Summary

The year 1572 A.D. constitutes a turning point in the history of the Netherlands. In this year, the first permanent victory over the ‘Spanish armies’ was achieved. With this, the Revolt entered a new phase, which was to result in the founding of the Republic of seven united Netherlands, independent of the Spanish dynasty and independent of the ancient alliance between the Catholic Church and the central government.

It is also a year of importance for the Reformed Church in those cities and towns which, willingly or reluctantly, had rallied to the Beggars and Prince William of Orange. The early congregations in Noord-Holland were reinforced by numerous compatriots who had departed for the sake of their religion, and who were now returning to help realise their ideal: the purified, Reformed Church and society. The following questions are central to my research: to what extent was this ideal adopted, and to what extent was realisation of this accomplished within my chosen scope of research: the classis of Edam.

Within the Reformed ecclesiastical institution, the classis constituted the link between the local church councils on the one hand, and the synod on the other. The importance of this position was already emphasised by the earliest national and provincial synodical assemblies. In this context, van Deursen points out the major significance of the classis as an instrument of Calvinisation of the Reformed Church. On every occasion, the classis is assigned supervision of and control over the congregations, and the joint exercise of those authorisations brought great cohesion to the classis, making them a clearly distinguishable community.

The Edam classis is of particular interest due to the presence of good source material, and because of the fact that Waterland has traditionally been a centre of Mennonite activity. As a result, the exchange between the various rivalling religious movements could be investigated from the perspective of the classis, and supplemented by information from the local Edam, Monnickendam, and Purmerend archives. In addition to these three towns, 27 villages and hamlets fall under the authority of the Edam classis, all of which were able to install their own local Reformed ministers, sometimes shared with neighbouring communities, during the period researched.

Research has covered the period between 1572 and 1650. The year 1650 was chosen as the final year of research because the process of Reformed confessionalisation has ended around the middle of the 17th century in the sense of the Reformed Church having become an established church, along with the other religious movements having found their place.

As elsewhere in the Revolting regions, the Reformed Church of the classis of Edam has had to establish its place next to, and partially instead of, Catholic and Mennonite movements, which in turn had to find their ways within the new political balance of power. This new balance resulted in the Catholic Church being declared an illegal religious organisation by the States of Holland from 1573, and Mennonite activity was only allowed with feigned ignorance. The Reformed Church was the only to be allowed public manifestations, although in reality it depended on the space provided by the local elite, as were both other movements. In this, the Reformed Church faced a frustrating
paradox, in the words of Jonathan Israel. Part of the population bode their old church farewell, but was (as of yet) hardly getting enthusiastic about the new one. The consequences of this with regard to the position and the ambitions of the Reformed Church within the Edam Classis have been investigated. In this investigation, the concept of a ‘confessionalisation process’ has been adopted, as used by Schilling in his analysis of confessional developments in the German Empire. He has demonstrated how, starting around 1570, the leading clergy of the various religious movements expected more of the expansion of their own religious organisations and the demarcation of their respective doctrines and outlooks on life than of the option of religious peace from a pragmatic point of view. This confessionalisation process entails both an internal and an external component for the various denominations. Primary aim was developing a personal identity and subsequently propagating this, and embedding it in man and society.

With reference to this, the progression of the confessionalisation process within the actual Reformed Church in the Edam classis and its component towns and villages has been investigated. Did the classis conform to the national ecclesiastic organisation and ecclesiastic order stipulations, or was a more autonomous stance adopted? How did the classis provide propagation and conservation of the true doctrine and organisational unity in their own region, and how much room was the classis allowed for this by local consistories? What values and standards were pursued by the classis in this process of confessionalisation, and to what extent were these adopted and propagated within their own religious sphere, by the ministers, by the consistories, and by the members? Subsequently, analysis has focused on the position the Reformed Church wanted to attain within larger society in the region investigated. How did the classis of Edam regard the boundaries of religious community, and the relationship towards civic authorities? In this context, how were Reformed Church tasks as a public church regarded? What was the reach of religious and social care for the non-Reformed, or was this henceforth to be government responsibility and if so: why was the Reformed Church attempting to Reform society through the political system in spite of this? In short, how did the Edam classis assess its responsibilities within and without their own religious community?

As a consequence of this, the actual efforts have been viewed which were made by synod, classis, and consistories with respect to the propagation of Reformed values and standards. During this period, no consensus existed on the exact nature of Reformed confessionalisation. For this reason, it was investigated how far the people of the Edam classis went in Reforming ‘the papists’, church buildings, liturgy, education, and poor relief. What did the classis expect in this of local and provincial authorities, and how did these respond to the wishes of the Reformed? To what extent did church and government ‘find each other’ in propagating Reformed values and standards, and in combating elements of popular culture deemed to be conflicting such propagation, and what were its results? Were these values and standards accepted or rejected by their contemporaries?

And, finally: to what extent and yielding which results did classis and consistories oppose to the other religious movements in order to stress their own distinctive character? To what extent were they supported or obstructed in this by local and regional authorities? And: are shifts discernible within these processes in the 1572 – 1650 period?
Research has focused primarily on religious developments in the region involved from 1520, the fate of the Reformed in exile native to the region during the 1567 – 1650 period, and the founding, development, and organisation of Reformed churches under Edam classis authority afterwards. Main topics of research have been the arrangement and organisation of the classis, the mutual relations between classical assembly and local congregations, and the role the classis assumed towards local congregational life and the ministers involved. Furthermore: the Edam classis fell under the authority of the synod of Noord-Holland. What were their actual mutual relations like? And what efforts did they make – both individually and jointly – for the Calvinisation of society, including the struggle against other religious movements?

This research has revealed that within the Edam classis, synod and classis each performed their own ecclesiastical-orderly tasks and roles in the founding and expansion of the Reformed Church from 1572. The exchange between both institutions underwent changes in appearance, which became apparent in a gradual yet non-simultaneous shift of attention from the internal to the external confessionalisation process.

In 1619, the Dordrecht national synod gave a new impulse to the internal and external process of confessionalisation. Internally, supervision of ministers and school teachers was intensified, and classes were called upon to increase supervision of local congregations. In outward direction, through the synods, the authorities were again called upon to restrain the increasing rise of Catholicism. In the Twenties, the synod of Noord-Holland attached an offensive to this against violations of marriage laws, followed in the Forties by pleas for expansion of Sunday rest. The classis of Edam underwent its own growth process between 1572 and 1650. During the first decades of its existence, its attention focused primarily on propagation of the new doctrine through the establishment of new clergyman positions. In addition, the classis has made an effort of its tasks regarding ministers’ supervision from the beginning. An important phase within classical development is constituted by the major doctrinal and disciplinary disputes of the first decade of the 17th century. The interference of the synod of Noord-Holland in these conflicts put relations between classis and synod on edge, but has proved beneficial to mutual relations over time.

After settling of the doctrinal disputes in the Calvinist sense, the Edam classis gradually became more attached to the directives as set out by the synod of Emden (1571), for instance with respect to religious education as a condition of administration of baptism. This also becomes apparent from the Edam pleas in the synod for conservation of ecclesiastical-orderly correct procedures. Unrequested interference by meerdere assemblies was firmly rejected, and the classis adhered strictly to this course with respect to local church congregations.

With regard to discipline, as a means of maintaining the purity of the Avondmaalsgemeente (communing congregation), the classis adhered to the stipulations of the earliest synods and church orders from the beginning up to approximately 1635. The classis never chose to impose its outlook onto consistories. Classical influences on local congregational life were mainly limited to appointment procedures and supervision of ministers and school teachers. The absence of further conflict appears to indicate that this control along main lines provided sufficient guarantees of proper functioning of local church congregations by classical standards.
At the beginning of the Twenties, internal confessionalisation within the *Edam classis* had been largely completed, allowing the *classis* to increasingly direct their views outwards. Up to that point, efforts for confessionalisation of society were almost completely left to the synod of Noord-Holland. However, the *Bestandstwisten*, the major controversy between the remonstrants and the contra-remonstrants, had resulted in rapid changes to society, for instance regarding the rapid rise of Catholicism. Moreover, resumption of military conflict caused increasing tensions and a reinforced call for measures against moral decay. The *Edam classis* joined the ranks of the calling from 1625, although Catholic advance was very limited in their own region, as a consequence of which these concerns were hardly shared.

Within the *Edam classis*, non-Reformed movements managed to obtain or regain their places within the towns and the various villages. The extent to which this occurred, and the moment at which it occurred, may be explained among other things by 16th century religious relations. Continuous combating of Catholicism and the refutation of Mennonite writings left the consistories at the mercy of the *classis*, and the *classis* at the mercy of the synod of Noord-Holland. In this way, the respective doctrines could be tested at this higher level of abstraction, while parties tolerated each other at the local level, thereby accepting a confessional multiform society.

The second component of the external confessionalisation process concerns the propagation of the personal values and standards outside the circle of members. The synod of Noord-Holland started taking this seriously from 1586; again, the *classis* of Edam only joined this process after the synod of Dordrecht. In this, the tone was set by synodical assemblies on each occasion. In this struggle, the *Edam classis* mainly operated as an intermediary between synod and consistories, and through the consistories towards the local magistrates. Public city life becoming increasingly Reformed within the *Edam classis* was mainly due to local consistories and town councils. The party taking the initiative was different for each location.

In order to visualise the internal and external processes of confessionalisation at a regional level, analysis of the mutual exchange during a prolonged period between *classis* and synod, and between *classis* and consistories is required. Only along this line may the respective inputs of the various institutes be properly assessed. By comparing data from different sources, points of view and shifts over times may surface, which can probably not be revealed otherwise. Together, these sources provide a fascinating perspective on the way in which the Reformed leading figures and their fellow believers have made an effort to establish a new church in a divided society. They also teach that *classical* organisation, usually backed up by synodical assemblies, have played a key part in this process, particularly by their efforts and care for ministers and the internal unity.