurgeon, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Iain Murray, Sinclair Ferguson, and Joel Beeke. Also (and this is very important too), for a number of years FRC theological students have been attending the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from which about a dozen FRC pastors have already graduated and who presently serve in this denomination.

The Free Reformed churches have come a long way. From the early 1950s to the present time they have become more and more familiar with the Puritans and their theology. It is a theology that in many respects resembles what the Free Reformed fathers brought with them from the Netherlands. Certainly, when it comes to the doctrine of salvation or soteriology, there are many similarities between the Free Reformed and the Puritan understanding of the way in which God saves sinners and leads and preserves His people from the moment of regeneration to their entrance into glory.

This is not to say, however, that there are no differences at all between Free Reformed and Puritan teachings. To mention only a few areas, Puritans hold different views from Dutch Secession theologians on matters like church membership, the covenant of grace, and baptism. A minority of Puritans also held different views from the Dutch Secession on church government.

None of these differences concern the essentials of the Christian religion, but they are important enough for us to be aware of them as they do have a bearing on how we view the covenant congregation, present the gospel, and deal pastorally with the souls entrusted to our care. While some attention will be paid to these differences in this book, the emphasis is on what unites Dutch Secession and Puritan theology. In fact, the focus is on the more serious differences between the old traditional Calvinism represented by the Dutch Further Reformation, English Puritanism, and Secession theology,

on the one hand, and on neo-Calvinism found in several Dutch Reformed denominations, on the other hand.

As I hope to make clear, these differences manifest themselves primarily in the preaching of the gospel and the way in which God saves sinners.[1] Broadly speaking, Dutch Calvinistic preaching may be divided into two main categories. First, there are the old school or traditional Calvinists, who emphasize experiential preaching, sometimes to excess, resulting in a form of unhealthy mysticism. Second, there are the neo-Calvinists or Kuyperian Calvinists who, generally speaking, do not appreciate the experiential preaching found in what they consider right wing, traditional churches that trace their roots to the the sixteenth century Reformation and the Further Reformation.

The Dutch Secession of 1834, which is the subject of this book, tried to preserve the heritage of both reformations. As a minister in a denomination that has direct links to the Secession, I feel constrained to tell the story of Hendrik De Cock and other leaders of that great movement of God and the rich spiritual legacy they left. May those of us who are the descendants of the Secession in one degree or another honor and preserve that heritage, saying with David, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Ps. 16:6).

Much of this book was first delivered as lectures at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and subsequently written as articles in "The Messenger," the denominational periodical for the Free Reformed churches of North America. Thus, I have written this material from the perspective of a Free Reformed minister for our denomination's members so that they would become more aware of the treasure entrusted to them in our rich heritage. Despite having a Free Reformed perspective, however, I trust that many people from all kinds of Reformed backgrounds will be able to glean much interesting material about the Dutch Secession from this volume.

To assist those who do not understand Dutch, I have taken the liberty to translate Dutch book titles into italicized English. If the book has been translated into English, the bibliographical information is recorded in a footnote. Where that is lacking, the reader should assume that the book has not been translated into English.

1. For an excellent explanation of this difference, see *Reformed Thought: Selected Writings of William Young*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Ray B. Lanning (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011).

No one who writes a book can do so without at least some assistance from others, be it only interest shown in the project by loved ones; encouragements offered by friends and colleagues; suggestions from professionals regarding important resources; advice on writing style, proper grammar, diction, or vocabulary; layout; appearance; and so on. To begin with the latter, I wish to thank my editors, Jonathon Beeke, Admissions Director and Registrar at PRTS, and Andrew Buss, who went through the manuscript chapter by chapter with a thoroughness that at times embarrassed and irked me but in the end proved to be of great benefit as the finished product turned out to be a great improvement over its original draft. Now that I have finished going over all thirty-four chapters, usually agreeing with their corrections and suggestions but occasionally arguing in favor of my own preferences, a great sense of relief has come over me. Thank you so much, Jonathon and Andrew!

I also would like to thank my colleagues and others who showed interest in *Project 1834*, as I called my book at first. Many of you asked me from time to time, "How is the book coming?" or "When will it be published?" Well, it is finished now, and I hope you will read *A Goodly Heritage* and be blessed by it.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to mention my dear wife, Ricky, who has been a tremendous help in writing this book from start to finish. She typed every letter, page, and chapter on her Mac, formatting and preediting before sending it on to others for professional oversight. She checked every footnote and compiled a lengthy bibliography of English and mostly Dutch books and articles.

In addition to all the mechanical yeoman's labor, Ricky's greatest contribution to my book has been more of an intellectual and spiritual nature. Her interest in and understanding of Secession theology (as well as theology in general) is amazing and has served me well. I may be the sole author of this book, formally speaking, but her input has been considerable, so I am not exaggerating when I say that she deserves to be called my coauthor.

Above all, my gratitude goes out to God, who has drawn me to Himself by the preaching of His Word, using faithful servants past and present who have brought to me the Word of Life and who have instilled in me a deep love for the heritage of the Secession of 1834 and a strong desire to preserve it by making it known to another generation.

Soli Deo gloria.

—Neil (Cornelis) Pronk

The Historical Background and Spiritual Roots of the Secession of 1834

At the famous Synod of Dort (1618–1619), some of the foreign delegates expressed the pious hope that the Reformed churches in the Netherlands "would persevere in and transmit to succeeding generations their 'orthodox, godly and simple confession of faith…until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.'"[1] But by the end of the eighteenth century, it seemed as if that hope would not be realized. Only a few small and scattered churches still cherished the Reformed religion. Churches where the truth was still proclaimed from the pulpit were becoming increasingly rare. Ecclesiastical leadership ridiculed the past and condemned anyone who dared to combat the spirit of enlightenment.

The cold winds of rationalism had been blowing strongly across Europe since the beginning of the eighteenth century; this certainly had its effect in the Netherlands as well. Preachers everywhere were promoting a new faith that aligned with human reason and understanding. The doctrine of the Trinity was rejected as being irrational, and other "unbelievable" doctrines—such as the atonement of Christ, original sin, and human depravity—were modified to fit this new way of thinking. Although man was considered imperfect, it was thought that he could be perfected through proper education. Preaching was therefore largely moralistic, stressing the need for good works, but the necessity of the new birth was seldom mentioned.

By 1795 the philosophies of Descartes and Spinoza, aided by the writings of English deists, French encyclopedists, and early German critics of the Bible, yielded their evil harvest. It is therefore not surprising that when French troops invaded the Low Countries in 1795, they received a warm welcome.

1. Peter Y. De Jong, "A Darkness over the Land," in *The Reformation of 1834*, ed. Peter Y. De Jong and Nelson D. Kloosterman (Orange City, Iowa: Pluim Publishing, 1984), 9.

According to Peter De Jong, "The revolutionary motto, 'liberty, equality, and fraternity' had found fertile soil in the land."[2] Members of the so-called Patriot Party forced the Prince of Orange into exile. Immediately a new government was formed and the United Provinces became the Batavian Republic.

One of the first acts of the revolutionary government was to change the position of the Reformed Church. Its privileges were rescinded and its properties nationalized. Religious activities were carefully monitored, and few dared to raise a voice in protest. Toleration in matters of doctrine and discipline was the order of the day. The lines between Reformed and Lutheran were blurred, and differences between Calvinism and Arminianism were regarded as a mere strife over words. A new Psalter with contributions by Mennonites and Arminians, replacing the one by Petrus Dathenus, was introduced in 1773. In 1807 a collection of many unscriptural hymns was added without ecclesiastical approval.

During this dark period the masses seemed quite satisfied with the changes, having lost all sensitivity to the strength and purity of the Reformed faith. This is not to say that true faith was entirely lacking in the Netherlands. Many ordinary believers were still determined to find food for their souls; if this was not be to be found in the established church, then they would look outside its walls.[3] As Walter Lagerwey writes, "In the absence of orthodox preaching in the pulpit, orthodox believers sought to strengthen their faith in conventicles, religious meetings, held in the homes of Christians and led by lay teachers. The lay exhorter again became an important person in the nurturing of spiritual life."[4]

These Calvinists who gathered in conventicles adhered to Scripture and the Reformed confessions, particularly the Canons of Dort with its clear emphasis on human depravity, the sovereignty of grace, and divine election. These sincere and godly believers loved the Reformed experiential truth and fed on the writings of the "old writers" such as Willem Teellinck, Wilhelmus à Brakel, Jodocus van Lodenstein, Jacobus Koelman, and other leaders of the Further Reformation whose ministries extended from the early seventeenth until the late eighteenth centuries. It was primarily through these humble, God-fearing Christians that biblical, confessional, and experiential

2. De Jong, "Darkness over the Land," 12.

3. De Jong, "Darkness over the Land," 12.

4. Walter Lagerwey, "The History of Calvinism in the Netherlands," in *The Rise and Development of Calvinism*, ed. by John H. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 88.

faith was preserved and handed down to the next generation, culminating in the Secession of 1834.

The Further (Second) Reformation and Its Influence on the Secession of 1834

What was the Further (Second) Reformation, and why did this movement have such a formative influence on those who became the leaders and followers of the Secession of 1834? The "Nadere Reformatie," as the Dutch call the movement, derives its name from its own representatives. For instance, in his brochure titled *Nadere Reformatie in Leer, Orde en Zeden*, Jacobus Koelman summarizes the desire that motivated him and many other concerned pastors in the Dutch Reformed Church to pursue a more thorough and consistent reformation of doctrine, order, and morals. The word *nadere* may also be related to the English word *further* as used in the term *Further Reformation*, referring to the Puritan movement to reform the Anglican Church. While English-speaking scholars referred to this Dutch movement as the Second Reformation for many years, more recent Dutch church historians prefer the designation Further Reformation.

The Historical Context of the Dutch Further Reformation

The Dutch Further Reformation must be seen in the context of a much broader movement that took place in western Europe during the seventeenth century. One could say that the Dutch Further Reformation represents a phase of an international Pietist movement that swept through many Protestant denominations during that period. It has close affinities with German Pietism and even more so with British Puritanism, although there are also significant differences.

For many people the word *pietism* has a pejorative connotation. Like Puritanism, with which it has many affinities, pietism is generally associated with asceticism, fanaticism, sanctimoniousness, and self-righteousness. Sadly, this caricature of pietism is still found in certain Reformed circles, although this negative attitude is slowly changing. According to Ernest Stoeffler,

> From the days of the apostles we find running through the history of the Church what we might call an experiential tradition.... Pietism manifested itself during the Middle Ages in a mystical approach to life both in the monastic movement and the anti-clerical protest movements of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.... In the turbulent days of the

> Reformation this experiential tradition exerted itself with perfectly tremendous force. Neither Luther, nor Calvin were free from its grip.… During the seventeenth century this experiential line of pietism asserted itself throughout Protestantism in the Pietistic movement.[5]

Whether it was Puritanism in England and Scotland, the Further Reformation in the Netherlands, or Pietism in Germany, Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries, and later in North America, its main feature was always the same: a strong emphasis on personal experience and holy living, the so-called *praxis pietatis*, or practice of godliness. This is not to say that adherence to doctrine was neglected. Rather, it was assumed. Whether it was Lutheranism in Germany or Anglicanism in England or the Reformed faith in Holland, Pietism did not question any doctrines held by these respective churches but saw the need to point out the danger of mere head knowledge of the truth while being a stranger to its saving and transforming power.[6]

While all pietists shared a strong experiential emphasis, significant differences also existed within this shared commitment. As time went on, Arminian tendencies developed, especially in Anabaptist circles. In Lutheranism, pietism often led to anti-church attitudes, while in England many Puritans ended up leaving the established church and became separatists.

Characteristic of the Dutch Further Reformation, however, was its love for and its loyalty to the Reformed Church despite its many weaknesses and deformities. Certainly in its early stages its leaders were consumed with zeal to reform the church from within; secession was not an option.

Scholarly Interest in the Dutch Further Reformation

As is the case with English Puritanism, the Dutch Further Reformation has become the subject of much scholarly interest in recent years. This was not always so. In fact, church historians did not begin to pay serious attention to this movement until the latter part of the nineteenth century; then it was primarily German scholars (such as Heinrich Heppe, Albrecht Ritschl, and Wilhelm Goeters) who made major contributions to our understanding and appreciation for the Further Reformation in the Netherlands.

While most agree that English Puritanism had considerable influence on its kindred movement in Holland, it was Goeters who pointed out that while

5. F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 7.
6. Stoeffler, *Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 7–8.

the Dutch Reformed were impressed with the Puritan emphasis on personal and societal holiness, they did not imbibe any of the independent and separatist tendencies that surfaced among the Puritans following their failure to reform the Church of England. Goeters believed that the essence of the Further Reformation was her attempt to bring the visible church in line with her invisible character. In other words, her ideal was to make the church's confession regarding her holiness a visible reality in the lives of her members.[7]

More recent Dutch students of the Further Reformation tend to view the movement more as a homegrown phenomenon, albeit with considerable input from Great Britain. According to this school of thought, the sad decline in spiritual vitality and morality of the Dutch Reformed Church precipitated the Further Reformation.

When Arminians, Anabaptists, and even Roman Catholics pointed out the glaring inconsistencies between Reformed faith and practice, the more serious among the pastors and lay members acknowledged that much of this criticism was justified, and they resolved with God's help to work toward change. They believed with all true Christians that sound doctrine must yield the fruit of holy living.

The Problem of Dead Orthodoxy

During the decades following the Synod of Dort, the Reformed Church became doctrinally sound as orthodoxy was restored to its pulpits. But the sad reality was that for many church members religion was more a matter of the head than the heart. They possessed a form of godliness while denying its power; in fact, in too many cases they did not even have much intellectual knowledge of the truth. The goal of the Further Reformation, therefore, was not chiefly to restore the pure doctrines of Scripture to the pulpit but rather to see the objective truths of God's Word take hold of church members in such a way that the gospel's transforming power could be seen in both their private *and* public lives.

To resist this threat of dead orthodoxy, reform-minded pastors found great help in Puritan authors for their sermon preparations as well as family devotions, problems with faith and assurance, marks of grace, prayer, and meditation. Many Puritan books were translated into Dutch and widely read.

7. W. van 't Spijker, "Bronnen van de Nadere Reformatie," in *De Nadere Reformatie en het Gereformeerde Pietisme* ('s-Gravenhage: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 1989), 7–9.

Relations between Church and State

By the middle of the sixteenth century the growth of the Reformed faith in the Netherlands posed a serious threat to the established Roman Catholic religion. Since the Low Countries were at that time part of the Spanish empire, the Protestant advance became a real concern to Emperor Charles V and especially his successor, Philip II. This "most Catholic of all princes"[8] was determined to stamp out the Protestant heresy spreading throughout his northern domain. But his concern was not only a religious one; Protestantism also threatened the political stability of his empire. To preempt this potential revolt, Philip II appointed his sister, Margaret of Parma, as regent of the South and North Netherlands territories. The Dutch deeply resented this foreign intervention and resisted it in various ways, led by their champions, the counts of Horn and Egmont and William of Nassau, Prince of Orange.

To quell the rising opposition against Spanish rule, Philip sent the Duke of Alva with a large army to the Netherlands in 1567. The ruthless reign of terror that ensued sparked outright rebellion. Thousands of Dutch Protestants, including many Calvinists, were slaughtered. Large numbers of Dutch Calvinists fled eastward, settling in German territories. In 1571 they organized themselves at Emden into the Synod of the Churches of the Netherlands under the Cross.[9] When around 1572 the political situation in the Netherlands showed some signs of clearing, many of these dispersed Calvinists began to return home. Since most of the Protestants killed by Alva's troops were Lutherans and Anabaptists, the returning Calvinists were in a position to assume the ascendancy of the Reformed faith. In 1578 they were able to hold their first synod on Dutch soil in Dordrecht. They were strong enough to form the so-called Union of Utrecht, comprising the provinces of Utrecht, Gelderland, Zeeland, Holland, Groningen, and Friesland, with Overijssel joining a year later. The union guaranteed freedom of worship to Catholics and Protestants alike. In 1581 the seven provinces formally declared that the king of Spain had forfeited his authority within their bounds.

This union experienced a setback in 1584 when William of Orange was assassinated. While this event gave new hope to Spain and Catholics, it greatly

8. This title for Philip II is used, for example, in Frederik Schiern, *Life of James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell* (Edinburgh: Thomas and Archibald Constable, 1880), 17.

9. Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806*, Oxford History of Early Modern Europe, ed. R. J. W. Evans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 164.

demoralized the Reformed in the United Provinces. This crisis passed, however, without altering the settlement agreed on by the Northern Provinces.[10]

With Calvinists securing a position of dominance in the Northern Provinces, many Catholics migrated to the south, where the Duke of Parma had succeeded in welding together the political unity that is now Belgium. Protestants living in the south in turn moved north. The result was a predominantly Protestant state with Calvinism in the ascendancy. These United Provinces finally achieved autonomy in 1648 after almost eighty years of intermittent war with Spain.

The Reformed Church Becomes the Public Church of the Netherlands[11]

Although by 1578 the Reformed faith appeared to have replaced Catholicism as the dominant religion in the realm, this did not mean the populace immediately embraced the new religion with great enthusiasm. The newly organized Reformed congregations grew slowly at first. In many areas active membership remained at under 10 percent of the population. Thus, during the early years of the republic, neither the old church nor the new commanded the allegiance of the populace.[12]

Although the Reformed Church never became the established or state church in the fullest sense, it did enjoy several advantages over its replaced rival, the Roman Catholic Church.[13] It had the support, be it ever so lukewarm, of the majority of the people, which enabled the Reformed party to mobilize popular opposition to Catholic worship and other religious practices. As the officially recognized church, it could also count on government support, which meant not only protection and preferential treatment over other religious entities but also that Reformed ministers' salaries were now paid by the state.

The disadvantages were also considerable. As the ministers looked to the government for financial support, this inevitably led to government interference with the church's internal affairs. For instance, the church might see the need to convene a synod to discuss important matters, but the government

10. Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 200–204.

11. A public church differs from a state church in that it is protected and promoted by the government but not controlled in every respect, as was the case in other Catholic and Protestant lands at the time.

12. Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 363.

13. Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 368.

was able to delay or even cancel such an assembly when it seemed fit to do so. Thus, while the Calvinistic clergy were concerned to maintain the autonomy of the church (and some even wanted to subordinate the state to the interests of the church), the magistrates generally followed the more Zwinglian model of entrusting the rule and discipline of the church to the civil authorities. The latter were afraid that a centralization of the church's power might exercise too much influence on the state. As Jonathan Israel points out,

> There was from the start a wide chasm between the Reformation of the Calvinist preachers and that of the regents…. Whereas the preachers followed Calvin, the regents preferred the Reformation of Erasmus… [and] adhered, in their majority, to a mild, non-dogmatic Protestantism which accepted that there should be only one protected public Church, but not that society, and the individual, should be rigorously ordered theologically to its control.[14]

We see here remnants of the ancient contest between church and state, a debate that was a major issue throughout the Middle Ages. This contest in the Dutch context resulted ultimately in the strangulation of the church by the state, a factor that was to play a key role in the Further Reformation and later during the time of the Secession.

During the Arminian controversy, adherents of Arminianism were able to ally themselves with magistrates that held to a more Zwinglian (or Erastian) church polity. When the tide at last turned, both this Erastian polity and Arminianism were rejected; this was ultimately because of a coup d'état effected by the Reformed-leaning Prince Maurice. This apparent victory, while sweet, did not alter the fact that the great Synod of Dort (1618–1619) was convened by the authority of the States General, which subjected the synod to its control and approval. The old Zwinglian ideals were weakened but by no means banned; they persisted and the civil authorities continued to exercise extensive control over the church until she was reduced to little more than a department of the state.

Despite formal recognition that both church and state were divine institutions and had to cooperate in obedience to God's Word, there was an ongoing struggle for control. In this struggle the spirit of the age was on the side of the state, so much so that it was bound to emerge the victor. Symptomatic of this victory is the fact that after the Synod of Dort, no national synod of

14. Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 369.

delegates from the churches was assembled again until after the Secession of 1834. This meant that it was almost impossible for the church to make decisions binding on all the congregations. The only way to seek united action was for provincial synods to communicate with each other and to make concurrent resolutions. As a result, in several doctrinal disputes no universal solution could be reached, and many doctrinal differences remained unresolved, which contributed to the church's deteriorating orthodoxy.