

HSTH 322 - CRC CHURCH HISTORY (by Chad Steenwyk)

I. Reformation in the Netherlands

- A. The Struggle for Ref'n: Its Political Framework: The struggle for ref'n and nat'l indep went hand-in-hand. Netherlands was controlled by RCC Spain in 1600s (☒ **Charles V**). ☒ **Margaret of Parma**, Regent of Neth (dtr of Charles) caused many to flee. Refugee Ref'd Churches in England became laboratories for Ref'd church life. Bloody Mary Tudor forced refugees to return to the Neth, bringing back their ideas. 1555
☒ **William of Orange** rose up an army against Duke of Avla's 6,000 Spanish troops (beginning 80-years War). First victories in 1572.
- B. East Friesian Reformation - influenced by Christian Humanism
☒ **Count Edzard** – He supported the work of the Christian Humanists.
“**Confession of the East Frisian Preachers**” – 1528 – 1st Reformed confession
☒ **John Laski** – Polish superintendent of the E.F. church. Introduced many reforms: (1) equal representation of clergy & laity. (2) church as organic (influenced Kuyper).
E.F. was part Dutch/part German. Border fixed in 1870. Many CRCs have roots to E.F. (Graafschap, MI; Grundy Center, IA, Germany Valley, IL; Bundy, MN)
- C. Belgic Confession (B.C.) – written by ☒ **Guido de Bres** (1561) – itinerant Fr. speaking pastor. *Situation*: 1566 Valenciennes (after iconoclastic riots) de Bres preached and Margaret sent in the troops. 3 months later, March 1567, city surrendered, de Bres captured & tried for treason (no heresy) & hung. *Publication* – publishers feared persecution, but published in France *Purpose* – (1) I Peter 3:15 “be prepared to give an answer.” (2) polemic and apologetic reasons to inform Phillip II. A/g Anabaptists and RCC – but affirmed civil authority. *Ecclesiastical Apportionment* – signed at synod in Armentiers in 1563. Required for all office-bearers at 1571 Synod of Emden. Text official set at Dort.
- D. Synod of Dort (1618-1619) – States General wanted to gain world-wide Ref'd consensus because Remonstrance was attacking the B.C. Approved Canons and Church Order.
☒ **Jacobus Arminius** 1560-1609 – conflict with ☒ **Gomar** when he denied dble predestination, Augustinian view of sin & grace and espoused contingent grace. His followers formed the **Remonstrance**, which issued 5 article creed in 1610 (opposite of T.U.L.I.P. + Erastian church polity + doctrinal freedom). Denounced at Dort.
☒ **Martinus** (infralapsarian) was opposed by Gomar (supralapsarian)

II. Historical Roots of the CRC in the Netherlands during the 19th Century.

The CRC's roots are not in the Hervormde Kerk (NHK) but in two Secessionist movements.

A. Historical Background for the Secession of 1834

1. The Church in the French Era – Church became liberal (Enlightenment).
2. The Reorganization of the Church (NHK) – “freedom of religion”
 - a. New Constitution – organized by the government
 - b. The Administrative Structure – centralized, bureaucratic and tied closely to the government (despite “separation of church and state”).
 - c. New Formula of Subscription – general, inclusive
quatisten – “because” confessions agreed w/ Scripture
quatenussen – “in so far as” confessions agreed w/ Scripture

3. Het Reveil – “Great Awakening” of the Netherlands
 Conventicles – “little churches in the Church” – met in fields/barns. Allowed people’s spiritual needs to be met while remaining in the NHK.
 - ☒ **Willem Bilderdijk** – considered himself to be lone champion of orthodoxy. Preoccupied with eschatology. Students (Spanish Jew converts):
 - ☒ **Isaac DaCosta** – Thought Pr. of Orange = messiah. Against Spirit of the Age
 - ☒ **Abraham Capadosa** – Against vaccinations.
 - ☒ **Groen VanPrinster** – Secretary for king. Founded Anti-Revolutionary Party

B. Secession of 1834

1. ☒ **Hendrik DeCock** – “Father of the Secession” - Ulrum, Gronigen. Started out as liberal student at Utrecht. Friend of ☒ **Hofstede DeGroot** (remained liberal). DeCock was converted through reading Calvin’s Institutes and began preaching in conventicles. He opposed the use of liberal and Arminian hymns in the church. DeCock wrote and spoke against the NHK and therefore was deposed. He didn’t want to leave the NHK. **Oct 13, 1834** formulated “Acts of Secession or Return”
2. ☒ **H.P. Scholte** – “Scholte Club” (Brummelkamp, VanVelzen, Meerburg, VanRaalte). Suspended for “sowing the seeds of unrest” Seceded Nov. 1, 1834.
 Secession spread rapidly. Conflict with the government – persecuted (worship interrupted, fined, lost jobs). Organization of the Christian Reformed church in the Neth (GKN) in 1836. Established their own theological school in Kampen.


II. Immigration to America 1846-1847

Why Immigrate? Poor economy, famine, persecution, Neth. was being “judged” for apostasy. The Manner – Colony movements, not individuals. Whole churches.

- ☒ **VanRaalte (VR) Group** = “Pilgrim Father of the 19th Century” – 1847 founded Holland, MI
- ☒ **Scholte Group** – 1848 founded Pella, IA (benefited from 1849 California Gold Rush)

IV. The Union of 1850 and Secessions of 1857 and the 1880s

- A. Union of 1850 – Invited by RCA Domestic Missions through Dr. Wykhoff. The colonists in Holland, MI were struggling, but wary of union. Wykhoff gave them the right and freedom to separate at will. VR accepted in 1850 as did the RCA Synod.
- B. Criticism – began right away. Catechism preaching was lacking, Lax in church discipline, L.S. Celebration (Haan from GR led the attack. Classis Hackensack told him about open L.S.)
- C. Secession of 1857 (April Classis Holland meeting) – Rev. VandenBosch (Noordeloos), Rev. Klijn (GR), Polkton (Coopersville) consistory, Graafschaap (best reasons given).
 Reasons Given for Secession (by Graafschap):
 - 1) 800 hymns used was a/g Dort CO – they were not Scriptural or Reformed
 - 2) Admitted all Christians to LS (except RCC), not just the Ref’d
 - 3) Neglected catechism preaching, catechesis and *huisbesuch*
 - 4) Refused to circulate books unless approved by 14 denominations (NOT TRUE)
 - 5) RCA regarded 1834 as unnecessary and untimely
 - 6) Rev. Wykhoff gave churches permission to leave if they wanted to.
 1866 – Iowa churches seceded and proposed to join CRC. Orange City joined in 1870s
- D. Interpretation of Secession and Return - What the colonists had struggled for in the Neth felt as if it was compromised in 1850. Returned to Dort C.O. and doctrinal standards.
- E. More Secession: The Free Masonry Controversy of the 1880s with the RCA. The RCA allowed membership in lodges, but many churches didn’t think it was compatible with church membership. This boosted the struggling CRC and gained GKN recognition for the CRC.

- V. Years of Struggle and Conflict (1847-1880)
 - A. The CRC did not flourish because of internal conflicts and unfruitful controversies.
 - B. 1863 – proposed to disband and join Old School Presbyterians
 - C. New Beginnings
 - 1. *De Wachter* – 1868 through Dec 1, 1985. “Watchman on the walls of Zion”
 - 2. Theological Education – began in 1865 (Graafschap parsonage by VanderWerp)
 - 1916 – Franklin Campus, 1960 – Knollcrest Campus
- VI. The Doleantie and  **Dr. Abraham Kuiper** in the Netherlands
 - A. Kuiper the Man – talented, 1880 started the Free University Amsterdam (FUA). Member of the Anti-Rev Party. Prime Minister 1901-1905. Died in 1920. Conversion – challenge by Dutch pietist.
 - Thought – influenced by German Idealism (common grace) and Romantic Natural Philosophy (sphere sovereignty & church as organism).
 - B. Reformation by Doleantie – NHK was incomplete and deformed. People were crying out. Kuiper didn’t want to separate, but wanted reform/renewal from within. But it ended up being a secession in 1886.
 - C. Union of 1892 – 1834 and 1886 joined to form the GKN.
 - D. Kuiper’s Legacy in the CRCNA (peaked in 1910-1918)
 - 1. Later immigrations were highly influenced by the Doleantie
 - 2. Calvin College was inspired by Kuiper’s interest in higher education
 - 3. Christian social action - *Fas et Jus* and Christian Labor Alliance (CLA).
 - 4. Christian institutions of Mercy – Pine Rest; Bethesda; Gofle Hill
- VII. Americanization of the CRCNA 1890-1918
 - A. 1890 - TDPRC or Hackensack (more American) (1822) + HCRC (1857) = CRCNA
 - B. America was uniting and patriotism grew causing the CRCNA to face Americanization.
 - C. Proceeding on the Basis of Principle: 3 Distinct Minds in the CRC
 - 1. Confessional Reformed (from the Pietists of 1834) – tenHoor, pietistic. Published “The Reformed American” 1897-1916
 - 2. Separatist Calvinists (Kuiperian Neo-Calvinists influenced by the Doleantie) Schoolland, VanLonkhuizen; published “The Calvinist” 1903-1918
 - 3. American Calvinists (Kuiperian, open to Americanization)
 - H. Beets, J. Groen, B.K. Kuiper; published “The Banner” 1904 to Present
 - D. Education – Christian Day Schools. Started Calvin College in 1894
- VIII. Brief Characterization of the CRC from WWI to WWII
 - 1. Bultema Case 1918 – Premier minister in Muskegon
 - 2. Janssen Case 1922 – Calvin Sem prof dismissed b/c of open views of Scripture.
 - 3. Hoeksema Case 1924 – minister in GR. Denied common grace.
 - 4. Worldly Amusements 1928 – NO play cards, dance, attend theater, etc.

The Era of Consolidation and Uniformity (1930s & 1940s) – little contact w/ outside

IX. From the End of WWII to the Present

A. Immigration to Canada – neo-Kuyperian ideas. More social implications to the gospel

B. Internal Conflicts and Tensions

1. “Reformed Journal” – represented the progressive element, advancing new ideas

“Torch & Trumpet” or “The Outlook” – preserve Ref’d distinctiveness.

2. “Association of Christian Reformed Laymen” against the establishment.

C. Recent Doctrinal Controversies

1. Infallibility and Authority of Scripture –1958-1961

2. Love of God controversy – 1962-1967 Prof Dekker said God loved all men

D. Women in Office and Secession - not just over W-in-O, but about the authority Scripture.