

Proceedings of

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The International  
Conference of  
Reformed Churches

---

June 19-28, 1989

PREMIER PRINTING LTD.  
ONE BEGHIN AVENUE  
WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, CANADA  
R2J 3X5



*Delegates:*

*Top row: J.M. Vingno, J.C.L. Starreveld, W.P. Gadsby, G.I. Williamson, K. Deddens, P. DenButter, M. van Beveren, A.C. Boyd, A. Roos, J. Visscher, W. Boessenkool, D.C. Jones, T.E. Tyson, R.S. Rayburn, R. Sander, Ho Jin Jun, C. Graham, V.E. D'Assorville. Middle row: J.P. Galbraith, J.J. Peterson, J.L. Helberg, P. Rossouw, L.W. Bilkes, P. VanderMeyden, J.L. VanBurgel, W. Underhay, B. Stewart, J.A. Gillies, J. Eikelboom, A.A. MacDonald. Bottom row: J. de Gelder, N.E. Reid, O.J. Douma, J. Douma, J. Faber, D. Macleod, J. van Bruggen, C. Van Dam, Cl. Stam, W.D.J. McKay. Missing: J. Heyns*

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# Section I

*Minutes of the  
Conference*

## Conference Minutes

### SESSION 1

Tuesday, June 19th  
Morning & Afternoon

At Langley and in the Canadian Reformed Church there on Tuesday, 19th June, 1989, The International Conference of Reformed Churches met pursuant to the decision of the last meeting of the Conference held in Edinburgh in September 1985. The meeting of the Conference was constituted with devotional exercises conducted by Rev. Dr. J. Visscher representing the Canadian Reformed Churches as calling body. Dr. Visscher also addressed the Conference on the purposes, potential and the vision of the Conference. (The address will be available as an appendix to the minutes.)

#### **1. Participating Churches**

Rev. Dr. Visscher reported that the calling body had examined and found satisfactory the credentials of the participating members. The following list of participating churches and delegates was noted ("D" = Voting Delegate, "A" = Advisor):

##### ***Member Churches***

##### **Canadian Reformed Churches**

Rev. Cl. Stam (D)  
Dr. J. Visscher (D)  
Prof. Dr. J. Faber (A)  
Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam (A)

##### **Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ireland**

Rev. Norman E. Reid (D)

##### **Free Church of Scotland**

Rev. J.A. Gillies (D)  
Prof. D. Macleod (D)  
Prof. A.C. Boyd (A)  
Rev. Wm. Underhay (A)

##### **Free Church in Southern Africa**

Rev. A.A. MacDonald (D)

##### **Free Reformed Churches of Australia**

Mr. J. Eikelboom (D)

Mr. J.L. Van Burgel (D)

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Rev. W. Peter Gadsby (D)

Presbyterian Church in Korea

Dr. Ho Jin Jun (D)

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

Rev. J. de Gelder (D)

Prof. Dr. J. Douma (A)

Rev. O. J. Douma (D)

Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen (A)

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Rev. W.D.J. McKay (D)

***Church Applying for Membership***

Free Reformed Churches in South Africa

Rev. W. Boessenkool

Mr. A. Roos

***Observer Churches***

Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

Rev. P. Den Butter

Rev. J.C.L. Starreveld

Christian Brethren Free Church (Philippines)

Rev. J.M. Vingno

Gereja Masehi Musyafir (Indonesia)

Rev. E. Fangidae

Free Reformed Churches of North America

Rev. P. Vander Meyden

Rev. L.W. Bilkes

Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa

Prof. Dr. J. Heyns

Dr. P. Rossouw

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Rev. J.P. Galbraith

Rev. T.E. Tyson

Rev. J.J. Peterson

Rev. G.I. Williamson

Presbyterian Church in America

Prof. Dr. D.C. Jones

Dr. R.S. Rayburn

Reformed Churches in South Africa

Prof. Dr. J.L. Helberg

Prof. Dr. V.E. D'Assonville

Reformed Church in the United States

Rev. R. Sander

Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

Dr. Bruce Stewart

**2. Executive**

The Convener reported that the Interim Committee proposed that the Executive be appointed as follows:

Chairman - Rev. Dr. J. Visscher

Vice-Chairman - Rev. J. de Gelder

Recording Secretary - Prof. A.C. Boyd

Corresponding Secretary - Rev. M. van Beveren.

The proposal of the Interim Committee was accepted.

**3. Further recommendations of the Interim Committee**

The following recommendations of the Interim Committee were also accepted:

**3.1** That Principal C. Graham and Prof. Dr. K. Deddens be appointed official advisors to this Conference with right to participate in all discussions but without right to vote.

**3.2** That it be understood that observer and visiting delegates have the right to take part in all discussions although not to vote.

**4. Agenda**

The following was proposed as the Agenda for the Conference:

**4.1 Main Agenda**

Reports

- Secretary - Rev. M. van Beveren
- Interim Committee
- Treasurer - Mr. H.A. Berends
- Auditor

(The first two reports should be tabled the first day of the Conference)

Study Reports • Ecumenical Creeds

- Missions

Workshop • Rules for Interchurch Relations

Advisory Committees to be appointed:

- Committee of Membership and Finances
  1. to deal with membership application of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa
  2. to deal with Treasurer's report, auditor, proposals from the FRC of Australia
- Committee on Constitutional Matters to deal with amendments from various churches in Australia, Canada, Netherlands, Scotland
- Committee on Study Report - Creeds
- Committee on Study Report - Missions
- Committee on 1993 Conference to deal with site, date, hosting church, agenda including possible topics and speakers

Appointments • Executive Committee (substitutes)

- Treasurer
- Standing Committees

#### **4.2 Speeches & Papers**

- Prof. C. Graham - "Nehemiah the Rebuilder"
- Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen - "Baptism with the Holy Spirit"
- Prof. D. Macleod - "Christology"
- Prof. Dr. J. Douma - "Apartheid"
- Prof. Dr. K. Deddens - "Contextualization in Mission"
- Prof. Dr. Ho Jin Jun - "Tangun Shrine Worship & Radical Christian Movement in the Korean Church"
- Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam - "The Elder as Preserver of Life in the Covenant"

#### **4.3 Discussion**

Mr. J. Eikelboom questioned whether the topic of Apartheid ought to have a place on the Conference Agenda. He spoke to the matter asking whether the is-



sue belonged to the real work of the member churches of the Conference and expressing the fear that the Conference could be diverted to political issues. (A copy of Mr. Eikelboom's address is retained among Conference papers and copies are available for delegates who wish one.) It was agreed to remit the matter to the Constitutional Committee and suspend a decision on including it on the Agenda until the Committee reports.

It was noted that the above discussion raised the question as to how the agenda is compiled.

#### **5. Report from Corresponding Secretary and Interim Committee**

The Corresponding Secretary reported on his own work and the work of the Interim Committee. He spoke of the happy and fruitful work of the Interim Committee over the period since last meeting of the Conference. He referred with sorrow to the resignation of Rev. D. Lamont due to illness and to the death of Rev. Drs. M.K. Drost, member of Missions Committee. He passed on the regret of the following Churches for their being unable to be represented this year, while assuring the Conference of their continued interest:

Reformed Church of Japan

Iglesia Evangelica Presbiteriana del Peru

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Christchurch, New Zealand

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia

Rev. van Beveren reported that several Churches had written to him seeking information about the Conference.

The initiative of member Churches who had sent the topics for consideration had been helpful but he requested that when a topic was recommended the name of a speaker should also be mentioned.

He paid tribute to the contribution made to the work of the Committee by Principal C. Graham and Rev. G. van Rongen, expressing regret that Rev. G. van Rongen was unable to be present, and passing on his greetings to the Conference. (Rev. van Beveren's Report is retained among Conference papers and copies are available for delegates who wish one.)

The Conference recorded its thanks to the Interim Committee and especially to Rev. van Beveren.

The Conference suspended its sitting for lunch.

## **6. Committees**

On the recommendation of the Executive the Conference agreed to the following membership of Committees:

### **Membership and Finances Committee**

Rev. O.J. Douma - Convener

Rev. W.D.J. McKay

Rev. Cl. Stam

Mr. J.L. Van Burgel

### **Committee on Creeds**

Prof. Dr. Faber - Convener

Prof. D. Macleod

Prof. Dr. J. Douma

Rev. W. Underhay

### **Constitution Committee**

Rev. W. Peter Gadsby - Convener

Rev. J. Gillies

Prof. C. Graham

Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam

Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen

### **Missions Committee**

Rev. Norman E. Reid - Convener

Mr. J. Eikelboom

Dr. Ho Jin Jun

Rev. A.A. MacDonald

Prof. Dr. K. Deddens

### **Committee for Next Conference**

The Executive

Dr. J. Visscher - Convener

Rev. J. de Gelder

Prof. A.C. Boyd

Rev. M. van Beveren

The Conference suspended its sitting to give Committees time to begin consideration of their remits.

**7. First Report of Membership and Finances Committee****7.1 Application from Free Reformed Churches in South Africa**

On behalf of the Committee Rev. Cl. Stam reported that the applicant had satisfied the Committee and that they joyfully recommended that the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa be accepted into membership of the ICRC. The recommendation of the Committee was unanimously accepted and the Chairman addressed the delegates and welcomed the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa into membership. The Rev. W. Boessenkool and Mr. A. Roos replied and indicated the desire of their Church both to benefit from membership of the Conference and contribute to it. Mr. Roos offered to make available to delegates a printed statement prepared by the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa.

**7.2 Statement by Mr. J.L. Van Burgel**

Mr. Van Burgel made reference to what the Free Reformed Churches in Australia saw as a weakness in the admissions procedure. They were concerned that Article IV of the Constitution should never be taken in isolation but always in the light of serious consideration of Article III regarding Purpose. Member Churches should always be asking themselves if they were seeking to fulfill the Purposes of the Conference beginning with those stated in III,1 and III,2 of the Constitution. From the beginning the desire of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia was to see a Conference of sister churches. Mr. Van Burgel's statement was noted. (A printed copy is retained among Conference papers and is available to delegates.)

**8. First Report of Constitution Committee  
Paper on Apartheid**

The Convener, Rev. W.P. Gadsby reported that the Committee had taken up their remit regarding the inclusion of the paper on Apartheid on the Agenda and after full discussion recommended unanimously that it be included on the grounds that it had been properly included on the proposed agenda in exactly the same way as other topics

and that while the topic could be treated as a political subject it was not only political.

After discussion it was agreed to adhere to the proposed agenda and ask Prof. Dr. J. Douma to give his paper on Apartheid.

The meeting adjourned and Committees continued consideration of their remits.

## SESSION 2 Tuesday, June 19th Evening

At Langley on Tuesday, 19th June, 1989 in the evening the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises.

### **1. Introducing the Churches**

Prof. Dr. Bruce Stewart introduced the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America tracing its roots back to 17th century Scotland and outlining its development in North America from the founding of its first congregation in Pennsylvania in 1745. He referred also to its missionary work first in Haiti and later in the Middle East and the Far East.

### **2. Conference Address**

Rev. Prof. C. Graham addressed the Conference on the subject "Nehemiah, the Rebuilder".

The Chairman thanked Prof. C. Graham for his paper and indicated that discussion of it would be taken up at the morning session next day.

The session was closed with prayer.

SESSION 3  
Wednesday, June 20th  
Morning & Afternoon

At Langley on Wednesday, 20th June, 1989, the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises conducted by the Chairman.

**1. Discussion of the paper "Nehemiah, the Rebuilder"**

Discussion took place on a number of issues raised by Professor Graham's paper. Professor Graham responded to these. The discussion developed mainly along the lines of the relationship of the book of Nehemiah to the New Testament and to Christology in particular. From there consideration was given to the Exemplarist and Redemptive Historical use of the Old Testament. The consensus view was that these were not mutually exclusive. Interest in the relationship between these two approaches to the Old Testament was such as to suggest that papers on these topics might be given at a future meeting of the Conference.

Prof. Graham was again thanked for his contribution.

**2. Second Report of Constitution Committee**

The Convener of the Committee, Rev. W.P. Gadsby reported as follows:

**2.1 Proposal of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands** that, "Delegates at the beginning of the Conference express their agreement with the Basis of the Conference." Constitution Article II - Basis.

**Recommendation**

The Committee recommended that the proposal was not necessary in as much as all Conference delegates are accredited by their Churches, all of whom subscribe to the Conference Basis.

**Decision**

The delegates of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands indicated that they did not wish to pursue the matter and the Conference agreed unanimously to pass from it.

**2.2 Proposal of Free Church of Scotland** that, "The Constitution should involve all member churches in a commitment to recognize the membership, ministry and sacraments of the other member churches." Constitution Article III - Purpose.

**Recommendation**

The Convener reported that the Committee had taken note of, and agreed with the observation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to the effect that, "The matter 'is sufficiently covered by Art. III,2 of the Constitution... Member churches should strive to achieve the above mentioned goal, but this situation does not automatically arise from being a member of the ICRC. Before a sister church relation can be established time should be taken for the necessary contacts and discussions.'" The Committee was therefore not recommending adoption of the proposal.

**Discussion**

There followed a prolonged discussion in which the following points were made by delegates:

- i) Membership of the ICRC should not replace true sister church relationships.
- ii) The mutual recognition sought by the Free Church of Scotland proposal was possible only between sister churches.
- iii) The Constitution of the ICRC does lay on member churches the obligation to express and promote the unity of faith that member churches have and churches failing to act should be called to explain their failure.
- iv) Among member churches there are differing procedures and policies for promoting interchurch relationships and these need to be respected.
- v) The proposal of the Free Church of Scotland presents a goal to be aimed at, but is not a responsibility of the Conference as such.
- vi) The question of admission to the Lord's Table was brought up. Delegates of the Reformed Churches referred to the admittedly strict procedures that were applied even to their own members when vis-

iting other congregations of their own Churches and in the light of that pleaded for understanding of their attitude in this matter to members of other churches. Delegates of the Free Church of Scotland pointed out that the standards for admission to the Lord's Table within the Free Church of Scotland were high, but at the same time the Church welcomed to the Lord's Table all who were members in good standing in any true Church of Jesus Christ. They spoke of the grief experienced both when members of the Free Church of Scotland were not admitted to the Lord's Table within member churches of the ICRC and also when members of Reformed Churches which had membership in the ICRC felt themselves unable to come to the Lord's Table within the Free Church of Scotland. The delegate of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia suggested that the matter required to be examined in the light of Scripture rather than on the basis of historical development within the various churches.

- vii)** The delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, while not able to accept the proposal of the Free Church of Scotland in the terms in which it was stated, agreed that the mutual recognition referred to was what should be sought. At the heart of the matter is the doctrine of the Church.
- viii)** The delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches cautioned against trying to go ahead too quickly. The position of their Churches was that they were happy to be part of this Conference in a way in which they had never previously been able to partake in an interchurch conference because they saw that this Conference does recognize and express unity and is committed to promote unity. It has great possibilities. Out of membership of this Conference they had already made contact with other churches with a view to establishing sister church relationships. They were grateful for what they had in the Conference and were pledged to its purposes, but wished to identify clearly what were

Conference responsibilities and what were the responsibilities of the Churches.

- ix) The Free Church of Scotland delegates responded. Prof. D. Macleod wished still to highlight the anomaly in the situation that there were member churches of the Conference which, while recognizing other member churches in the Conference as true churches and accepting their delegates as brethren, did not allow members of these churches to come to the Lord's Table. He wished also to state the ongoing difficulty that the Free Church of Scotland had with the difference that was made between recognizing a church as a true church and accepting a church as a sister church. However, they considered that there had been a fruitful and helpful discussion and in the hope that future meetings of the Conference would continue consideration of these issues they would not oppose the Committee's recommendation to pass at this time from the proposal of the Free Church of Scotland.

#### **Decision**

The Committee's recommendation was adopted.

The meeting was suspended for lunch

**2.3 Proposal of Canadian Reformed Churches and Free Reformed Churches of Australia** that, "Membership of REC (RES) is an impediment to membership of the ICRC." Constitution - Article IV Membership.

#### **Recommendation**

The Committee considered that the point is adequately covered by Article IV, 1 (d) of the Constitution and recommended that the proposal be not accepted.

#### **Discussion**

There followed considerable discussion in which the following points were made:

- i) The need to witness against a false ecumenicity (Free Reformed Churches of Australia).
- ii) The peculiar position of the REC (RES) from that of all other bodies because it includes several churches which in many ways are close to the



churches of the ICRC and therefore should be excluded from dual membership (Canadian Reformed Churches).

- iii) The wording of the proposal: what does impediment mean? The Canadian Reformed Churches had understood this to mean the incompatibility of membership in REC and the ICRC and therefore supported the proposal.
- iv) The problems created by drawing up lists of organizations: Where do you stop? Whom do you include? How often do you update? (Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia).
- v) Admission to the ICRC is already tightly controlled by the Constitution and acceptance involves commitment to the whole Constitution and Regulations (Free Church of Scotland)

**Decision**

On a vote being taken the recommendation of the Committee was adopted by 8 votes to 3.

- 2.4 Proposal of Canadian Reformed Churches** to amend Article V of the Constitution to read, "The conclusions of the Conference shall be advisory in character. Member churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation."

**Recommendation and Decision**

The Committee's recommendation for adoption of the proposal was unanimously accepted.

- 2.5 Proposal of Free Reformed Churches of Australia** that the first words of Article II of the Regulations be amended to read "Each meeting of the Conference shall elect..."

**Recommendation and Decision**

The Committee's recommendation for adoption of the proposal was unanimously adopted.

- 2.6 Proposal of Free Reformed Churches of Australia** that subsection 4.b.iv of Article II of Regulations be amended to read, "forward to the churches materials,

reports or other publications as authorized by the Conference”.

**Recommendation**

In the light of preliminary discussion of the matter by delegates the Committee brought forward a revised recommendation that in the light of the words “as authorized by the Conference” contained in this sub-section, no change was called for.

**Decision**

On a vote being taken the Committee’s recommendation was adopted by 9 votes to 1 (Free Reformed Churches of Australia wish to adhere to their proposal).

- 2.7 Proposal of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands** that there be added to sub-section 2 of Article IV of the Regulations the words, “When committees are appointed, the Conference should also appoint persons who can serve as alternate committee members.”

**Recommendation**

After preliminary discussion of the matter the Committee recommended the adoption of a revised version of the proposal to read as follows, “The Conference shall also appoint members who can serve as substitute members should original appointees no longer be able to serve.”

**Decision**

The Committee’s recommendation was unanimously accepted.

- 2.8 Proposal of Free Church of Scotland** that in sub-section 3 of Article IV of Regulations “one year” be substituted for “two years”.

**Recommendation and Decision**

The recommendation of the Committee that the proposal be accepted was unanimously adopted.

- 2.9 Proposal of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands** that there be added to Article V of the Regulations the statement, “Only delegates of churches and not of organizations should participate in the meetings of the Conference.”

**Recommendation**

The Committee recommended that the proposal be not accepted on the grounds that the existing regulations cover the situation with regard to delegates. Furthermore, if the proposal is adopted in its present form it could be so interpreted in the future as to prevent the Conference from inviting an individual to address it.

**Discussion**

The delegates of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa indicated that their Synod had considered the proposal and they wished to support the proposal.

**Decision**

On a vote being taken the recommendation of the Committee was adopted by 9 votes to 1.

- 2.10 Proposal of Free Reformed Churches of Australia** that, "Article V of the Regulations should include a clear statement about the position of observers and advisors and also a clear indication of which churches can be invited as observers by the convening church."

**Recommendation**

The Committee recommended that the matter be remitted to the Interim Committee for further consideration and report to the next meeting of the Conference: the Interim Committee to have their recommendations made available for circulation one year before the next meeting of the Conference.

**Decision**

It was agreed to adopt the recommendation of the Committee and to remit the matter to the Interim Committee and draw their attention to the lack of clarity on the relationship of Article V,3 to VII,1 of the Regulations.

The session was brought to a close.

SESSION 4  
Wednesday, June 20  
Evening

At Langley on Wednesday, 20th June 1989 in the evening the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises.

**1. Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes of the first and second sessions, copies of which had been circulated to delegates, were adjusted and adopted.

**2. Introducing the Churches**

Dr. Ho Jin Jun introduced the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin) and their Seminary in Pusan. He reviewed the history of the Kosin Church which had come into being in 1951 as the result of a split in the main Korean Presbyterian Church over the issue of forced involvement in Shinto worship during the time of the Japanese occupation. The Kosin Presbyterian Church had close contacts with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of America and with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands who had provided professors for their seminary.

Prof. Jun referred to problems faced by the Seminary including the fact that up till now most of the faculty had been trained in western countries and, without experience of pastoral ministry in their own country, lacked ability to apply the Gospel to the Korean situation. They were now insisting that new appointees to the faculty should have experience in the pastoral ministry. They had already begun to move the Seminary from Pusan to Seoul: a move which they hoped to complete next year at considerable financial outlay. He requested prayer for his Church and Seminary.

Before concluding he indicated his Church's readiness to host the next meeting of the ICRC.

The Chairman thanked Prof. Jun for his account of his Church and Seminary and expressed the prayerful good wishes of the Conference members.

**3. Conference Address**

Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen addressed the Conference on the subject of "Baptism with the Holy Spirit". The Chairman thanked Prof. van Bruggen for his paper and indicated that discussion of it would be taken up next morning.

The session was closed with prayer.

**SESSION 5**  
**Thursday, June 22**  
**Morning & Afternoon**

At Langley on Thursday, 22nd June, 1989 the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises.

**1. Discussion of Paper by Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen on "Baptism with the Holy Spirit"**

Comments were made and questions asked on a large number of the points made in Prof. van Bruggen's paper. These he replied to, giving further explanation of statements made in the paper and defending the positions he had put forward. He pointed out that his approach to the subject of his paper had been dictated by hermeneutical considerations.

In reply to an observation about the misuse made by Pentecostals of the term "baptized with the Spirit" and a related observation that our Confessions, written three hundred years before the rise of the modern Pentecostal movement, gave us no dogmatic protection against this divisive movement, Prof. van Bruggen did recognize the responsibility falling on Reformed Churches to develop new formulations in line with the Confessions to deal with new situations.

There was also raised the question of the implication for ecumenical relations of being baptized with the Spirit. Prof. van Bruggen considered that the question was outwith the scope of his lecture.

The Chairman thanked Prof. van Bruggen for his paper and his helpful answering of questions and comments.

## **2. Treasurer's Report**

The Chairman welcomed the Treasurer, Mr. H.A. Berends and invited him to present his report. Mr. Berends spoke to the Report, copies of which, including financial statements, had been circulated to members (copies of these are retained among Conference Papers).

The Chairman thanked Mr. Berends for his report and his work throughout the years.

## **3. Second Report of Membership and Finances Committee**

**3.1** On behalf of the Committee, Mr. J.L. van Burgel recommended that the Conference:

- i) accept with thanks and gratitude the report of the treasurer, Mr. H.A. Berends;
- ii) note that all outstanding assessments for the 1985 Edinburgh Conference have been received and that by using some of the 1987 and 1988 assessments all expenses of the Edinburgh Conference have been met;
- iii) note that a budget for the 1989 Conference has been prepared and it appears there will be sufficient funds to cover expenses;
- iv) accept the auditor's report submitted by the Cloverdale Consistory which indicated that they found the treasurer's books to be correct and complete to the end of March, 1989;
- v) decide that if the next ICRC is to be held in Seoul, the Presbyterian Church in Korea be requested to appoint a treasurer with the following mandate:
  - a) To draw up a budget for that Conference with the assistance of the Interim Committee.
  - b) To assess each member Church on the basis of the percentages used for the 1989 assessments, except for the following changes:  
The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia  
0.5%  
The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa  
0.5%.
  - c) To collect the installments needed on a yearly basis.

- d) To reimburse all costs incurred by the Conference.
- e) To submit his financial report to the next meeting of the Conference.

**Decision**

It was moved, seconded and agreed to that the Conference accept the recommendations i) to iv). With reference to recommendation v) it was moved, seconded and agreed to that there should be substituted the following, "reappoint Mr. H.A. Berends as treasurer with the following remit:

- a) To draw up a budget for the next Conference with the assistance of the Interim Committee;
- b) To assess each member Church;
- c) To collect the installments needed on a yearly basis;
- d) To reimburse all costs incurred by the Conference;
- e) To submit his financial report to the next meeting of the Conference."

**3.2 Proposal from Free Reformed Churches of Australia**

that the Conference reconsider the decision of the meeting of 1985 regarding travelling expenses to the effect that, "travelling expenses be borne by the member churches on the same basis as ordinary costs of the Conference."

**Recommendation**

The Committee recommended that the Conference:

- i) confirm the decisions of the 1985 ICRC re costs of the Conference and does not accept the proposal of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to include travelling expenses with ordinary costs of the Conference;
- ii) continue to provide sufficient funds to enable financial assistance to be given to those member churches, otherwise financially unable, to send one delegate to the Conference.

**Discussion**

Discussion revealed support for the proposal of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia on the grounds that it gave the smaller member Churches the opportunity to exercise their right to attend the Conference. It was pointed out that paragraph 2 of the Committee's recommendation introduced a limitation of the present understanding whereby smaller member churches are free to apply for financial help for two delegates. It was asked whether the cost implications for the larger churches had been evaluated.

**Decision**

It was agreed to ask the Committee to reconsider its recommendation (cf. Minute 2 of Session 7).

**4. Welcome**

At this stage the Chairman welcomed Dr. R.S. Rayburn, observer, Presbyterian Church of America, who had just taken his seat in the Conference.

**5. Second Report from Constitution Committee**

**5.1 Proposal from Free Church of Scotland**, supported by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, that there be added as second and third sentences of subsection 2 of Article VIII of the Regulations the following, "Recommendations should also be in the hands of the Corresponding Secretary one year in advance and be circulated as soon as possible thereafter. Amendments to Committee proposals shall be receivable by the Corresponding Secretary up to the opening session of Conference."

**Recommendation**

The Committee recommended that subparagraph 2 of Article VII of Regulations be amended to read as follows, "Materials for the agenda should be received by the Corresponding Secretary one year in advance. Recommendations should also be in the hands of the Corresponding Secretary one year in advance and be circulated as soon as possible thereafter. Amendments to Committee proposals can be received by the Corresponding Secretary up to the opening session of the next meeting of the Conference. Other agenda mate-



rial received less than one year before the opening of the next meeting of the Conference shall only be considered if the Conference so decides."

**Decision**

The recommendation of the Committee was unanimously accepted.

**5.2 Proposal from Free Church of Scotland** that, "The Regulations and procedures should make possible discussion of important issues not included in the pre-set agenda provided a proposal to this effect be tabled by at least five voting delegates."

**Recommendation**

The Committee recommended that there be added as subsection 4 of Article VII of the Regulation the following, "Additional subjects for the agenda shall be restricted to those matters which are important and urgent and which could not have been placed on the agenda in a regular way. In such cases the meeting of the Conference shall decide by a simple majority whether to place these matters on the agenda."

**Discussion - Amendment 1**

It was moved and seconded that the words "simple majority" in the last sentence of the prepared additional subsection be replaced by "two-thirds".

**Decision - Amendment 1**

On a vote being taken the amendment was carried by 5 votes to 4.

**Discussion - Amendment 2**

It was moved and seconded that there be inserted after the word "agenda" in the first line of the prepared additional subsection the words "introduced by a delegate of a member church".

**Decision - Amendment 2**

On a vote being taken the amendment was carried by 6 votes to 2.

**Decision**

On a vote being taken it was agreed by 6 votes to 1 with one abstention to adopt the following as subsection 4 of Article VII of the Regulations, "Additional subjects for

the agenda introduced by a delegate of a member church shall be restricted to those matters which are important and urgent and which could not have been placed on the agenda in a regular way. In such cases the meeting of the Conference shall decide by a two-thirds majority whether to place these matters on the agenda."

**5.3 Proposal from Canadian Reformed Churches and Free Reformed Churches of Australia** to insert the stipulation that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are members.

The Convener reported that although this proposal had been circulated to member Churches under Article II, Basis, of the Constitution, the Committee had dealt with it in connection with Article IV, Membership, because it was related to subsection 1.a of that Article which reads, "adhere and are faithful to the confessional standards stated in the Basis." The Convener explained that the Committee had considered the matter in conjunction with the proposal of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia that there should be added as subsection 1.c of Article IV of the Constitution the following, "show willingness to strive for unity with member churches of the Conference in their own country."

**Recommendations**

The Committee recommended:

- i) that subsection 1.a of Article IV of the Constitution be altered to read, "adhere and are faithful to confessional standards which are in agreement with the Basis of the Conference";
- ii) that there be added as sub-section 1.e of Article IV, "declare that they accept the Basis of the Conference and are committed to the Purpose of the Conference";
- iii) that there be added to subsection 2 of Article IV the words "and/or the Purpose of the Conference".

In presenting the Committee's recommendations the Convener explained that the Committee was seeking to deal with the problem of diversity and unity found within the Conference with respect to confessional

standards. They also wished the Conference to be able to deal sympathetically with applications for membership from Churches that might subscribe to only one of the Three Forms of Unity, or to a confessional standard which is not listed in the Basis but is yet in agreement with those there listed. The proposed addition of subsection 1.e ensured that churches seeking membership accept the Basis, although not subscribing to standards listed there, and are committed to the Purpose of the Conference.

**Proposed Amendment**

An amendment to the first part of the Committee's Recommendation was moved as follows:

"Those churches shall be admitted as members which:

- a) adhere and are faithful to their own confessional standards which are included in the Basis of the Conference."

The motion lapsed due to lack of a seconder.

**Discussion**

There followed considerable discussion in which the following points were made:

- i) If the Committee's recommendation is accepted the Conference will be required to devise means to satisfy itself that the standards of the applicant church are acceptable and churches making application will not know in advance whether their standards are acceptable.
- ii) The Committee's recommendation makes the basis too wide and undefined. A church may subscribe to a very brief confession which does not in fact contradict the Basis of the Conference but covers very little of the substance of the Confessions referred to in the Basis.
- iii) Consideration must be given to the new younger churches who might be encouraged to join the Conference. Just as the member churches recognize the need for contextualization in the work of mission so the concept requires to be applied with regard to Confessions. It would be unreasonable

to expect young churches outwith the West to adhere to 17th century European Confessions rather than formulate their own Confessions.

- iv) Could not the proposal of the Canadian Reformed Churches and Free Reformed Churches of Australia be met by including a simple statement in the minutes of the meetings of this Conference?

**Decision**

The Chairman was asked to give a ruling as to whether the Committee's proposal was in fact out of order because, a) it was proposing an amendment to the Article on Membership whereas the original proposal had been circulated under the heading of the Article on Basis and b) the proposal was substantially different from that proposed by the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

The Chairman ruled that the whole matter should be reconsidered by the Committee in the light of the points raised in the discussion (cf. Minute 4 of Session 7).

**6. Welcome**

Rev. P. Den Butter and Rev. J.C.L. Starreveld, the visiting delegates of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and Prof. Dr. J.L. Helberg and Prof. Dr. V.E. D'Assonville, the observer delegates of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, all of whom had just taken their seats in the Conference, were welcomed.

The session was concluded.

**SESSION 6**  
**Thursday, June 22**  
**Evening**

At Langley on Thursday, 22nd June, 1989, in the evening the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises.

**1. Introducing the Churches**

The Chairman called on Ds. J.M. Vingno to introduce the Christian Brethren Free Church in the Philippines. Ds.

Vingno started by pointing out that his country has been plagued by many social, economic, and political problems. However, in spite of these, the Lord has prospered his work and at present there are five Christian Brethren Free Churches in the Philippines. They all hold to the ecumenical creeds and the Three Forms of Unity. Since their inception in 1977 the ministry has expanded to radio and television programming. Ds. Vingno continued by relating how he left the Baptist faith for the Reformed and through God's providence eventually came in contact with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. He concluded by emphasizing the important task the church has in preaching Christ, and Him alone.

The Chairman thanked Ds. Vingno for his address.

## **2. Conference Paper**

Dr. Ho Jin Jun addressed the Conference on the subject "Tangun Shrine Myth & the Radical Christian Movement in the Korean Church".

The Chairman thanked Dr. Jun for his paper and indicated that it would be discussed the following morning.

The session was concluded.

## **SESSION 7** **Friday, June 23** **Morning & Afternoon**

At Langley on Friday, 23rd June, 1989, the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises conducted by the Chairman.

### **1. Discussion on Paper by Prof. Dr. Ho Jin Jun on "The Tangun Shrine Worship and Radical Christian Movement in Korea"**

Discussion ranged over a considerable number of points raised by Prof. Jun's paper. These included the following:

- 1) The task of the Church in Korea and the Reformed Churches in other countries with regard to politics and government.

- ii) The place given in teaching in seminaries and mission training programs to exposing the doctrinal and philosophical background of popular teachings such as Liberation Theology and, in Korea in particular, Minjung Theology.
- iii) The working out in practice in all countries of what is implied in Prof. Jun's statement, "We need the relevancy of Reformed Theology in Korea today" (pg. 19 of paper).
- iv) In connection with iii) above, the responsibility of members of the Conference to help each other not only to criticize theologies such as Liberation Theology, but to discover, in the tradition of those who formulated our Reformed Confessions, what the Bible is saying to the situation facing us today and so apply our Reformed Theology.
- v) The possibility and desirability of seeking to form Christian political parties, after the example of Abraham Kuyper, in Korea and elsewhere, so as to seek to relieve in some measure the problem of seeking to influence society without the Church courts getting involved in political matters.
- vi) The need to instruct believers so that they will influence society.
- vii) The need to avoid any teaching that suggested that the Gospel of Christ and Him crucified was not all sufficient.
- viii) Should member Churches of the ICRC which have the duty to be prophetic in their ministry and therefore constantly to seek renewal, be happy to be called "Conservative" churches?

**Prof. Jun's Response**

Prof. Jun responded to some of the points raised. Because Christians are a very small minority in Korea a Christian political party would have little influence even if it could be formed.

The tendency in the Korean Churches had been to concentrate on the salvation of individuals and they were weak in the area of instructing their people with regard to what is happening in society around them.

There was little reference in the older Reformed writings to the matter of demon possession that was a real issue for Korean Church.

The Chairman thanked Prof. Jun for his paper and his further contribution in answering questions raised.

**2. Third Report of Membership and Finances Committee** (cf. Minute 3.2 Decision of Session 5)

**Recommendation 1**

The Committee recommended that the Conference adhere to the decision of the 1985 Conference in Edinburgh.

**Decision**

The Committee's recommendation was adopted unanimously.

**Recommendation 2**

The Committee recommended that member churches should pay the travel expenses of their own delegates. Those churches unable to pay such expenses may request assistance from the General Funds of the Conference for travelling expenses of one delegate.

**Discussion**

The Corresponding Secretary drew the Conference's attention to the fact that there had been no objection from any church to the Edinburgh 1985 Conference decision which left open the possibility for a small church to be aided with the expenses of two delegates. There had been no sign of this privilege being abused, nor was the Conference facing financial difficulties.

**Decision**

An equal number of votes having been cast for and against the Committee's recommendation the Chairman declared that the status quo would be maintained.

**4. Third Report of Constitution Committee** (cf. Minutes 5.3 Decision of Session 5)

**Recommendation**

The Committee recommended that there be recorded in the minutes of this meeting of the Conference the following statement: "The Conference declares that all member churches are expected to adhere and be faithful to their own confessional standards, and that they recognize the

Reformed character of the Basis, and also that they are committed to the Purpose of the Conference.”

In presenting the Committee's recommendation the Reporter indicated that they had given long consideration to the matter and had looked at various ways of dealing with it. They brought forward this proposal as one that in some way answered the proposals submitted by the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, while at the same time leaving open the possibility for churches to propose in future years relevant changes to the Constitution if, on further reflection, they thought these necessary.

#### **Discussion**

There followed prolonged discussion in which the following points were made:

- 1) Attention was drawn to both the reaction of the Free Church of Scotland and of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands circulated with the Provisional Agenda. The original proposal of the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia is based on a misunderstanding. The Committee's recommendation does not help. The subsection 1.a of Article IV does not require the officebearers of member churches to subscribe to anything other than the Confessional standards of their own churches. This Article does not in fact refer to “subscription” at all. “Subscription” is what is required of officebearers by their own churches. The declaration proposed in the Committee's recommendation is superfluous. It would be a bad precedent to legislate because of a misunderstanding. We should be able to live with the Constitution as it is without alteration or declaratory statements (Free Church of Scotland, Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Corresponding Secretary).
- 11) If in fact the proper understanding of the present Constitution is that no subscription is required of officebearers except to the adopted standards of their own churches why not make a statement to that



effect? (Canadian Reformed Churches, Free Reformed Churches of Australia)

- iii) The delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches indicated that what their churches were committed to was the position set out in the original proposal from their Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.
- iv) The present basis of the Conference declares the unity that there is between member churches and gives recognition to the doctrinal unity that there is between the standards listed. The framers of the Westminster Confession did not see themselves as replacing the Three Forms of Unity but setting forth their doctrine for the Anglo-Saxon world. Does the Conference need a statement that could be taken as some sort of protection for member churches from guilt by association (in this instance association with the Westminster Confession of Faith)?

Anything that might detract from the message that the Basis of the Conference recognizes a common theology in the standards listed there would indeed threaten the future of the Conference (Free Church of Scotland).

- v) If the Committee's proposal is carried and such a statement included in the minutes of this Conference it could be used to tie the hands of future Conferences.

**Decision**

On a vote being taken the Committee's recommendation was defeated by 5 votes to 3.

**5. Motion from Delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia**

In terms of the proposal of their Churches circulated in accordance with the Constitution (Article VI), the delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia moved that in Article II of the Constitution there be inserted, "Delegates to the Conference subscribe only to the standards of the Churches of which they are members."

**Decision**

On a vote being taken the motion was defeated by 7 votes to 2.

- 6. Recommendation of Constitution Committee** regarding submitting proposed alterations to the Constitution and Regulations.

The Committee in presenting their report took the opportunity to recommend that member churches should be informed that proposals for alterations to the Constitution or Regulations should be submitted in accurate terms with clear indications as to the precise point in the wording of the Constitution or Regulations at which the alteration or addition is to be incorporated.

**Decision**

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

- 7. Minutes of Sessions 3 and 4**

The minutes of Sessions 3 and 4, copies of which had been circulated, were adjusted and adopted.

The session was concluded.

**SESSION 8**  
**Friday, June 23**  
**Evening**

At Langley on Friday, 23rd June, 1989, in the evening the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises conducted by the Chairman.

- 1. Report of the Committee on Ecumenical Creeds**

The Report, copies of which had been circulated to delegates, was presented by Dr. J. Faber who spoke to the Report and explained the Committee's recommendation. Before presenting the recommendation, Prof. Faber underlined the following points:

- i) The difficulty faced by the Committee on Creeds in seeking to fulfill their mandate by correspondence. He paid particular tribute to the work of Rev. G. van Rongen in coping with and helping the Committee to overcome this difficulty.

- ii) The importance of the Committee's mandate in view of the fact that the Confessions of all the member churches of the Conference went back to the ancient creeds and also in view of the attempts by the modern ecumenical movement to alter texts of the Creeds.
- iii) The tremendous influence of the International Consultations on English Text which shows the influence of modern theology.

**Recommendation**

The Committee recommended as follows:

The International Conference of Reformed Churches at Langley, B.C., 1989, having taken note of the Report of the Standing Committee on Ecumenical Creeds, thanks the Committee, and especially its reporter, the Rev. G. Van Rongen, for the work done.

The Conference commends the Report to the careful attention of the member churches and requests them to submit their comments to the next meeting of the Conference.

The member churches are requested to consider especially the following points:

- a) the difference in the use of these creeds in the member churches;
- b) the following deviations from the received text in the International Consultation Text:
  - 1) the expression "conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit" instead of the Scriptural formulation "by the Holy Spirit" both in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed;
  - 2) the omission of the words "God" and "Almighty" in the expression "seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty";
  - 3) the omission of the word "thence" in the clause concerning Christ's coming as judge of the living and the dead;
- c) the placing between brackets of the *Filioque* clause in the Nicene Creed as accepted in the Western Church;

- d) the omission of the phrase *descendit ad inferna* in the text used by the Presbyterian Church in Korea;
- e) the addition of the word "Christian" in the clause concerning the holy catholic church by churches that follow the German rather than the Latin text of the Heidelberg Catechism (1563);
- f) the addition of the words "I believe" in some translations of the same clause.

#### **Discussion**

Discussion centered on two points:

- i) Whether it was necessary to request churches to send in comments and commit future Conferences to further discussion on the text of the creeds.
- ii) The use of the preposition "by" to translate the expression *de Spiritu Sancto* in the Apostles' Creed.

#### **Decision**

It was agreed to accept the recommendation of the Committee with the following adjustments:

- i) That in the second line of the second paragraph the word "invites" be substituted for "requests" and that on the same line there be added after "comments" the words "if any".
- ii) That in the paragraph relating to deviations in the ICET text (b.1) the Scriptural formulation be stated as "from the Holy Spirit" rather than "by the Holy Spirit".

## **2. Introducing the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh**

Principal Emeritus C. Graham introduced the Free Church of Scotland College. He traced the history back to the year 1843 when there took place the event in the history of the Church in Scotland which has come to be known as "The Disruption". In that year the majority of the ministers of the Church of Scotland, as a protest against intolerable state intrusion into the affairs of the Church, left the Church to form the Church of Scotland, Free, while still adhering to the principle of good state/church relationships. They were left without manses, churches, or facilities for training students for the ministry. Within 25 years three Theological Colleges had been established. By the

end of the century deviations from Scriptural teaching had infiltrated the Free Church Colleges. This affected the Churches and paved the way for a compromising union in 1900 and only 26 ministers remained in the Free Church. Although these men had the right to all the property of the Church they were deprived of most of it. A fine building in the heart of Edinburgh was assigned as church offices and College. This building houses the College today. Its faculty of five professors, all of whom have had experience in the pastoral ministry, is appointed by the General Assembly. Its main purpose is to train ministers for the Free Church of Scotland but students from other backgrounds are welcome and each year several are enrolled. The library of some 40,000 books includes many valuable old volumes including some first editions of Calvin.

### **3. Conference Address**

Prof. Dr. J. Douma addressed the Conference on the subject of "Apartheid".

The Chairman thanked Prof. Douma for his paper and indicated that it would be discussed on Monday morning.

The meeting was closed with prayer.

## **SESSION 9**

### **Monday, June 26**

### **Morning & Afternoon**

At Langley on Monday, 26th June, 1989, the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises conducted by the Chairman.

### **1. Discussion of the paper on "Apartheid" by Prof. Dr. J. Douma**

Several participants presented responses to Prof. Douma's paper.

- 1) Rev. O.J. Douma (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) made the plea that although the paper dealt only with Apartheid in South Africa the Conference should discuss the subject in more general terms with modesty and mildness. The fact that even within the Dutch reformed churches in Canada

there was separation from each other with respect to the Lord's Table was a form of Apartheid. Such Apartheid was sometimes justified on the grounds that if two Churches tried to unite what happens is that we are left with three Churches.

- ii) Rev. W. Boessenkool (Free Reformed Churches in South Africa) read from a prepared paper a long response. Copies were made available to participants. The main points in Mr. Boessenkool's response were as follows:

1. Rev. Boessenkool stated that the paper of Dr. Douma was misrepresenting the political situation in South Africa. He warned that the ICRC was going in the line of the WCC and the REC when political issues were tabled. He wanted the ICRC to adhere to Art. 30 of the Dordt Church Order, otherwise the result could be that some reformed churches in South Africa would not want to ask for membership.
2. Rev. Boessenkool stated that the paper of Dr. Douma was incomplete. According to Dr. Douma thousands of black people had been shifted to other places. The ruling position of the whites being the cause that this took place. Besides that, the fear of the whites had inspired them to do so. Rev. Boessenkool pointed out that it was not fear but the willingness to help with better and cheaper housing, that was the background. Also that at this moment nobody will be shifted to any other place without his consent, everybody being free to look for work at any place he likes.
3. Rev. Boessenkool stated that the paper of Dr. Douma was inaccurate. Rev. Boessenkool gave many figures of the rapid changing scenario in South Africa. Many figures were given of things that had changed which Dr. Douma had not brought into account in his paper. Rev. Boessenkool proposed that the Conference file Dr. Douma's paper and his reaction to it, and continue with the agenda. For the most impor-

tant thing in the world is to contend for the faith which has been delivered to us. Unity in the truth will stand forever.

4. Rev. Boessenkool maintained that the delegates of the member churches of the ICRC really expected a thoroughly theological analysis which goes into the roots of the issue. He therefore regretted that the paper together with the other papers had not been sent to the delegates in advance.

- iii) Mr. A. Roos moved that Prof. Douma's paper and the response by Rev. Boessenkool should not be published and that the Conference terminate discussion of the topic and proceed to the next business.

**Chairman's Ruling 1**

The Chairman indicated that it would be impossible at this stage to put an embargo on the publication of Prof. Douma's paper. He ruled that the paper be included with Conference papers and that the responses be recorded by the recording secretary for inclusion in the minutes and that the Conference continue with discussion.

**Chairman's Ruling 2**

The Chairman ruled that he would not be happy to accept further long printed statements but he did encourage full participation in the discussion centered around Prof. Douma's paper.

- iv) Dr. P. Rossouw (Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa) having apologized for the unavoidable absence of his colleague Prof. Dr. J. Heyns, made the following points:
  - a) The ecclesiastical aspects of the subject were rightly approached by way of an ethical analysis of Apartheid but such an analysis needed to be full and it was impossible at one session to give a full picture of the situation in South Africa.
  - b) He wished to ask Prof. Douma if in preparing and presenting his paper he had been aware of the fact that South Africans were very aware of mis-

takes made in the past and that 80% of all South African Christians were committed to changes.

- c) South Africa was in a transitional stage as far as government is concerned.
- d) Why had the paper made no reference
  - i) to the persistent efforts of the South African Government to get together all acknowledged black African leaders for consultation;
  - ii) to the fact that the Group Areas Act and other Acts related to Apartheid are under reconsideration and a Bill of Human Rights is being considered for all racial groups in South Africa?
- e) While injustices were committed in implementation, the declared aim of successive Prime Ministers was justice and fear was not the great motive.
- f) Freedom of speech in South Africa to criticize the government is unrivaled in all Africa.
- g) The presentation in Prof. Douma's paper is out of date. South Africa is on the way to meaningful change.
- h) The Role of the Church in South Africa.

It is admitted that it was a mistake ever to have tried to give a Biblical justification of Apartheid. The Dutch Reformed Church has listened to criticism from all over the world and has reconsidered her position. The paper belittled the major changes in the Dutch Reformed Church as seen in the publication *Church and Society*. There is no Apartheid in the Dutch Reformed Church. The Dutch Reformed Church has in fact denounced the ideology of Apartheid and has urged the government to uphold the Scriptural norms for human justice.
- i) South Africa is in a state of transition towards a contextualized Christian democracy. What she needs is not boycotts but critical solidarity.



**v) Conference's Responsibility in the Matter**

It was suggested that the Conference agree with the substance of Prof. Douma's paper that Apartheid finds no basis in Scripture, leave working out of dismantling to South Africa, encourage South African Reformed Churches to join the Conference (Rev. Cl. Stam), appreciate that the solving of the problems will take time, and appreciate that the Reformed Churches in South Africa are doing what they can (Prof. Dr. K. Deddens). The struggle in South Africa is a battle for the Reformed faith against a fake Christless Christianity proclaiming the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man without reference to Scripture.

**vi) Responsibility of the Church to the State**

In light of Article 30 of the Church Order, Dr. Faber questioned Prof. Douma's statement on page 29 of his paper relating to the Church's responsibility.

**Response - Prof. J. Douma**

Prof. Douma in replying regretted that he had only fifteen minutes to respond to a discussion which lasted one and one-half hours. He pointed out that the subject had not been chosen by the Dutch churches. The Interim Committee had invited him to give an evaluation of a relevant subject. With reference to the Reformed Churches in South Africa, Apartheid was not a determining factor for admission to ICRC but the subject had to be faced. He was aware while preparing the paper of all the information referred to by Dr. Rossouw. He defended his position on the duty of the church in South Africa to speak out against this sin, as against any sin. It is an ecclesiastical task.

Apartheid had to be addressed in all its aspects. The Dutch Reformed Church had criticized the application of Apartheid but not Apartheid as such. Why had Rev. Boessenkool not spoken about the "sin" of Apartheid? It is important for the member churches to go on speaking to one another about a matter that has brought so much misery to South Africa.

The Chairman thanked Prof. Douma for his paper and his response to the observations made and expressed the great need for ongoing prayer.

**2. Message from Gereja Gereja Reformaci, Indonesia**

The Chairman reported receipt of a message from the Gereja Gereja Reformaci, Indonesia expressing their regret at being unable to send an observer to the Conference.

**3. Conference Paper**

Prof. Dr. K. Deddens addressed the Conference on the subject "Contextualization in Missions".

The Chairman thanked Prof. Deddens and invited discussion of the paper.

**Discussion**

In the discussion attention was drawn to the following points:

- i) Contextualization is knowing the background of those to whom you speak.
- ii) We may be oversensitive on the issue of cultural imperialism. We may have, because of a long period of Bible teaching, something more to export than theology.
- iii) The problem of upward mobility when lives are changed by the Gospel.
- iv) Can we not learn from Marxist diagnosis and analysis of the problems of the poor while rejecting its proffered remedies. We must not allow rejection of false theologies to become an occasion for ignoring the needs of the poor.
- v) The problem of the use of the term "Christian" as a synonym for "Western". Maybe a term can be coined to describe true faith in Christ on analogy of Hinduism, Marxism, namely Christo-ism.
- vi) The problem of breaking with customs that belong to the old religion.
- vii) New third world situations may call for expansion of the Confessions.
- viii) It may be difficult to teach people the Scriptures in their own culture if their languages are limited especially in the decadent, rather primitive, cultures.

**Response - Prof. Deddens**

Prof. Deddens in replying to comments agreed with those who had suggested that Scripture and Contextualization

were two most important questions for future Reformed Churches worldwide. He agreed that all cultures are not equal but the missionary had often a great deal to learn from the native culture. We can learn from all sources, including Marxism. The problem of limited languages can be overcome over a period of time. With regard to need for extension to the Confessions he wished to point out the fullness of the teaching in the ecumenical creeds and the Reformation Confessions.

Prof. Deddens was thanked for his responses to the discussion.

The session was closed with prayer.

## SESSION 10 Tuesday, June 27 Morning & Afternoon

At Langley on Tuesday, 27th June, 1989, the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises conducted by the Chairman.

### **1. Minutes of Session 5**

The minutes of the Session 5, copies of which had been circulated, were adjusted and adopted.

### **2. First Report of the Missions Committee**

The Rev. Norman E. Reid presented the report from the Advisory Committee on Missions. The first part of the report with recommendations as adopted by the Conference is minuted below. The second part of the report with adopted recommendations is minuted under Session 12, Wednesday, June 28.

The Committee reviewed progress made on the mandate given to the Standing Committee appointed in 1985. That mandate contained the items 1,2, and 3 below (for item 3 see minute of Session 12).

#### **2.1 Item 1 of Mandate**

To gather information from the member churches regarding their missionary activities and training programmes.

**2.1.1 Missionary Activities****2.1.1.1**

On examining the returns from the churches the Advisory Committee noted that the Korean Church had not made any submission to the committee. Dr. Ho Jin Jun, being a member of the Advisory Committee had explained that his church had 15 missionaries working in the following countries: Taiwan, Indonesia, Ghana, Japan and the Philippines. With aid from the Presbyterian Church in America his church had begun a missionary training institute in Korea. He asked that lecture(s) be sent to help in his training programme, especially in the field of Pastoral Theology.

**Recommendation 1**

The Committee recommended that member churches take note of the request of the Korean Church.

**Decision 1**

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

**2.1.1.2**

A letter from a committee of the church at Spakenburg-South (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) was received asking about possibilities anywhere in the world for new missions activity or expansion of existing activities. The letter also contained an offer of financial support and/or man power to assist in such projects.

**2.1.1.3**

Rev. J.M. Vingno, an observer from the Christian Brethren Free Church (Philippines) expressed the desire for the ICRC to help send missionaries to his area, as need for reformed witness is great.

**Recommendation 2**

The Committee recommended that the Conference request the delegates from the

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to convey the information from Rev. Vingno to the Church at Spakenburg-South.

**Decision 2**

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

**2.1.1.4**

The Committee discussed the submission from the Free Church of Scotland in the Information Re The Provisional Agenda Page 5, Item 8 "Re Missions" first paragraph. The Committee noted that Dr. Deddens was delivering a paper on "Contextualization".

**2.1.2 Missionary Training Programmes**

**Recommendation 3**

On the training of nationals and identifying suitable training schools, etc. the Committee recommends that the Conference instructs the Standing Committee on Missions to investigate programmes of missionary training.

**Decision 3**

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

**2.2 Item 2 of Mandate**

To gather information regarding coordination of missionary activities of member churches in training and exchanging missionaries.

**2.2.1**

A letter from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia had been read to the Committee stating that their church would cooperate in actual mission activities with sister churches only.

It was agreed that since this issue was basic to the whole Conference it should not be discussed in the Advisory Committee.

**2.2.2**

Discussion took place regarding the need for more contact between the churches in Sumba/Savu (Gereja Gereja Reformaci, Indonesia) and the Korean missionaries in Java.

**Recommendation 4**

The Committee recommended that the Conference draw the attention of the churches in Sumba/Savu to the presence of two Korean missionaries in Java and the attention of the Korean Church to the existence of the Churches in Sumba/Savu.

**Decision 4**

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

**2.2.3**

The Convener reported that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ireland was cooperating with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in establishing a Reformed congregation in the north of England in conjunction with the Presbyterian Association of England. The Irish Church was providing man power and the Dutch Church helping financially and with temporary preaching supply. This is a practical outcome of our relationship within ICRC.

**2.2.4**

A message was received from Prof. Boyd speaking of the need on the Peruvian mission field for teachers in the high school, Collegio San Andres, in the Free Church of Scotland mission. Rev. McDonald spoke of need for additional missionaries in the areas served by the Free Church in Southern Africa.

**Recommendation 5**

The Committee recommended that the Conference request that members take note of these needs.

**Decision 5**

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

**2.2.5**

Dr. Deddens drew the attention of the Committee to the Conference organized by the missionaries in Brazil and Curaçao belonging to the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. This Conference will take place in October 1989 in Curaçao. Invitations have been extended to missionaries serving in Peru, Surinam

and South Africa. The Conference will be in the English language, and will also involve mission aid workers.

**Recommendation 6**

The Committee recommended that the Conference draw the attention of member Churches to this information.

**Decision 6**

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

**2.3 Conference Request**

The Conference requested the Missions Committee to reconsider and resubmit the second part of their Report with recommendation to a later session of the Conference.

**3. Workshop - Rules for Interchurch Relations**

The Vice-Chairman, Rev. J. de Gelder, occupied the Chair. Rev. Dr. J. Visscher presented a paper, copies of which were circulated, as a basis of discussion on the topic of interchurch relations. (This paper is retained among Conference papers.)

**Discussion**

The ensuing discussion involved a large number of participants. The observations made included the following:

**1) Wording of Rule 1**

The delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia pointed out that they adhered to wording as in the rules of the Canadian Reformed Churches. These words expressed the responsibility churches have to each other to be ready to admonish and rebuke one another whether or not these are churches of the one federation or churches of different federations or denominations.

The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa indicated that they deliberately omit reference to liturgy because liturgy can be determined by a wide variety of influences.

The Free Church of Scotland delegates expressed the view that to begin with this rule suggested suspicion

and tended to vitiate at the outstart the whole question of interchurch relationships.

Rev. Cl. Stam (Canadian Reformed Churches) did not see Rule 1 as expressing suspicion but as an expression of mutual responsibility. He questioned use of the term "practice" in the wording of Rule 1 in the proposal.

Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen proposed that this Rule 1 should be more positive. As it stands it gives the impression that the member churches are perfect. The wording should indicate a commitment to each other to encourage each other as faithful churches in the struggle to remain faithful. The point was endorsed by other delegates.

In reply Dr. Visscher said he did not see this point as motivated by suspicion. These rules were first established for use of churches with very close relationships. He admitted they could be interpreted negatively and a more positive statement of this rule was perhaps desirable. As to the use of "practice" in Rule 1 he explained that he had in mind churches which subscribed to an acceptable Confession but did not adhere to it.

**ii) Rules 2 and 7** in the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa proposed rules.

The delegates of that church drew attention to the word "intended" in Rules 2 and 7 and considered it most important. In reply Dr. Visscher expressed reservation about the wisdom of insisting on such a practice.

The omission of reference to liturgy in the proposed rules he saw to be in keeping with Article 50 of the Church Order.

**iii) Rule 3**

Prof. D. Macleod (Free Church of Scotland) saw this as desirable and suggested that if it is done it largely covers provisions of Rules 1 and 2.

**iv) Rule 4**

Rev. Cl. Stam found difficulty with allowing each other's ministers to preach the Word and administer



sacraments. He pointed to the restrictions in the Dutch and South African rules at this point. Such permission should be given only by special arrangement. Recognition of each other should not necessarily include admission to each other's pulpits. Prof. Dr. Faber could not see how this could be left out if Churches were recognizing each other. The difference between admission into the ministry of the Church and occasional preaching had to be remembered. Rev. van Beveren thought Rule 4 was being idealistic at this stage. It may be that for a time we could not implement the proposal about admission to each other's pulpits. People may not be ready for it yet though it was a goal to be aimed at. Prof. D. Macleod saw that in view of different liturgies there could be practical difficulties in inviting each other's ministers to administer the sacraments but he saw the rest of proposed Rule 4 as altogether desirable, while making the point that the responsibility to invite a preacher to the pulpit lay with the minister who is held responsible for his action. At Edinburgh in 1985 delegates from other member churches of the Conference had been invited to preach in the Free Church of Scotland pulpits because the Free Church ministers had wanted to make a declaration to the congregations that all members of the Conference preach the same Gospel.

In reply Dr. Visscher indicated that he could not see how preaching could be excluded from Rule 4. If we recognize others as true Churches we are saying they preach the Word. If some ministers of Reformed Churches did not accept invitations to preach in other churches it could be attributed to their understanding of the relationship between pastor and consistory which required consultation with the consistory before acceptance of such invitations.

**v) Need for a process of getting to know each other**

Several participants (including Rev. J.J. Peterson, O.P.C., who outlined the process in existence between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Canadian Reformed Churches) made the point that the purpose of the Conference was to promote such a process.

This was being accomplished (for example, because of common involvement in the ICRC the Canadian Reformed Churches had entered into discussions with the Free Church of Scotland). Rules governing interchurch relationships, which were in any case an alien concept to Presbyterian Churches, perhaps found their place at the end of the discussion process rather than at the beginning. Rev. P. Den Butter questioned the wisdom of an attempt to adopt the rules. Let the Churches decide for themselves how to pursue Article III,2 of the Constitution.

**vi) Existence of true churches side by side**

Rev. P. Gadsby (Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia) wondered if sometimes reluctance to recognize one another as true churches stemmed from an unwillingness to accept that two true churches could exist side by side. With several other participants he acknowledged that the ultimate goal must be unity and visible union, yet among the churches there are differences which will mean that for a time they may have to walk apart. Overcoming obstacles to unity will be achieved by recognition. It was important to consider not just where a church stands at any one point of time but the direction in which she was moving (Rev. G.I. Williamson, Orthodox Presbyterian Church). The point was endorsed by Prof. D. Macleod in the course of his contribution. The enormous problem facing the world today is the existence of apostate churches denying the fundamental truths of Scripture. We must not waste our energy on disputes between reformed churches.

**vii) Summing up**

The Chairman of the session said that the purpose of the workshop had been to have a free and open discussion and that had been accomplished. No conclusions had been reached but it was hoped that the delegates would be able to report to their churches on their discussions.

**4. Minutes of Session 6,7 and 8**

The minutes of the Session 6,7 and 8, copies of which had been circulated, were adjusted and adopted.

The session was closed.

SESSION 11  
Tuesday, June 27  
Evening

At Langley on Tuesday, 27th June, 1989, in the evening the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises.

**1. Introducing the Churches**

The Chairman invited Professor V.E. D'Assonville to introduce the Reformed Churches in South Africa. Professor D'Assonville began with an expression of appreciation of the welcome and fellowship he and his fellow-delegate had experienced at the Conference.

He recalled that the Reformed Churches in South Africa had come into being by way of secession in 1859 on Biblical grounds similar to those which occasioned the secession in Holland in 1834. The early years had witnessed a severe struggle for survival and then towards the end of the century the war had renewed their trials. They suffered not only the closure of their seminary but the loss of thousands of people as a result of the war and the concentration camps. Nothing was left after the war—churches, manse and farms had been burnt down. As a result there was large-scale emigration of the people.

But in spite of all, God blessed them. A seminary which began in 1969 has become the largest, indeed, the only Christian university in the African continent having now some 10,000 students. No colour bar exists at the university. Also, the church has its Bible and psalm book in the Afrikaans language.

The church has grown and kept to the Word and the Three Forms of Unity. Their conviction and experience is that truth and love are from the Spirit of God. Truth without love is brutality and love without truth is sentimentality.

The Chairman thanked Prof. D'Assonville for his account of his church and their trials.

**2. Conference Address**

Prof. D. Macleod addressed the Conference on the subject of "Christology". The Chairman thanked Prof. Macleod for the preparation and delivery of his speech and indicated that discussion on it would take place the next morning.

The session was closed with prayer.

**SESSION 12**  
**June 28, 1989**  
**Morning & Afternoon**

At Langley on Wednesday, 29th June, 1989, the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises conducted by the Chairman.

**1. Second Report from Advisory Committee on Missions** (cf. Minute 2 of Session 10)

Rev. Norman E. Reid presented the second part of the Committee's Report.

**1.1 Item 3 of Standing Committee's Mandate**

To examine the need to produce listings of relevant missionary literature on an ongoing basis, and to promote the publication of an introduction to Reformed missions.

The Committee spoke of the need to involve Rev. Drs. L.J. Joosse, the editor of *Reflection* in the work of the ICRC, since this publication met a great need in the area of Methodology in Missions. It was agreed that investigations be made to identify ICRC and *Reflection* more closely. *Reflection* appears quarterly in English, with a Dutch summary. The above is not to be understood as implying that the ICRC is entering the field of publication.

**Recommendation 7**

The Conference instructs the Mission Committee to investigate the possibilities in this area.

**Decision 7**

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

**1.2 Further to the Standing Committee's report on mission work among the Jews...**

**Recommendation 8**

...The Conference instruct the Missions Committee to continue to collect information regarding missions work being done among the Jews and distribute this information to member churches.

**Decision 8**

The recommendation was unanimously adopted

**1.3 Recommendation 9**

The Conference appoint a Missions Committee with the following mandate:

- 1) to update information from the member churches regarding their missionary activities;
- 2) to investigate progress of missionary training in the member churches;
- 3) to continue to collect information from the member churches regarding any missionary activity among the Jews;
- 4) to examine the need to produce listings of relevant missionary literature for the promotion of the study of methodology of missions;
- 5) to investigate the possibilities of one or more member churches establishing liaison with the magazine *Reflection* with a view to promoting the publication of material on Methodology in Missions;
- 6) to send its report to the Corresponding Secretary at least one year before the next Conference.

**Decision 9**

The recommendation was unanimously accepted.

**2 Discussion on Paper by Prof. D. Macleod on "Christology"**

Professor Macleod's lecture was recognized as having many points worthy of discussion and further investigation. Some of the questions raised concerned certain areas of risk in formulating a Christology along the lines indicated by Prof. Macleod. These related to:

- i) Mysticism as suggested by the exegesis of Peter's statement regarding the believers being partakers in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4); Theo-Paschitism and Christo-monism (Prof. Faber).
- ii) Prof. van Bruggen had difficulty with a reference to sources lying behind the four gospels which seemed to suggest a measure of hospitality to liberal criticism. He also questioned whether all of Christ's knowledge was derived from His study of revelation.

Other comments related

- iii) to the possibility that the Christological approach might ease the tension between the particular emphasis of the Westminster symbols and the covenantal emphasis of the Three Forms of Unity (Rev. W. Peter Gadsby),
- iv) to the emotional life of our Lord as reflecting emotion in God (Rev. P. Den Butter),
- v) and to certain risks inherent in the objective approach of the systematic theologian (Rev. L.W. Bilkes).

#### **Response - Prof. D. Macleod**

To these questions and comments Prof. Macleod responded. He rejected the suggestion of mysticism in the scholastic sense of direct unmediated access to God and contended that the *onus probandi* in regard to an alternative exegesis of the passage in 2 Peter 1:4 lay with those who disagreed with the obvious meaning. While rejecting the notion of divine apatheia as of Stoic provenance he was persuaded that God the Father was not unmoved by the sacrifice of His Son. The apparent Christo-monism of his approach derived from his persuasion that "all God does is Christ-shaped". He was also persuaded that we cannot in principle exclude the use of sources for New Testament narrative. This does not in any way prejudice recognition of the full inspiration of Scripture. With reference to a question regarding the baptism of adopted children (Rev. G. Williamson) Prof. Macleod indicated that although adopted children are not physically descended from their parents, they belonged to the family organism.

**3. Report of the Executive Committee**

**i) Next Conference**

Host Church: Presbyterian Church in Korea  
Place: Seoul, Korea  
Time: the first half of September 1993  
Alternate Host: The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

**ii) Substitutes for the Interim Committee**

Committee: Rev. O.J. Douma, Prof. D. Macleod,  
Rev. M. VanderWel

Corresponding Secretary: Rev. Cl. Stam

**iii) Suggested Topics and Speakers for the Next Meeting**

Marriage and Divorce - Drs. A. Kamer  
Church in a Secular Society - Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes  
Admission to the Lord's Supper - Rev. J.A. MacCallum  
Preaching: Redemptive Historical & Exemplaristic - Prof. Dr. C. Trimp  
Church Growth - Dr. J. Visscher  
Theonomy - Prof. A.I. Macleod  
Prophecy Today? - Prof. Dr. S.G. Hur  
Children in the Covenant - Prof. F.S. Leahy  
Possible Theme: Issues Facing the Church Today

**iv) Papers and Respondents**

A summary of each paper should be received by the Corresponding Secretary at least six months prior to the next meeting. Respondents will be assigned to reply to each paper from among those delegated to the meeting. The respondents should receive the papers six months in advance.

**v) Committee on Theological Affirmation**

Mandate: to take up the suggestion of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia regarding an agreed statement as to what constitutes a "true church" and the consequences of such a statement for intercommunion, etc.

Members: Prof. E. Donnelly  
Prof. Dr.J. Faber (convener)

Prof. B. Kamphuis  
Prof. D. Macleod  
Prof. Dr. N. H. Gootjes (substitute)

**vi) Committee on Social Responsibility**

This suggestion by the Free Church of Scotland remains unclear to the Executive; hence, we recommend that the Free Church of Scotland reconsider this matter and come to the next meeting with a more detailed proposal which can be fully assessed.

**vii) Committee on Missions**

Members: Rev. J.M. Batteau  
Prof. A.C. Boyd  
Rev. C. Haak (convener)  
Prof. Dr. Ho Jin Jun  
Dr. D. MacDonald (substitute)

**viii) Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the Conference**

To be published in a book which will contain the following:

- the sermon at the prayer service
- the opening remarks of the chairman
- minutes of each session
- reports of the committees on creeds and missions
- papers delivered
- revised constitution
- address list

**ix) Directory**

The Corresponding Secretary is charged to compile a Directory containing all the pertinent material about the member churches: date of institution, creedal basis, membership statistics, interchurch relations with other churches, publications, theological seminary, etc.

**x) Newsletter**

The Corresponding Secretary is charged to issue an occasional newsletter keeping the members churches up to date on pertinent events and developments, as well as passing on information on missions.



**Discussion 1** (cf. Minutes of Session 13, Item 1, Discussion 2)

There followed discussion on the various points seriatim.

**i) Next Conference**

Some questions were asked as to the feasibility of holding the next Conference in Korea. The Executive undertook to research all possible factors before finalizing their decision.

**ii) Substitutes for the Interim Committee**

The Conference agreed to the appointment of the substitutes named by the Interim Committee.

**iii) Suggested Topics and Speakers for the Next Conference**

With regard to topics and speeches many questions and suggestions were put forward. Some questions referred to the practicability of including the number of lectures proposed. Attention was drawn to the need to make the Conference discussion relevant both to third world countries and to the member churches. Among suggestions regarding topics there figured:

- a) A Study on Prayer
- b) The Church in Society
- c) Law in Society
- d) Reformed Ecumenicity
- e) Reformed Anthropology
- f) The Encounter between Calvinism and African Culture
- g) Bible Translations

Suggestions were also made as to persons to whom topics should be assigned.

As the Executive had merely provided suggestions it was agreed that the points raised in discussion should be borne in mind when the time came to propose the actual programme of the next Conference, it being accepted that the duration of the Conference would not exceed ten days (inclusive of weekend).

**iv) Papers and Respondents**

There was no unanimity regarding the proposal to have people appointed to prepare beforehand re-

sponses to paper to be submitted to the Conference. Some regarded this as a good method to pursue study in depth. Others took the view that it yielded distortion through adversarial debate. The matter was assigned to the Interim Committee for further consideration.

The session was closed with prayer.

**SESSION 13**  
**Wednesday, June 28**  
**Evening**

At Langley on Wednesday, 28th June, 1989, in the evening the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises conducted by the Chairman.

**1. Discussion 2** (cf. Minutes of Session 12, Item 3, Discussion 1)

**v) Committee on Theological Affirmation**

Discussion mainly concerned the mandate to the Committee.

**Decision**

On a vote being taken the Committee's proposed mandate was approved. The delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches abstained owing to disagreement among the delegates.

**vi) Committee on Social Responsibility**

**Decision**

The recommendation of the Committee was unanimously approved.

**vii) Committee on Missions**

**Decision**

The Conference agreed to add the names of Prof. Dr. K. Deddens, Rev. W.M. McKay and Rev. Boessenkool and omit the name of Rev. Dr. J. M. Batteau from the list proposed.

**viii) Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the Conference  
Decision**

The Conference unanimously agreed to the recommendation of the Committee.

**ix) Directory**

**Amendment and Decision**

The Conference unanimously agreed to the recommendation of the Committee with the following amendment: "The Directory should contain a family tree of each of the member Churches".

**x) Newsletter**

**Amendment**

The recommendation was amended to read as follows:

"The Corresponding Secretary is charged to issue an occasional newsletter keeping member and visiting churches up to date on pertinent events and developments, as per information supplied by the churches."

**Decision**

The Conference unanimously agreed to the recommendation of the Committee.

**2. Minutes of Session 9 and 10**

The minutes of Session 9 and 10 were adjusted and approved. It was also agreed that the minutes of the following sessions should be revised by the Executive.

**3. Conference Address**

Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam presented his paper on "The Elder as Preserver and Nurturer of Life in the Covenant".

**4. Discussion of paper on "The Elder as Preserver and Nurturer of Life in the Covenant" by Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam**

It was observed

- i)** that the expression life-eldership might be more accurately referred to as "indefinite tenure" (Rev. G. Williamson);
- ii)** that the arguments for term eldership were more pragmatic than Biblical (Prof. C. Graham);

- iii) that there might be a reputable role for pragmatic considerations in edifying the Church (Prof. J. van Bruggen);
- iv) that the elder's duty was not only to rule but also to equip the people of God for service (Rev. L.W. Bilkes);
- v) that eldership is a charismatic function and emphasis should be on spirituality rather than academic proficiency (Prof. D. Macleod);
- vi) that life eldership might tend to confuse the functions of minister and elders (Rev. Cl. Stam).

**Response—Prof. C. Van Dam**

To these points Prof. Van Dam responded observing

- i) that he would wish to reflect further on the concept of indefinite tenure of eldership;
- ii) that where Scriptures appeared to tolerate the concept, pragmatic consideration could be relevant;
- iii) that he would favour some training—not necessarily academic—before ordination;
- iv) that the offices of minister and elder are developments and there should be reluctance to multiply rules beyond what is necessary and Biblical.

Prof. Van Dam was thanked for his work and his presentation.

**5. A Note of Appreciation**

Rev. de Gelder reflected on the manner in which the Chairman had guided the Conference with firmness and kindness. He expressed thanks to the host church for all the arrangements so generously made.

**6. Closing Speech**

The Chairman addressed the Conference in the following terms:

“Esteemed Brethren,

We have come to the close of this second meeting of the ICRC. Over the past ten days we have discussed and debated a great deal together. We have done so on the floor of the Conference, in committee, as well as during the intermissions, the meals, and the outing. As a result we have gotten to know each other better and we have re-

ceived added insight into the respective churches that we represent.

Thinking back over the topics dealt with we have covered a considerable amount of ground. The presentation on Nehemiah led us to consider the relationship between the Old and New Testament and the different ways in which Old Testament passages are treated in the preaching. The submission on Baptism with the Holy Spirit turned our attention to the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's children. The essay on Tangun Shrine Worship confronted us with some of the vexing problems facing churches in Asia and Africa. The lecture on Apartheid brought us into the realm of morals and ethics in terms of race and colour. The introduction to Contextualization forced us to focus on how the Gospel relates to culture. The oration on Christology reminded us of the glory of our Lord in terms of His person and work. The paper on Eldership caused us to consider anew this office in terms of its origin, nature and function.

In addition to all this, we also discussed the reports submitted in the areas of the ecumenical creeds and missions. The recommendations on these matters will now go back to the member churches for their consideration and possible implementation. The workshop on interchurch relations produced some interesting exchanges of opinion that will hopefully assist us as we consider our respective approaches to interchurch relations and the rules that govern them.

Finally, we wrestled with constitutional revision and reformulation. In some instances changes were adopted; in other cases it was decided to leave matters as is. It was very much a matter of give and take.

Adding it all up what do we come to? On the one hand, there has been a definite growth in terms of our understanding of each other and our churches. An increased maturity was present in terms of the willingness to listen, to understand and to accommodate each other. On the other hand, there were frustrations too because of different approaches, procedures and perspectives. In short, we have learned much, but the process must be one of further learning and discussion. In this world of

so much appalling unbelief and immorality the churches of our Lord can not afford to turn a divided face to the world. We need each other and must be a hand and foot to each other in order that we might all the more witness to the centrality of our Lord and Saviour in this broken and sin-shattered life.

May the Lord bless each and everyone of you, as well as the churches that you represent. It is my hope and prayer that He will enrich you more and more through His Word and Spirit and that your faith in Jesus Christ may be steadfast, may abound and may be spread far and wide. Having said all that I now declare this second meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches closed."

#### **7. Closing of Conference**

The Conference was closed with praise and prayer.

## Section II

*Speechs, Statements and  
Reports*

## Prayer Service

*by Rev. M. van Beveren*

Text: Galatians 2:18-21

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

We are assembled here at this evening to give thanks to the Lord for the privilege that we have the meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches which is scheduled to begin tomorrow. It is a reason for joy, a reason for thankfulness when churches from several parts of the world send their representatives and thereby express the unity of the faith in Christ Jesus as He is revealed in the Scriptures and confessed in the Reformed creeds. In a time in which the authority of God's Word is undermined and the validity of the creeds of the Reformation is more and more called into question, if not ridiculed, those churches through their delegates come together to encourage one another to remain on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. They come together to assist each other to do the task to which the Lord calls them, the task namely to proclaim the gospel as revealed in the Scriptures. And that, congregation, in short, is the purpose of the Conference. And that is why we should rejoice! The Conference is not a spectacle to exhibit that strength lies in unity. For what strength do we have? As it is, the churches have no strength in themselves and the Conference of churches does not change that at all. The only power for the churches is the Word of God, no matter how big, no matter how small those churches are.

It has been said that the International Conference of Reformed Churches is a conference of disappearing minorities. We are agree with that last part of the description. Minorities they are—those churches. But whether or not they are disappearing is something else. That depends on whether or not they continue to build on that one foundation, whether or not they hold on to that one gospel of Jesus Christ. For that is the power, the Gospel. The power of the churches is the proclamation of the happy tidings of free grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The power is the preaching of reconciliation in this world—reconciliation to God through the one Mediator between God and man. When the churches start tampering with that message, then they will be disappearing. And there will be no future. It is as Paul says in one of his other letters, the letter



to the Romans, "The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith." By that power the church was built in the early centuries in the midst of the heat of persecution. By that power the church was built in the days of the Reformation, and by that power the church is built today and will be built. And that, congregation, is why we will this evening also pray for the Conference and the delegates. We will ask the Lord that not human wisdom prevail, but that all involved be guided by God's Word and Spirit. And that all discussion and decisions may serve the proclamation of the gospel in the churches and in the world close by and far away, so that God's name be glorified and His church be built. But before we pray we will listen to the Word of God as we find it in our text.

In the letter to the Galatians the apostle Paul is preaching the Gospel of justification through faith in Jesus Christ. It is true that the apostle has been doing that in all his letters, but there is a special emphasis here. This letter to the Galatians is almost entirely against the heresy which came up in the early Christian Church—the heresy of Judaism and legalism. By that we understand the teaching and belief that for the justification and salvation of man, besides Jesus Christ, something else is required, namely, the keeping of laws and regulations—in those days the laws and regulations taken from the Old Testament and the Jewish tradition. Besides Jesus Christ, people said, "We need our own good works as a condition that God might fulfill His purpose in His people." Paul fights that teaching with all his power. And he uses strong language for it. Then he preaches that mankind is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ only. Paul does not mean that we have nothing to do with the law of God. No, Paul also fights against that so-called libertarianism that says we do not have to bother about God's will anymore. At the end of the letter he shows that the law of God still has a function as a guideline for the believers to walk in thankfulness—to walk in thankful covenant obedience. Or, as he says it in his letter, "to walk in the Spirit" and he calls that fulfilling the law of Christ. But that can only be on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done and on nothing else.

Well, I don't have to say it, because you know what justification is. It is that God says, "You are longer guilty." He declares, "You are righteous. Your sins are taken away." Martin Luther could never be sure of his salvation because no matter

how he tried, his so-called good works were imperfect and defiled with sin. And he was sure of his salvation only when he understood that a man is justified through faith in Jesus Christ because Christ died for our sins and only through faith in Him God declares that we are no longer guilty. Well, congregation that message is important for us always, also tonight. If we confess that the Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord then also a conference of churches can have its foundation in Him alone—in Him as He is revealed in the Scriptures. I may preach unto you God's gracious Gospel of justification through faith in Jesus Christ. And we will see Paul first defending the Gospel, secondly, professing his faith, and thirdly, preaching God's grace.

**Paul Defending the Gospel**

In our text the apostle says, "If I build up again those things which I tore down, then I prove myself a transgressor." The question is: what did Paul tear down? Well, that whole Jewish structure and teaching that a man is saved by doing the law, by keeping rules and regulations. That is what Paul tore down right from the beginning when he became an apostle of Jesus Christ. And he says, "If I would then build up that Jewish system again, namely, that we have to be saved by doing the law and not by faith in Jesus Christ alone, well then I (and others also) would still be a transgressor, for then I would still be under the law, I would still be condemned by the law." For by the works of the law no man shall be justified. So Paul is defending the Gospel which he had preached before. The situation was serious. Not only one church was influenced by Judaism and legalism. This letter is addressed to the churches of Galatia—four or more churches were involved. They accepted the view that all Christians should be circumcised and that they had to keep many of the Old Testament rules. That was not only embarrassing for the Gentiles who had become Christians and had joined the church on the basis of Christ's work only. But it was clear that the gospel of Christ was perverted. Here was a different message. Here was a gospel that was contrary to what they had received. That is why Paul right at the beginning of his letter in chapter one says, and he says it two times, "If anyone is preaching to you gospel contrary to that which he received, let him be accursed." It cannot be said any stronger.

Then Paul explains how he from the beginning had preached the gospel of free grace through faith in Jesus Christ. That gospel is not based on personal opinion, but is received from Christ Himself. And Paul explains that this preaching was also accepted by the other apostles. Indeed, after quite some dissension and discussion, but those discussions were caused by false brethren who secretly slipped in to spy out the freedom which we have in Christ. Paul does not have too many good words for those people.

It all began in Antioch. There Paul had spoken of the blessings of the Lord, that also the Gentiles had accepted the gospel. But some men, those false brethren, came down from Jerusalem and were saying, "It is fine that those heathen believe in Christ, but they have to be circumcised according to custom of Moses, otherwise they cannot be saved." You can read that in Acts 15. The matter was then discussed at the meeting of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem and it was decided, and the whole church agreed that the Gentiles should not be compelled to be circumcised. And with that message Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and the whole matter seemed settled. Not so! Something else happened. First, the apostle Peter came to Antioch. He is called Cephas. Peter had also accepted that the gospel is: justification through faith in Jesus Christ for Jews and Gentiles alike. And Peter had fellowship with those Gentiles who had become Christians. And he ate with them, and he sat with them at the same table. But then, again, people arrived from that circumcision party in Jerusalem, and they said, "Sure, sure, we agree, we agree that Gentiles do not have to be circumcised in order to be Christians, but there should be a clear distinction between those uncircumcised people who do not keep the law of Moses and the believing Jews." And Peter listened to the circumcision party and gradually he drew away and finally separated himself from his Gentile friends all together. He did not eat with them anymore, and did no longer sit with them at the same table. And not only Peter did so, but also the rest of the Jews and even Barnabas was influenced. They introduced again a difference, a separation, between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews were considered clean and the others unclean. And that happened in the Christian church! In the church, they saw on the one hand of group of better Christians, more advanced Christians, Christians of a better standing. And on the other

hand, there was the group of Christians on a lower level. Oh, those people of the circumcision party meant well, and they could say, "The whole tradition of the Old Testament supports us."

Well, congregation, you know when such a distinction is accepted in the church of Jesus Christ, the church is in great danger. For then that one basis, that one foundation is no longer recognized. Well the apostle Paul warns the Galatians; he admonishes them not to live by that Jewish structure again, not to build up again that Jewish building, that teaching that salvation is based on doing the works of the law. For it is an impossibility. That is how the apostle Paul is defending the gospel of justification through faith in Jesus Christ. And there is no other gospel!

**Paul Professing His Faith**

And then we see in our text that Paul is professing his faith. That is very personal. We read that part again, the verses 19 and 20. And you see that the emphasis is on "I" and "me". "I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." A very personal confession, congregation. For the apostle Paul is not speaking about a system. He spoke about the system of Judaism and legalism. And you may even call that a philosophy. But the message of justification through faith is not a system. It is a message, a proclamation which can be accepted only through faith, that very personal faith in Jesus Christ. In the past, Paul had been an ardent observer of the law. He had kept the law, the law of the covenant, exactly as the Jewish leaders required it. At that time Paul considered himself, he says it himself, blameless. But when he believed in Jesus Christ, he saw that keeping rules and regulations for one's salvation is a dead-end street. It does not help for salvation. That is the meaning of "I died to the law". Paul no longer looked to the law as a source of salvation. That does not mean no laws for Paul anymore. His purpose and desire was not to live for the law, but to live to God, the lawgiver, the living God. He looked to Him, who in Christ is gracious and slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He looked to Him as the source of his salvation with a personal and living faith.

When the apostle Paul speaks about himself this way, congregation, he actually spells out what our confession is and should be, of every one of us. It is one thing to speak about the doctrine of justification through faith, but it is another thing to confess it. We can discuss at our study societies, and we can do so at the Conference as well, we can discuss for hours the subject of justification through faith. Sure, and we are thankful that the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards give ample help to understand the Scriptures, but the question is do we live by that confession in everything we do, also when we talk about how the church of Jesus Christ should be built up. And that's why we need that personal confession. Can we say, congregation, what Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ." That is: I who by myself am a self-righteous man or woman. I who think that I can save myself by good works, by my offerings, by everything that I do in church as a good member of the congregation. I who used to have confidence in myself, I am crucified and crushed with Christ. My proud heart is broken. I with all my desires and wishes, with pride and self-esteem, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I, that self-righteous man, who lives, but it is Christ who lives in me. And Christ is the one who directs my life now, who gives direction to my desires, in Him is all my hope and trust. Is that your confession, congregation? Is that the confession of everyone present here? Not just on paper! But is that your confession just like the apostle Paul confesses his faith? And if he had not confessed his faith, if that were not his faith then all the letters of the apostle Paul would be worthless.

And his is not only a confession for the future, for the life hereafter. No, he speaks about the life today. "The life I now live in the flesh." This earthly life, with all the weakness and sin and dangers, I live through faith in Christ. He is my salvation. He is my guide every day again. For every day I live by the forgiveness of my sins through the blood of Christ. And every day I live by the justification through faith alone. Faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. On that confession Christ builds His church. So, it is not, as some might say, subjectivism or individualism when we speak about a personal faith or a personal confession. When the church confesses, the members confess. And if we can't, if we cannot confess with that personal faith, we may be registered in the

records of our congregation and may be active in church, and we may be involved in everything, and we may have our strong opinions. I say, if we have not that personal confession and live by it, we are not living members of Christ. And no matter how impressive the credentials for attending the Conference, if we do not have that faith we have no power to build the church of Christ. "I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." Nobody can be indifferent to that confession. We confess or we don't. We say "Yes" or we reject. We are living stones or we are dead branches.

**Paul Preaching God's Grace**

And that gospel is preached by the apostle Paul. And in spite of opposition, Paul will continue to preach it: the gospel of God's undeserved grace to sinners. Paul says, "I do not nullify the grace of God" and he means, "I will not nullify. I refuse to nullify the grace of God", like those people do who still expect their salvation from the keeping the law, keeping regulations. For there is no justification through the law, but only through Christ crucified. Through Him there is remission of sins, through Him there is new life. Did you notice, congregation, that the apostle Paul does not say, "Forget about the law." No, he says, "Christ lives in me." He gives direction to my life, to my mind, to my thoughts, to my intentions, to my aims. Christ is alive in me. Accepting justification through faith in Christ is also accepting the guidance of Christ as he speaks to us in God's Word. That was Paul's preaching and Paul continues to preach the gospel and nothing else.

And this is how the Galatians are brought back to the freedom in Jesus Christ. Not to gratify the desires of the flesh, but to walk in the Spirit, to fulfill the law of Christ. And all that as a result of faith in Jesus Christ. That is the power of the gospel, the power of the preaching of the gospel. It is the power for the church of all ages and for the churches in all places: on the mission fields and at home. For that message sets free. That message renews life because it renews the heart of men through God's Spirit. Through that message God's people begin to walk with love and delight according to God's will. And that message sets men to work, and to live in thankful covenantal obedience. And it is that message that builds the church. Otherwise all those efforts to build the church are in vain. Through that message the church is built and church life can

grow and flower. And no other power can do it. Paul in another letter says, "The grace of God is training." He doesn't say anything else is training. No, the grace of God is training us to live a thankful life, godly in every respect. That is the power of God behind everything. That is the motor for church life. The motor for Christian life. And that's the message gives freedom and joy, lasting joy.

Well, congregation, we should be thankful for what is good in our church life, thankful for what our Christian activity has performed and is performing. And I think of all the offerings and sacrifices, your support for church life. I think of the schools for our children and support of the colleges, and about the missionary activities and about charities. We have to see, and when our eyes are opened we do see, the blessings of the Lord—the blessings of the Lord also in the Conference of Reformed Churches. But we should not forget that those blessings are blessings only on the basis of God's undeserved, sovereign, free grace in Jesus Christ. We always and in everything have to go back to Him as the source of our salvation, the fountain of life and we have to rely on Him alone. A Christian culture, a Reformed lifestyle, also a Canadian Reformed lifestyle, and a Presbyterian tradition, are all very valuable as expressions of our gratitude to God, as fruits of our thankfulness to Him, but if they become more than that, if they become, for instance, a touchstone to determine levels and standings among us or even to determine whether a person is a true Christian, we fall in the error of the Judaists, substituting the Jewish law and culture by a culture of our own. And as a result the churches will lose their power by taking away from that glorious and powerful gospel of justification through faith only in Jesus Christ. May that gospel also be in the center in the coming days of the Conference. May the Conference remember the power of God. For it is: through faith alone, by God's grace, apart from works, apart from any work. And there is no exception. Amen.

## Welcome Speech

*by Dr. J. Visscher*

On behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches as a whole, and the Canadian Reformed Churches of Cloverdale and Langley in particular, I would like to welcome you to Langley, B.C., Canada, for the second official meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches. Many of you have traveled great distances in order to be here. We are thankful that you have arrived safely, and we pray that the same may be the case for those who are still on the way.

As mentioned, this is the second meeting of the ICRC. This Reformed ecumenical organization was born in Groningen, the Netherlands. There during the months of October and November in the year 1982 a Constituent Assembly was held and the foundation of the Conference was laid. Thereafter the first official meeting of the Conference was held three years later in Edinburgh, Scotland.

What all of this readily reveals is that the ICRC is a very young organization. And youth, as you all know, typifies certain things. Youth often points to inexperience and to a measure of immaturity. No doubt as you experience the Conference in the coming days you will discern that compared to some other ecumenical organizations that you may have experienced in the past, this Conference still needs to grow and to develop further. Maturity has not yet arrived. Youth is also characterized by a certain uncertainty in terms of direction and goals. And that, too, you may find in our midst as we grapple with matters relating to future aims and developments. Finally, youth exemplifies freshness, vitality and potential. These tend to be among the positive characteristics of youth. Without sounding conceited, it is hoped that they will be found among us in such abundance that they will make up for the other shortcomings.

Yet in spite of its youth, the ICRC is already an international entity. At present ten churches are members and these churches have their roots in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America. It is expected that this meeting will increase the number to eleven, and that at future meetings the numbers will continue to grow. The fact that there are ten observer churches present is hopefully representative of the future potential for growth. Indeed, let it be stated here that every church in the



world which places its doctrine and life wholeheartedly under the divine authority of the Scriptures and the derived authority of the Reformed confessions is invited to participate in this Conference.

It has been rightly said that the Word of God is characterized by unity in diversity. So many different men, in so many different times, under so many different circumstances, from so many different backgrounds, were led by the Holy Spirit to write the one Word of God. Out of all of that variety there emerged a scintillating singularity of witness, all climaxing in Jesus Christ the Word Incarnate.

To some extent the same maxim about unity in diversity also applies to the church of our Lord. Our reading from the book of Revelation testifies to this; the whole Word testifies to it; indeed, what we see at this Conference testifies to it as well. We may humbly and thankfully say that we belong to the one family of God, to that one people of the Lord. Yet there is an awesome diversity among this people. To speak with the words of the apostle Paul, within that family there are different branches. Present here are two of those branches in the form of the Presbyterian churches which have their roots in Scotland, England and the USA and the Reformed churches which have their roots in the Netherlands and continental Europe.

It must be admitted that there are differences between these two branches of the one family in terms of the confessions which have been adopted, the church government which has been devised, the historical developments that have taken place, and the practices which have developed. These differences, however, do not constitute insurmountable obstacles, but matters that need to be discussed and dealt with properly. The challenge before us is to listen to each other, to learn from each other and so to grow towards each other in terms of understanding, love and fellowship.

In this connection it can be said that the ICRC has a great potential, not as some super, international church, not as some meddling socio-economic-political body, but as a forum which will promote among its members fuller understanding, closer relations internationally and greater unity locally, increased co-operation in the various areas of missions and theological training, and finally an improved Reformed witness in this world in theological and ethical matters. Truly, the

possibilities are numerous and the potential is vast. Whether we are up to the challenge and the opportunity remains to be seen.

To a large measure that depends upon our vision. And what should our vision be? First of all, our vision must be **biblical**. It must be grounded and rooted in the infallibility of God's inspired Word. This Word has been given, says the Belgic Confession in Article 5 for the "regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith." We believe what it reveals. We believe that it is sufficient. We believe in its supremacy over all the words and pronouncements of men.

This Word is truly authoritative, and that authority must not be sacrificed on the altar of feminism, nor on the altar of revolution, nor on the altar of scientism and evolutionary speculation, nor on the altar of homosexual rights. Our vision must be defined and determined by the Word of God. The ICRC will only prosper as long as its commitment to the Word of God remains unshakable and immovable. All around us churches and ecumenical organizations are busy accommodating the Word to fit their views and insights and agenda. Whereas, it must be the exact opposite, in that our views and ideas must be determined from the Word and fall in step with the Word.

Secondly, our vision must be **historical**. There are many today who would like to turn the clock back to the days of the early N.T. church. That is supposedly the ideal and the ultimate model. But what is forgotten is that God's clock keeps on ticking, His plan for all things keeps on unfolding, and His redemption keeps on moving towards fulfillment. It is not possible and it is not right to go back to the Jerusalem of old. On the contrary, we must look forward with longing to the new Jerusalem that will come down from above.

Today we live between advents, between Jerusalems, and between Paradises. In other words, we must be conscious of the passage of time and of how God leads His people through the times. We look back with thankfulness to the heritage of the past: to the early church fathers—Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Athanasius, and Augustine; to the great Reformers—Luther, Calvin, Knox; to the great creeds both ecumenical and Reformed—the Apostles', the Nicene, the Scottish, the Belgic, the second Helvetic and the Westminster. Our roots run deep and our treasures are great.

But our future is even greater. God's people are a people on the move to a new home and a new future. With longing and with confidence we may live and must live. Christ is coming again. And so our vision must not only appreciate the past but also anticipate the future. This Conference does itself no service when it cuts itself off from the past, rather it must embrace what God has given us in the past in terms of the faithful witness of church confessions, church fathers and church reformers and continue to defend it. We are one with the church of all ages. And at the same time the smallness of our numbers should not deter us either. The future belongs to the people of God. We may do our work with confidence, for Christ is with us.

Thirdly, our vision must be **contemporary**. Faith in the Triune God is not a relic of the past, not passé, but an ongoing reality. We live in a world filled with problems and tensions, and we dare to say that the Word of God has the answers to the predicaments of man, be they social, economic, racial, political or religious. The Word speaks today because the Spirit of Christ continues to speak through it. It is never silent and never out of step.

Too often our stand with respect to the world is ambivalent. Should we love it or curse it? Neither, we are to witness to it without compromise and with hope. Our vision must be acutely relevant. The ICRC must not only deal with internal problems and predicaments, with theological questions and organizational issues. It must also recognize that God's people live in a world of temptation and confrontation and that it must speak with biblical boldness and clarity to the moral and ethical problems of the day.

Finally, our vision must also be **catholic** and universal. We all confess that catholicity is a mark of the church and of the people of God. We believe it and are even proud of it to a degree. The Christian faith is not a narrow-minded business. Yet when it comes to exercising and promoting this catholicity we sometimes take a more parochial and restrictive posture, as if our particular local churches and the churches we officially recognize exhaust the matter.

What we forget is that Christ's church gathering is broader and greater than our perceptions. His people are spread and dispersed over the whole world. He is an eternal King who is never without subjects and who gathers these subjects from ev-

everywhere, from every corner of the world. Our Scripture reading from Rev. 7 describes this so well when it speaks about "a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." (v. 9)

This catholicity which stretches over all time, all places, all races, and languages, demands that our vision be as wide as the world. The ICRC is already well on the way to reflecting this universal dimension, and that is as it should be. Indeed, may the diversity increase even more, but it must be diversity in unity, unity of faith and hence unity in Christ.

May Jesus Christ, the only Head and universal Bishop of His Church fill us with His Spirit and guide us with His Word, and so make it possible for these days to be filled with fruitful discussion, increased understanding and true fellowship.

Herewith, I declare this second meeting of the ICRC officially open.

## Statement by Mr. J. Eikelboom

The adoption of the agenda of the Conference is an important matter. We take into account that this is a Meeting of Churches, and not of private persons. That puts a well defined limit on what we can do here. The Australian delegates have examined the titles of the papers placed on the provisional agenda by the Interim Committee. And we have no difficulty, except with the paper titled "Apartheid". This brings to mind Edinburgh 1985 where some remarks were made about the relevance of this Conference, and the question was asked whether a Conference statement ought to have been issued on South African apartheid, which was seen as a matter of public importance. It seems now that this matter is in fact on this provisional agenda. We stress the words "it seems". For without having dealt with the paper we can only guess at what will be said and done.

The Interim Committee has no doubt been given some insight into the contents of the paper, and has judged, on this Conference's behalf that the topic is indeed one that properly belongs here. All the same we think it is not unreasonable if, when reading the title "Apartheid", and with Edinburgh 1985 in mind, one translates that into an expectation of a paper which deals with a political problem. If the Conference were to start on that road it would be difficult to not make conclusions, and then there would be the implication of a Conference statement. With that we would begin to become a political pressure group, well on the way of the World Council of Churches.

It is of course possible to direct Scriptural light onto any matter, be it political or otherwise. There is nothing wrong with that and it is probably done very often in the preaching. It is also possible that a member church asks the Conference to put a matter of particular importance to that church on the agenda. If that is the case here, we do not know about it. However even then we would hesitate, especially in the light of Edinburgh 1985. Even allowing for these possibilities our question remains: does the topic belong on the agenda of a Conference of Reformed Churches? Is it an issue that relates to the task of the churches back at home?

Their task of proclaiming God's Word in the official preaching and of confirming God's grace in the official administration of the Sacraments and of church discipline. That is the *only* message—and at the same time it is a *complete* message—which the church is authorized to proclaim in the name of the Lord in the *official preaching* of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It is the *only* answer and the *complete* answer for the forgiveness of all iniquities, the healing of diseases and the vindication and justice in all oppression. The Church must let God speak to man through His Word. That alone throws light upon life to regenerate to a new life in the Spirit.

We ask in very plain terms: Is the Church still game enough to put complete trust in the message of God's Word, also for the healing of rifts in nations, without a message of a Reformed Conference turned political pressure group? The Reformed testimony that Christ expects us to give to the world is not by way of a message from a Conference of churches, but by way of being united by faith to him. For that shows to the world the great restoring power and grace of our Saviour. And that is also true for political life.

We believe that if any agenda item at this Conference in any way whatsoever could turn into a political matter it does not belong here. Therefore we seek an assurance from the chair before consenting to have it on the agenda of this Conference of Reformed Churches.

## Statement by Mr. J.L. van Burgel

We express joy and gratitude that the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa can join with us as members of the ICRC. However, when we see that the FRSA through this admission will become co-members of the ICRC with for example the Free Church in Southern Africa this raises an issue which we wonder whether the committee addressed.

We can read in Article 4 the conditions for membership of the ICRC. We do trust that the committee investigated these and is satisfied that the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa are eligible to be members of the Conference. For this we are thankful.

However we believe that Article 4 cannot be taken in isolation. Like every other article, it must be read in the context of the whole Constitution—and in particular of Article 3—the purpose of the Conference. For surely any Church which applies for membership ought to accept and work towards the purpose of the Conference.

We refer firstly to Article 3 (1) which reads that the purpose of the Conference is “to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches *have* in Christ.”

And also in Article 3 (2) which states that the purpose of the Conference is “to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among member churches”.

The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, and for that matter all churches here should have some difficulty with these two sections of Article 3. For what is the FRSA relation to the Free Church in southern Africa? And what, for that matter, is the relation of other member churches with each other?

Quoting from the excellent booklet published by our sister church—the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands—entitled *For the Sake of True Ecumenicity* we read on page 6 “ecumenical fellowship is possible only when cooperating churches can honestly declare with regard to each other’s confessional standards, that they are in conformity with the Word of God. In no other way can form be given to the first rule of true ecumenicity, that it shall serve unity in truth. The churches, cooperating in ecumenical fellowship, must also

have the mutual confidence that they all sincerely maintain their standards and live up to them", and further:

"In all churches there must be an unreserved and reliable subscription to the standards. They have to make sure that in all these churches there is faithful doctrinal discipline, in order that the unity of faith be maintained against error"

If that were known to be so of all the member churches—and let's make it clear that we're not passing any such judgment—then all could be here in ecumenical fellowship as sister churches, and not just as ICRC members.

We would like to remind member churches that that is the reason why the FRCA always wanted a conference of *sister churches*. Only then can we be sure we have true unity of faith. If on the other hand we have something less than true unity of faith then it will affect our way of dealing with other matters on the agenda.

Having said all that, we repeat the question whether the Committee dealt with this aspect of the admission procedure. We do re-iterate that the FRCA welcomes the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa in the ICRC—after all they are our sister churches and we have the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship with them which expresses the unity of faith we have with them.



## Report of the Corresponding Secretary

*by Rev. M. van Beveren*

The Interim Committee has requested that I also report on behalf of them. During the years after the Edinburgh Conference regular contact has been maintained with the Interim Committee by means of correspondence. The contact was fruitful and pleasant. It was regrettable, however, that about a year ago, due to health problems, the Rev. D. Lamont had to resign. As we all know, he was the chairman of the Edinburgh Conference. The Rev. J. Visscher was co-opted to take his place.

Another member of the Interim Committee, the Rev. G. van Rongen, chairman of the Constitutive Assembly in 1982, vice-chairman of Edinburgh 1985 and organizer of the Committee on Ecumenical Creeds, informed us that he is unable to attend the Conference because of illness in his family circle. He conveys his best regards to the brethren and writes, "I have had much pleasure in the work and hope that the I.C.R.C. may become more and more beneficial to the member churches. In a world which is becoming more and more hostile to the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will increasingly need each other's support as churches which desire to be faithful to their Head and King. May He, therefore, also richly bless the 1989 Conference."

With sorrow we learned that the Rev. M.K. Drost, member of the Committee on Missions, died December 9, 1985. The Rev. Drost was lecturer in Missiology at the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. The loss suffered through his death is duly mentioned in the report of the Missions Committee.

As the Edinburgh Conference did not appoint alternate committee members the vacancy in the Committee on Missions was not filled. Also the fact that Prof. J.L. Mackay could not accept the appointment as a member of the Committee on Ecumenical Creeds underlines the desirability that for every committee, the Conference appoint alternate members. It is also advisable that before an appointment is made, the person involved be consulted. I mention here the suggestion of the Rev. G. van Rongen that to facilitate commu-

nication, committees be comprised of members living in the same region.

The following churches have expressed their regret that they can not send a delegate:

The Reformed Church in Japan

The Iglesia Evangelica Presbiteriana del Peru

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Christchurch, New Zealand (formerly: the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Christchurch)

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

They all express the wish that the Conference receive the Lord's guidance.

I may read to you part of the letter from the Reformed Church in Japan, "In view of the recent outcome of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod at Harare, our interest has been more increased in the ICRC. But our committee could not decide to send an observer from our church to the next conference in Canada. In spite of this we have great interest in the conference because of our deep concern with ecumenicity based on the sound Reformed faith and action. We would, therefore, appreciate if you could keep us informed of all the results of the next meeting. We would also ask you to give our warmest greetings to the delegates and observers at the conference". (Nov. 2, 1988, signed by H. Suzuki)

There has been correspondence with several other churches not represented here, some of which had sent visiting delegates to Edinburgh 1985. Other churches had asked for information on the I.C.R.C. or were recommended by member churches. We know that high travel expenses discouraged small churches to send delegates. A sample of such a church is the small congregation in Christchurch. I mention part of their letter to show that absence does not mean indifference. I quote, "Our great concern is to raise a clear biblical and Reformed witness in the mist of confusion, compromise and apostasy. We have little to offer at this point to a wider fellowship of Reformed churches, though, we admit, much to gain from the input of such a group. We would appreciate continuing contact and information. Our sincere desire and prayer is that your coming Conference will be a means of cementing unity between Reformed Churches worldwide, and also a means of stimulating these churches in the great missionary

task our Lord has laid upon His disciples." (Apr. 13, 1989, Dr. A.W. Young)

We are thankful that we have an impressive list of well-known scholars ready to introduce their topics. The initiative of the churches which recommended those brethren has been most helpful and has fulfilled the wish of Edinburgh 1985, namely, that the member churches participate in establishing the agenda of the Conference. As you may have noticed, however, there is also a list of recommended topics which are not on the agenda. They could have been there if speakers had been mentioned as well. But now we are still looking for men eager to tackle those subjects, which will, hopefully, happen at the next Conference, if well in advance the churches will have mentioned nominees, that is.

I am sorry that I can not address the Rev. G. van Rongen here today. He has been one of the promoters of the I.C.R.C. from the very beginning. We are gratefully for the activities he employed to the Conference up till now. And we wish him the Lord's blessing.

Prof. C. Graham, however, still is in our midst. For the past four years he has served as the heart of the Interim Committee. He never left letters unanswered and guided the Committee in a quiet but persistent manner. The churches may not have realized that for the greater part the Interim Committee consisted of persons who had retired from their official position. I am certain, nobody noticed it, because Prof. Graham is one of the men who may retire but never give up. I think it is not Scottish to accept praise, but I would label Prof. Graham as the father of the 1989 Conference. I suspect, however, that he looked at the secretary as at one of his pupils, considering him 20 to 30 years younger than he is. And that may have helped to keep the Interim Committee young and vigorous. On behalf of all the church, thank-you, Prof. Graham.

The churches of the I.C.R.C. have a great aim: to assist each other to fulfill faithfully the mandate received from the Lord, at home and abroad. It should be clear that that aim can only be effective when the churches realize that the riches they have are received by God's grace alone. All conceit and arrogance will prevent the I.C.R.C. from attaining the goal, will defeat the endeavours to reach out, and will undermine the proclamation of the gracious gospel of Jesus Christ. The I.C.R.C. can not be

founded on our faithfulness or be based on human insight, nor should it be the aim to make the I.C.R.C. an organization that finds its strength in numbers. But imploring the Lord for His grace for Christ's sake and expecting His strength as He has promised, the I.C.R.C. should strive that, as Scripture says, the Word of God may grow and multiply. Then, guided by that Word and God's Holy Spirit, the Churches and the Conference can expect the Lord's blessings. And His redeeming power will work in unexpected ways.

## Financial Report

Esteemed Members and Delegates:

As your treasurer it is my privilege to report to you on the monetary aspects of the workings of the Conference. During the meeting in Edinburgh the Conference decided to appoint a treasurer whose task it was to:

1. to draw up a budget for the Conference with the assistance of the Interim Committee.
2. to request each member Church to submit to him the number of its baptized members; as well as the estimated average per capita income of its members.
3. to assess each Church on this basis.
4. to collect the installments needed on a yearly basis.
5. to re-imburse all costs incurred by the Conference.
6. to submit his financial report to the next meeting of the Conference.

Along with this Mandate, the Edinburgh Conference also decided:

- a. to charge the delegates and advisers of the member Churches 135.60 per person.
- b. to charge the observers 180.60 per person.
- c. to charge the treasurer to bill the delegates and observers to collect the monies due and to re-imburse the F.C.S.
- d. to charge the treasurer to take into account in the making of his budget that the G.K.N. still needs to be re-imbursed for expenses incurred by the provisional secretary and the Interim Committee for the period between the Constituent Assembly and the first Meeting of the Conference.

Your treasurer's task commenced by assessing all the members and observers the fees as they were established by the 1985 Meeting.

In due time all members and most observers paid these assessments. Some observers did not agree with the assessment and believed that they were assured that no costs would be incurred by their presence, another observer reasoned that since he only attended the Conference for a few days, to charge him the full assessment would be unreasonable.

Because of the above and due to the fact that not all expenses could be covered by the 1986 assessment, the balance of the outstanding expenses were recovered by the 1987 and 1988 assessments.

As far as the division of the assessments was concerned, not all members responded with their estimate of the per capita income of their respective membership. In order to be as consistent as possible with these figures I have used the information provided by the United Nations Statistical Yearbooks. It is to be noted that while this information does not guarantee accuracy, it hopefully serves the consistency of the numbers.

The annual assessment notices were expressed in U.S. currency, since the American "greenback" can be purchased in most places in the world.

In consultation with the Interim Committee a budget was prepared to cover the anticipated 1989 Conference expenses. If everything goes according to plan most of the expenses incurred during this meeting will be covered by this budget.

The financial reports provided are expressed in Canadian dollars. Page one gives details on the Income and Expenses since the Edinburgh meeting. The total expenses for this meeting were \$18,286.00. On page one you can also find the Balance Sheet as of March 31, showing the members equity of \$16,103.76. Most of the outstanding assessments have been paid by now (June 12, 1989). Page two provides details on how the funds were assessed and who paid what. Page three gives details on the specific expenses and income of the 1985 Meeting. Page four shows the calculation as it relates to the share of the total assessments by the different members.<sup>1</sup>

In closing I would like to express my appreciation to all the members for their cooperation and the patience of specifically the creditors and of the 1985 conference, the Free Church of Scotland and the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, who generously advanced the funds needed for the 1985 Meeting.

Respectfully submitted, H.A. Berends, treasurer

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<sup>1</sup>The pages quoted above for the various financial statements are not applicable for this book.

## Income Statement as of March 31, 1989

**INCOME**

Member Assessment 1986	\$ 6,852.02
Observer Assessment 1986	2,137.55
Member Assessment 1987	8,459.82
Member Assessment 1988	1,921.48
Interest	101.37
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$19,472.24</b>

**EXPENSES**

Payment Expenses Edinburgh	\$14,171.00
Payment Preparatory Meeting Edinburgh	4,115.00
Administration Expense 1986	69.39
Administration Expense 1987/88	598.29
Bank Charges 1986-1989	20.12
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$18,973.80</b>

<b>EXCESS INCOME OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$498.44</b>
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## Balance Sheet as of March 31, 1989

**ASSETS**

Bank	498.44
Assessments Receivable	16,257.00
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$16,755.44</b>

**LIABILITIES**

Accounts Payable:	
Secretary Exp. '88/89	651.68
Member Equity	16,103.76
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$16,755.44</b>

## Expenses for 1985 Meeting in Edinburgh

(Expressed in Canadian Dollars)

1. Preparatory Expenses Edinburgh	\$ 4,115.00	
Meeting Expenses Edinburgh	14,171.00	
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$18,286.00</b>
2. Paid for by:		
A. Observers	2,137.55	
B. Members	16,148.45	
<b>Total</b>		<b>18,286.00</b>
<b>Outstanding Debt</b>		<b>0.00</b>

## Budget for 1989 Meeting in Langley

(Expressed in Canadian Dollars)

Travel Expenses for Interim Committee	\$ 5,000.00
Travel Assistance Fund	4,000.00
Administration Costs	3,000.00
Miscellaneous Expenses	2,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$14,000.00</b>



## Income & Assessments

(Expressed in Canadian Dollars)

<b>MEMBERS</b>	<b>1986</b>
1. Canadian Reformed Churches	835.00
2. Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland	275.00
3. Free Church of Scotland	3,383.15
4. Free Reformed Churches of Australia	546.00
5. Free Church in Southern Africa	0.00
6. Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia	0.00
7. Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland	825.00
8. Presbyterian Church in Korea	275.00
9. Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia	508.52
10. Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland	508.52
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$7,156.69</b>

<b>OBSERVERS</b>	
A. Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore	176.87
D. Free Reformed Churches in South Africa	807.61
G. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.)	953.07
J. Christian Witness to the World	200.00
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$2,137.55</b>

<b>Total Assessments</b>	<b>\$9,294.24</b>
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<b>Total Assessed</b> (including 1989)	<b>\$35,729.24</b>
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### Outstanding Assessments

(as of April 30, 1989)

1988	\$ 7,425.00
1989	8,832.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$16,257.00</b>

## Income & Assessments

(Expressed in Canadian Dollars)

1987	1988	1989
1,202.00	1,296.00	1,152.00
27.00	54.00	48.00
648.00	864.00	768.00
162.00	216.00	192.00
0.00	0.00	0.00
0.00	0.00	0.00
3,510.00	6,480.00	5,760.00
243.00	1,512.00	1,344.00
54.00	108.00	96.00
189.00	270.00	240.00
<b>\$6,035.00</b>	<b>\$10,800.00</b>	<b>\$9,600.00</b>

**\$6,035.00**

**\$10,800.00**

**\$9,600.00**

## Calculations of Share of Total Assessments

<b>Member Church</b>	<b>Number of Members</b>
Canadian Reformed Churches	11,828 <sup>2</sup>
Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland	563 <sup>4</sup>
Free Church of Scotland	12,000 <sup>4</sup>
Free Reformed Churches of Australia	2,347 <sup>4</sup>
Free Church in Southern Africa	1,692 <sup>4</sup>
Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia	2,000 <sup>4</sup>
Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland	108,000 <sup>3</sup>
Presbyterian Church in Korea	93,749 <sup>3</sup>
Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia	639 <sup>4</sup>
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland	3820 <sup>4</sup>

### **Totals**

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<sup>1</sup>The per capita income sources are from the International Monetary fund and/or the U.N. Statistical yearbook.

<sup>2</sup>Source: Canadian Reformed Yearbook

<sup>3</sup>Source: Dutch Yearbook GKN

<sup>4</sup>Source: Member churches

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Per Capita Income <sup>1</sup>	Members x Income	% of Total
13,000.00	153,764.00	12.0
9,210.00	5,185.00	0.5
9,210.00	110,520.00	8.0
10,282.00	24,132.00	2.0
4,000.00	6768.00	0.0
560.00	1,120.00	0.0
7,835.00	846,180.00	60.0
2,180.00	204,373.00	14.0
10,282.00	6570.00	1.0
9,210.00	35,182.00	2.5
	<b>\$1,292,794.00</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Report of the Missions Committee

### 1. Death of Rev. Drs. M.K. Drost

The Committee's work was scarcely started when it suffered the loss of Rev. Drs. M.K. Drost of the Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands who died on 9 December 1986. Drs. Drost's passing is indeed a great loss to the work of Reformed Missions. As Lecturer on Missiology at the Theological Seminary in Kampen his contribution to the work of this Committee would have been most valuable. While expressing sympathy to his own family and his Church and Seminary the Committee records with thanksgiving to the Lord Drs. Drost's life and his service in the cause of the Gospel.

### 2. Work Undertaken

The remaining members of the Committee were able to meet in Edinburgh in June 1987 and subsequently the attached letter was sent to the following member Churches:

- Canadian Reformed Churches
- Free Church of Scotland
- Free Reformed Churches of Australia
- Gereja Gereja Reformasi in Indonesia
- Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands
- Presbyterian Church in Korea
- Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

The letter was not sent at that stage to two member Churches, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Free Church in Southern Africa. The reasons for not sending were, in the case of the former, that she has carried out her missionary outreach through the missionary activities of the Free Church of Scotland, in the case of the latter, that she has not sent out missionaries to other regions and has only fairly recently assumed the role of a separate Church, having up till 1983 been an Associate Presbytery of the Free Church of Scotland. The decision not to send the letter to these two Churches was due perhaps to an over-emphasis on paragraph (i) of the committee's mandate (cf. attached letter). It was afterwards realised that these Churches might very well have very useful proposals to make relevant to paragraphs (ii) and (iii) of the

mandate. The letter was therefore subsequently sent to these Churches but not until after the date set for the submission of replies from the other Churches. If replies do come from these Churches and are too late for inclusion in the main report it is hoped that the opportunity will be given to submit these as addenda.

Replies were received from the following:

- Canadian Reformed Churches
- Free Church of Scotland
- Free Reformed Churches of Australia
- Gereja Gereja Reformaci in Indonesia
- Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland
- Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands

Not all those who replied felt above to provide information or make comments or proposals on paragraph (i), (ii) and (iii) of the mandate. Part of the problem is the differences in ecclesiastical and administrative structures in the member Churches. In the case of some there is a central Committee or similar body dealing with the missionary activity of the Church and this Committee is able to speak for the Church on the matters referred to in paragraphs (i) - (iii) of the mandate. This is not the case in all the Churches.

The information and comments received are tabulated on a separate sheet.

### **3. Observations and Recommendations**

#### **3.1 Coordination of Missionary Activity**

From the information provided it appears that there is at present no overlap of missionary activity undertaken by member Churches: no two Churches are working in the same area.

Where a member Church is considering a new sphere of work it might be good for that Church to consider helping in the activities of another Church faced with an open door of opportunity that is not being exploited because of lack of personnel or resources, rather than initiating an entirely new work.

Experienced missionaries who for one reason or another (e.g. withdrawal of visas, development of na-

tional church making their presence no longer necessary) have to leave their field of work and for whom no other opening is available within their own Church's missionary activity might be offered to other Churches. Where a Church or Churches already working in cooperation hold Conferences for missionaries on a regional basis it would be good to extend the invitation to the Conference to missionaries of other Churches working in the same region. For example, it might be helpful for missionaries of the Free Church of Scotland working in Peru to be present at the Conference organized jointly by the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands for missionaries working in Latin America, held every second year in Curaçao (Netherland Antilles) or Brazil.

### **3.2 Training Programs**

Where language differences are not a problem sharing of training programmes for prospective missionaries from the sending Churches there is the matter of training national workers on the fields. Where Churches are working in areas sharing a common language cooperation in such training should be investigated. Some member Churches have in the past, and still do, make use of training institutes run by other (non member) Churches or interdenominational bodies. At time the lack of a reformed emphasis has been a real disadvantage.

### **3.3 Publications**

Cooperation in this area would appear to be welcomed by member Churches. Perhaps this is the area where cooperation between the member Churches could most easily be started. Successful cooperation in this area could lead to good understanding between the member Churches on mission matters and pave the way for cooperation at other levels.

### **3.4 Jewish Evangelism**

The Conference may wish to give particular consideration to the question of Jewish evangelism. Three of the member Churches have for many years been involved in Jewish evangelism through Christian Witness to Israel and one group with the Reformed Churches in the

Netherlands are now supporting Christian Witness to Israel and have committed themselves to further study of the Church and Jewish people and are looking at the possibilities for Jewish evangelism by the Reformed Churches.

## Letter Sent to Member Churches

7th July 1987

Dear Brethren,

You will recall that the International Conference of Reformed Churches at its first meeting in Edinburgh in September 1985 appointed a Missions Committee with the undernoted mandate.

We regret to have to inform you that one of the members of the Committee, Rev. Drs. M.K. Drost of the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands, died on 9th December 1986. His passing is indeed a great loss to the work of Reformed Missions and to the Conference's Committee.

The remaining members, Rev. Professor K. Deddens, Rev. Professor C. Graham and myself were able to meet in Edinburgh in June.

The mandate of the Committee is as follows:

- (i) to gather information from the member Churches regarding their missionary activities and training programs;
- (ii) to study the possibilities of co-ordinating the missionary activities of the member Churches when it comes to training, mission fields and exchanging missionaries;
- (iii) to examine the need to produce listings of relevant missionary literature on an ongoing basis, and to promote the publication of an introduction to Reformed missions;
- (iv) to report to the next meeting to the Conference.

I should be most grateful if you would forward to me the information, relevant to your own Church, requested in paragraph (i) of the mandate. With regard to "missionary activities" it would be good to know the length of time during which these have been pursued and also any changes or modifications that have been made over that period. It would also be helpful to



have information on any new activities being planned for. With reference to "training programmes" we would appreciate information about programmes conducted on the mission fields as well as those provided for the missionaries prior to their being sent out.

Having received the requested information it will be the responsibility of the Committee to take up the study referred to in paragraph (ii) of the mandate. It would, however, be most helpful to have the observations of your own Church, or individuals from your Church, on these possibilities of cooperation.

Observations on the need referred to in paragraph (iii) would also be appreciated.

The Committee is required to report to the next meeting of the Conference in June 1989. According to the Conference Rules the Report should already be available for the member Churches. As Chairman I must accept the responsibility for the delay in getting the Committee's work started. In view of the need to have the Report prepared and circulated to member Churches as soon as possible can I ask you please to send your responses to this letter by 15th September this year?

With warmest Christian greetings.

Yours sincerely,

Chairman of the Committee

## Responses to Missions Committee

### **Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands**

#### *Missionary Activities Presently Undertaken or Planned For*

Work has been carried on in Indonesia since the "liberation" of the Churches in 1944/45. There are now 3 missionaries in Kalamantan Barat and 8 in Irian Jaya. Besides there is one missionary at work in South Africa (Mamelodi), 3 in Curaçao (Netherland Antilles), 3 in Brazil (Curitiba), 1 in Belgium (Gent) and 1 among foreign people, esp. among Hindustani in the "Rijnmond" area (Rotterdam).

Some of the missionaries, esp. in Irian Jaya, are set apart for the training to the ministry in a Theological Highschool in Irian Jaya. There are also some cooperators in the mission

fields, some of them being sent out by the mission Churches, others by mission aid (the last ones especially in respect of educational, medical, agricultural, linguistic and social work). In Irian Jaya has been made a small beginning of preaching by native ministers and of the institution of local Churches. In Curaçao existed already a local Church, belonging to the confederation of the Churches in The Netherlands. There the work is now more decentralized. The mission work is done by missionaries who are called and set apart by mission Churches in The Netherlands (the Church at Groningen-Noord, at Drachten, at Assen-Zuid, at Enschede-Noorde, at Spakenburg-Zuid, at Rijnsburg, at Rotterdam-Centrum, at Middelburg, and at Axel). These mission Churches in the same region. The mission Churches cooperate in a special Committee for that purpose.

*Training Programmes*

Since 1981 the Churches have their own institution for training of the missionaries. After having finished their study at the Theological University at Kampen, the future missionaries have to follow courses for the Reformed Mission Training (Gereformeerde Missiologische Opleiding, GMO), given by special teachers. These courses are to be finished with an ecclesiastical exam. The subjects of these courses are:

1. Theory of Mission;
2. History of Mission;
3. Religions and Cultures;
4. Anthropology;
5. Language Training.

*Comments & Proposals re Coordinating Missionary Activities*

The letter was answered by the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad and they felt unable to comment on these matters.

*Comments & Proposals re Producing Lists of Relevant Missionary Literature & Publication of Introduction to Reformed Missions*

The letter was answered by the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad and they felt unable to comment on these matters.

**Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland***Missionary Activities Presently Undertaken or Planned For*

Two ordained men and one lady worker presently doing language study in France with a view to starting evangelistic/Church planting work there. Work also done in South of Ireland—two male workers—one ordained.

#### *Training Programmes*

Training programmes carried out at the Church's Theological College in Belfast. Basic text: Bavinck "An Introduction to the Science of Missions". Other texts referred to: Verbuyl, "Contemporary Missiology" and Winter & Hawthorne "Perspectives on World Christian Movement".

#### *Comments & Proposals re Coordinating Missionary Activities*

Interested in the possibility of coordinating missionary activities. Consider that it would broaden the vision of the home Church if their missionaries were able to serve in the fields where other reformed Churches work.

#### *Comments & Proposals re Producing Lists of Relevant Missionary Literature & Publication of Introduction to Reformed Missions*

See real benefit in cooperation in publications. Need for Reformed Missions book emphasized. A shared programme of publishing evangelistic material in modern presentation and from reformed perspective for different languages is suggested. With their particular interest in France they would be happy to see such a sharing of resources and expertise for publishing material for France and other French-speaking areas (e.g. French-speaking Africa).

#### **Free Church of Scotland**

##### *Missionary Activities Presently Undertaken or Planned For*

Work has been carried on in India, Southern Africa and Peru since shortly after 1900 when the Free Church of Scotland was reduced to a small remnant when the vast majority joined the United Presbyterian Church to form the United Free Church. At 1900 all the missionaries joined the united Church. The work in India and Peru was essentially new work. The work in Southern Africa was more a resumption and continuance of pre-1990 work at the request of native Africans. In each of the fields National Churches have emerged but it is still the policy of the Free Church to second ordained men and others where appropriate to work with the National Churches, although at present visa restrictions prevent the implementation of this

policy in India. In each of the countries the National Churches welcome and request the help of seconded personnel from FCS. The FC envisages secondment in this way continuing for some time to come but also looks for the day when these National Churches will be able to dispense with the help of foreign personnel and she will be able to consider new spheres of missionary endeavour. Already the question of alternative fields has been discussed by the Missions Board but with no definite conclusions as to where or when. As well as direct pastoral/Church work the FCS supports with personnel and finance a small but growing Reformed Bible School in Southern Africa which serves and is supported by other bodies. Support for this School is envisaged as long-term.

Work is carried on among Asian Immigrants and Overseas Students in Glasgow. One ordained minister and a lady are employed in this work.

Financial and personnel support is also given for educational and a multi-faceted development programme in Peru and for medical work in India and financial support for educational work in India.

The FCS is deeply involved in Jewish Evangelism through the work of CWI. One ordained man is seconded to CWI, financial support is given, FC ministers serve on the Council of CWI and FC persons directly recruited by CWI serve as missionaries.

#### *Training Programmes*

Ordained man are trained at the Free Church College. Ad hoc arrangements are made for others. The need for more adequate training is a matter that has occupied the Missions Board in recent years. Language training, prior to going to the field where possible, is given a high priority.

#### *Comments & Proposals re Coordinating Missionary Activities*

Coordination of missionary activities is desirable. A multiplicity of reformed missions working in the same area does not commend itself. Missionaries of different Reformed Churches working together should be possible. A good understanding between the sending Churches would be necessary and a similar training programme. Where sending Churches share a common language participation in the same training programme could be arranged. In other cases language will create problems. If a member Church of ICRC is at any time considering opening up new work it would be good to consult

with other member Churches. A combined effort could open up prospects that one Church on her own could not think of undertaking.

*Comments & Proposals re Producing Lists of Relevant Missionary Literature & Publication of Introduction to Reformed Missions*

The Comments of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland recorded above are endorsed. The Missions Board of the Free Church of Scotland in June 1986 met with the Rev. Ds. L.J. Joosse of the Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands who was planning the publication of an International Reformed Journal on Missions and Evangelism. The Board expressed interest in the project.

**Gereja Gereja Reformaci in Indonesia**

*Missionary Activities Presently Undertaken or Planned For*

The Church has 2,400 baptised members and about 1,200 "hearers" not yet Christian, in 41 places of worship. All of these places are seen still to be mission stations and the missionaries from The Netherlands see as part of their task the motivation of the Churches of Sumba, Sawu and Timor to be witnesses to the heathen around them.

*Training Programmes*

There is a training programme on mission for the students of the Church's Theological Seminary.

*Comments & Proposals re Coordinating Missionary Activities*

There is a coordination of activities with the mission work of the Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands which is carried on in other parts of Indonesia: Kalimantan Barat and Irian Jaya. They would welcome contact with other truly Reformed Churches and Missions in Indonesia.

**Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia**

*Missionary Activities Presently Undertaken or Planned For*

The Church has been closely linked with and supportive of the FCS in its missionary activities. In all the activities recorded concerning the FCS above personnel of the PCEA have played a significant part. The Church has also supported CWI. Since 1948 this small Church of only 14 congregations and above 600 communicant members have sent three couples, two single ladies and a widow to the various fields.

In 1983 the PCEA independently initiated a witness to the Reformed faith in Fiji when an expatriate Fijian was ordained and sent to work there. Although he had to leave after only two years for health reasons the work is continued by a student pastor.

*Training Programmes*

Training for ordained men has largely been at the Free Church of Scotland College. The PCEA has no training institute of its own and for non-ordained missionaries has made use of various Bible Colleges.

The need for full-time language study freed from other responsibilities is stressed.

*Comments & Proposals re Coordinating Missionary Activities*

The reply refers to how in the development of the work in Peru, India and South Africa there was cooperation with other evangelical Churches and Missions in the training of national workers and pastors.

*Comments & Proposals re Producing Lists of Relevant Missionary Literature & Publication of Introduction to Reformed Missions*

The PCEA encourage the ICRC to proceed with a publishing programme that would be of mutual benefit to all the member Churches.

**Free Churches of Australia***Missionary Activities Presently Undertaken or Planned For*

In the early stages of their existence in the 1950's the FRC of Australia supported the mission work of their sister Church in the Netherlands and Canada. In 1968 a mission work was undertaken among Aborigines in Western Australia with the support of all the Free Reformed Churches and carried on for the first four/five years by volunteers.

In 1973 a full-time missionary worker was appointed and he began his work the following year. After ten years the work had to be abandoned, the apparent interest of the early years having faded to nothing.

Contact has been established with a group of political refugees from Irian Jaya who live around Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. Short term visits have been made but the efforts of the "calling Church" of Albany to find a minister to go to Port

Moresby have been unsuccessful. The FRC are open to other possibilities.

### **Canadian Reformed Churches**

*Missionary Activities Presently Undertaken or Planned For*  
Work has been carried on:

1. in Irian Jaya, Indonesia (by Toronto in cooperation with other Churches in classis Ontario-North). (Since 1960 by 1 missionary and 1 mission aid worker);
2. in Pernambuco, Brazil (by Hamilton, in cooperation with other Churches in classis Ontario-South). (One missionary is preparing himself);
3. in Maragogi and Soa Jose, Brazil (by Surrey, in cooperation with other Churches in Western Canada). (Since the seventies first by 1 missionary and 1 mission aid worker, since the eighties by 2 of both);
4. with Canada's native Indians (home mission by Smithers, in cooperation with other Churches in Canada).

### *Training Programmes*

Since 1986 the training of the missionaries is done by the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches at Hamilton. After having finished their studies at the College, the future missionaries have to follow special courses in theory and history of missions, cultural anthropology and language training.

### **Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland**

*Missionary Activities Presently Undertaken or Planned For*

In Overseas Missions the Church since its inception have co-operated with the Free Church of Scotland in provision of finance and personnel.

For the last ten years a mission work has been carried on in Dublin by an ordained pastor and a congregation of c. 40, mainly converted Roman Catholics, has been built up. Contacts have been made through door-to-door visitation.

*Comments & Proposals re Coordinating Missionary Activities*

The Church is enthusiastic about attempts to create better co-operation in the field of Reformed Missions.

**Free Church in Southern Africa**

*Missionary Activities Presently Undertaken or Planned For*

The Church which is still aid-receiving in finance and personnel does have an evangelistic outreach in the areas where it has already an established presence and is also seeking to extend into new areas.

*Training Programmes*

Training programmes, limited by lack of suitably qualified persons, are undertaken and evangelistic literature for use in outreach is produced. The training programmes are aimed at the non-ordained and it is they who are largely involved in the outreach work: the Pastors being fully involved in established congregations.

*Comments & Proposals re Coordinating Missionary Activities*

The Church would welcome cooperation with other like-minded Churches but at present there is no other member Church of ICRC in South Africa. There is an element of suspicion about entering into close relationships with other denominations that might lead to being taken over.

The General Assembly would be prepared to discuss the question of receiving missionaries from member Churches of ICRC.

*Comments & Proposals re Producing Lists of Relevant Missionary Literature & Publication of Introduction to Reformed Missions*

It is recognised that real benefit would accrue from the provision of literature that would set out the basic concepts of Reformed missiology.



## **“Credo”—Report of the Committee of Ecumenical Creeds**

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## **1. ACTIVITIES**

### **1.1 Mandate**

The International Conference of Reformed Churches, held at Edinburgh, Scotland, September 3-10, 1985, appointed a committee with the following mandate:

*to study the text of the three ecumenical creeds in order to come to a common text that can be recommended to the member churches.*

*Grounds:*

- 1. In the respective member churches some various texts of these creeds are used;*
- 2. It is desirable that the International Consultation Text of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed be scrutinized to ascertain whether this text is faithful to the Received Texts of the creeds.*

### **1.2 Members**

As members of the committee the following persons were appointed:

Dr. J. Faber, professor of Dogmatics at the Theological College of The Canadian Reformed Churches at Hamilton, Canada;

Dr. N.H. Gootjes, missionary professor Dogmatics at the Korea Theological Seminary at Pusan, South Korea;

J.L. Mackay, professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Literature at the Free Church College at Edinburgh, Scotland;

the Rev. G. van Rongen, minister-emeritus of The Reformed Church at Steenwijk, The Netherlands, living at Kelmscott, Western Australia, organizer of the committee.

As per February 26, 1987, professor Mackay informed the organizer that he was unable to take part in the activities of the committee due to pressures of other commitments.

### **1.3 No meetings**

According to a decision taken by the 1985 Conference

*that each committee appointed by the Conference is expected to expediate its dealings through correspondence,*  
and

*that in such cases where these committees are of the opinion that an actual meeting is necessary, they shall approach the Interim Committee for approval regarding the reimbursement of their expenses,*

the committee deemed it unnecessary to arrange a meeting of its members, and expedited its dealings through correspondence.

#### **1.4 Correspondence**

Apart from this 'internal' correspondence there was some correspondence with others, aiming at obtaining some necessary information, e.g. with the World Council of Churches at Geneva, Switzerland, and with Gerald Bray, the author of *Creeds, Councils & Christ*, at London, England, regarding the International Consultation Texts (ICET); and with Dr. H. D'Arcy Wood at Clarence Gardens, South Australia who provided the committee with ample information about the ICEL, ICET, ELLC, and ACOL (see on them sub 2.2).

#### **1.5 Member churches**

In the Committee's opinion it was unnecessary to contact all the member churches, asking them for a copy of the text of the creeds as used by them. Several of these texts were known from the official documents concerned or could be supplied by members of the committee.

## **2. THE INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION TEXTS**

### **2.1 Literature**

The grounds of the committee's mandate make mention of the *International Consultation Text of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed*.

These texts have been published in a booklet entitled *Prayers We Have in Common, Agreed Liturgical Texts prepared by the International Consultation on English Texts* (abbreviated: ICET). The second revised edition of this booklet (see further sub 2.2.2), published by SPCK, London 1975, was available to the committee.

Its contents are: Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Kyrie, Gloria in Excelsis, Sursum Corda, Sanctus and Benedictus, Agnus Dei, Gloria Patri, Benedictus, Te

Deum, Magnificat, and Nunc Dimittis. No text of the Athanasian Creed is included.

In his above mentioned book, Gerald Bray has reprinted the text of both creeds in Appendix A (pages 204-207). Several churches in various parts of the world have adopted these texts. We can now find them e.g. in the church of England's *Alternative Service Book 1980* (which a minor change in the text of the Nicene Creed), and in *The Australian Hymn Book (with Catholic Supplement)*, which was first published in September 1977.

## **2.2 The history of ICET, its predecessors and successors**

It may be useful to briefly outline the history of ICET, its predecessors and successors.

### **2.2.1**

Since Vaticanum II, the most recent general council of the Church of Rome, authorized services in the vernacular more than twenty years ago (November 29, 1964), bringing the exclusive use of Latin to an end, a number of English language liturgies were produced. However, they sometimes differed considerably. This led the Vatican to the appointment of an International Committee on English in the Liturgy, abbreviated as ICEL, which produced some texts in the year 1967.

### **2.2.2**

Soon afterwards, in 1969, this was followed by the formation of the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET), an 'interdenominational' body, based on the World Council of Churches.

The result was the submission of proposals for modern translations of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, and of some well known prayers (see sub 2.1) in the booklet *Prayers We Have in Common* in the years 1970, 1971 (Revised and enlarged edition), and 1975 (Second revised edition).

The ICET texts were accepted in several churches in the English speaking countries, e.g. in the church of England, the Anglican Church in Australia, and the Uniting Church in Australia.

### **2.2.3**

In the year 1975 the ICET ceased to function. In the meantime, however, another organization was established. It is called the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC).

One of its members is ACOL, which stands for The Australian Consultation on Liturgy. Other participants are from North America, England, South-Africa, and New Zealand, while the Church of Rome is represented by two members of ICEL.

ELLC met for the first time in Boston, U.S.A., from 7-9 August, 1985, following the International Congress of *Societas Liturgica*, a Roman Catholic organization. It had conducted a survey on the use of the ICET texts. A subcommittee was established to carry out the work of revision. The proposals of this committee were considered at the ELLC meeting which was held at Brixen, Italy, in the month of August, 1987, in conjunction with another congress of *Societas Liturgica*. Our committee, however, has received no further information regarding this meeting.

### **2.3 Evaluation of the International Consultation Texts**

The ICET 1975 texts are printed and discussed in sections 5 and 6 of this report.

## **3. THE TEXT OF THE CREEDS**

### **3.1 Brief outline development creeds**

Before we will deal with our actual mandate, *To study the text of the three ecumenical creeds in order to come to a common text that can be recommended to the member churches*, we would like to present a brief summary of the history that has led to the texts on which our translations rest.

However, first of all we will briefly outline the various factors which have influenced the professing of faith in credal formulas.

### 3.2 The New Testament

#### 3.2.1 Confessions in the New Testament

The necessity to profess faith was already there when the Lord Jesus was on earth. He Himself as it were challenged His disciples in this respect when He asked them: *Who do men say that the Son of man is?*, and *But who do you say that I am?* (Matthew 16:13,15). This last question was answered by Simon Peter when he replied: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God* (16:16). The same challenge was there after His resurrection from the dead. Then the Saviour told Thomas: *Do not be faithless, but believing*; whereupon Thomas answered: *My Lord and my God!* (John 20:27,28).

After Christ's ascension into heaven and the Day of Pentecost there was not only the 'missionary command', of circumstances, first of all issued to Christ's apostles, but also every believer's duty to confess his/her faith under all kinds of circumstances, even under persecuion. This is why in the apostolic epistles we find several places which refer to this duty. In a very clear way the apostle Paul shows us the close relationship between gospel preaching, faith, and confession of faith when in Romans 10:8-10 he says: *The Word is near to you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the Word of faith which we preach), because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved.*

We find something similar in I Corinthians 12:3, when it says there: *and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit.*

#### 3.2.2 Fixed formulas in the New Testament

This place in Scripture teaches us at the same time that the process of expressing faith in fixed formulas took place under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Such a fixed formula is also known from Philippians 2:11: *and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord*, while the addition of the clause *to the glory of God the Father* suggests the use of such a credal formula in the liturgy of the church.

We may presume that in this respect the simple ceremonies which accompanied the baptism of adult converts played a role. It is not perfectly clear whether the phrase (baptized) *in the name of the Lord Jesus* in Acts 8:16 and 19:5 (see also I Corinthians 6:11) points to the use of a baptismal formula different from the one mentioned in Matthew 28:19, or whether it refers to a formula used by the baptismal candidates in expressing their faith. However, in Colossians 2:6 the words *you have received Christ the Lord* strongly suggest such a credal formula.

So one of the factors that led to the introduction of fixed formulas was the baptismal ceremony, whereby the converts professed their faith.

### **3.2.3 'Sacred deposit'**

Another factor is the gospel preaching.

From the gospels we may learn that the Saviour at various places and under various circumstances used the same or similar formulations in His teaching, e.g. preaching 'the Sermon on the Mount' (Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6) and 'the Lord's Prayer' (Matthew 5 and Luke 11). The same can be presumed as far as the apostles are concerned - compare e.g. the contents of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians to the epistle to the Colossians. At any rate it may be clear that in the course of time a kind of 'body of distinct Christian teaching' grew from *the apostles' teaching* (Acts 2:42), which as a 'sacred deposit' must be transferred to the next generation (II Timothy 2:2). This deposit is in the New Testament introduced by a number of names, as e.g. *the gospel* (I Corinthians 15:1; Philippians 1:7,27; Colossians 1:5); *my gospel* (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8); *the truth* (Colossians 1:5; II Thessalonians 2:13; II Timothy 2:18,25; 4:4); *the faith* (Philippians 1:27; Colossians 2:7; I Timothy 4:6; 6:21); *sound doctrine* (II Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9); *the good doctrine* (I Timothy 4:6); *deposit* (I Timothy 6:20; II Timothy 1:14); and *the traditions* (I Corinthians 11:2; II Thessalonians 2:15).

The last-mentioned term is used in I Corinthians 11:2 in a context wherein we also find the term *delivered*—in Greek from the same root. This is a well known term in the New Testament writings. The apostle Paul gives us some details when in I Corinthians 11:23 he refers to the institution of



the Lord's Supper, and in I Corinthians 15:3-8 to Christ's death, His burial, His resurrection from the dead, and His appearances. In I Corinthians 11:2 and II Thessalonians 2:15 he speaks in a more general way, referring to the *traditions* he *taught* to others or *delivered* to them. The terms *received* and *delivered*—which were already known among the Jews—were technical terms for the transmission of authoritative teaching.

After we have found all this in New Testament—more could be brought forward—we may not be amazed to read the word *confession* in the epistle to the Hebrews (3:1; 4:14; 10:23).

#### 3.2.4 Faith defended

Another factor that contributed to the fixation of credal formulas was the necessity to defend the truth against all kinds of heresies.

When in his first epistle the apostle John uses the verb "to confess" (*he who confesses the Son*, 2:23), he does so in the context of a warning against the *lies* of the antichrist and his followers (*who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?* verse 22). The same is done in chapter 4: *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist* (2-3). We find something similar in the epistle of Jude, who found it necessary to write *appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints* (verse 3), and then issued a serious warning against some *ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ*.

#### 3.2.5

Again another factor that contributed to the fixation of credal formulas was the development of the liturgy of the Christian church.

This development did not only lead to the use of certain words and clauses in the liturgical prayers, like *Maranatha* (I Corinthians 16:22), and *come, Lord Jesus!* (Revelation 22:20), but also to that of some credal hymns (Philippians 2:5-11; Ephesians 5:14; I Timothy 3:16).

### 3.3 The Apostles' Creed

#### 3.3.1 Development leading to the Received Text of the Apostles' Creed

According to some ancient manuscripts of the book of Acts (the 'Western Text') the evangelist Philip, after the Ethiopian eunuch had requested to be baptized, said: *If you believe with all your heart, you may*; whereupon the eunuch would have replied: *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*. We will not enter into a discussion on the question whether or not what is known as Acts 8:37 is an interpolation. For in both cases this text points to what later on has developed into 'baptismal interrogations': before the candidates were baptized they had to respond to certain questions.

This process strongly contributed to the developing of the later creeds.

Some of these questions are still known, e.g. those asked in the church served by Justin Martyr (± 100-165):

*Dost thou believe in the Father and Lord of the universe?*

*Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ our Saviour, Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate?*

*Dost thou believe in the Holy Spirit, Who spoke through the prophets?*

and also those from the church of Irenaeus (±130 - ±200):

*Dost thou believe in God the Father,*

*Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who was incarnate, and died, and rose again?*

*Dost thou believe in the Holy Spirit of God?*

In his *Adversus Haereses* Irenaeus wrote that though the church has been spread all over the world, she has from the apostles and their disciples received faith in one God, the Father, the Almighty; in one Jesus Christ, God's Son, Who was incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit. She confesses Christ's birth from a virgin, His sufferings, resurrection and ascension into heaven, and His parousia for the resurrection and judgment of all mankind. The 'Rule of Faith' which we receive in baptism is a threefold one: God the Father regenerates us in His grace by His Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the *Apostolic*

*Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome (170-251) a threefold profession of faith of a Trinitarian character is described, accompanied by a threefold immersion. It reads as follows:*

*The one doing the baptizing lays his hand on him and asks him:*

*Do you believe in God, the Father almighty?*

*The one being baptized is to answer: 'I believe'.*

*Let him baptize him then a first time, keeping his hand on the person's head. He then asks him:*

*Do you believe in Jesus Christ, Son of God,*

*born by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary,*

*Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate,*

*Who died, was raised in the third day,*

*living from among the dead,*

*Who ascended to the heavens,*

*Who sits at the right hand of the Father,*

*Who will come to judge the living and the dead?*

*When he has answered: 'I believe', he is to baptize him a second time.*

*He is to ask him again:*

*Do you believe in the Holy Spirit,*

*in the holy Church,*

*in the resurrection of the flesh?*

*The one being baptized is to answer: 'I believe'. Then he baptizes him a third time.*

This interrogation during the baptismal ceremony presupposed some preceding instruction of the candidates. Already quite early, this instruction seemed to have given rise to a similar development, which resulted in the establishing of a number of declaratory forms of confession.

Illustrations are the following:

In the *First Catechesis of Cyrill of Jerusalem*, from the fourth century, we find a brief declaratory form, reading as follows:

*I believe in the Father, in the Son, in the Holy Spirit, and in a single baptism of repentance.*

In the *Der Balyzeh Papyrus*, which dates from the sixth century but includes some older liturgical material, we find a confession made by the candidate at baptism, reading thus:

*I believe in God, Father almighty,  
in your only-begotten Son, our Lord,  
our Lord Jesus Christ,  
in the Holy Spirit,  
in the resurrection of the flesh,  
in the holy catholic Church.*

In these credal forms, either of an interrogatory or of a declaratory character, which differed slightly but not fundamentally in the various local churches or regions, we find the origin of our creeds, in particular of the Apostles' Creed.

In this context the so-called *Symbolum Romanum* played a prominent role. This baptismal symbol is known from Tertullianus (±160 - 220), who referred to a 'Rule of Faith' which had much in common with what today we call the Apostles' Creed. This may be clear from the following lines taken—in translation—from his treatise *On the Veiling of Virgins* (1,3):

*The rule of faith which is one everywhere and unalterable... teaches us to believe in one God almighty, Creator of the world, and His Son Jesus Christ, born from the virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised on the third day from the dead, taken up into heaven, now sitting on the Father's right hand, destined to come to judge the living and the dead through the resurrection of the flesh.*

Irenaeus in his *Adversus Haereses* also refers to such a Rule of Faith, quoting from it clauses like the following:

*The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: (She believes) in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, Who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, Who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His (future) manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father, "to gather all things*

*in one", and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, "every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess" to Him, and that He should execute judgment towards all.*

We may safely presume that both authors had the Roman Creed in mind, or at least a similar formula (from the Western Church creeds are known from Aquileia, Milan, Turin, Arles, Toulon, Ravenna, Carthage and Hippo).

Anyhow, the text of this creed is better known to us from a commentary, *Expositio in Symbolum*, written in the year 404 by a certain Rufinus, who made a comparison between the Symbol of Aquileis in North Italy, his birthtown, and the *Symbolum Romanum*.

The text of the latter is almost identical to that of the Greek text which Marcellus of Ancrya in the year 340 sent to bishop Julius of Rome, when he had been accused of a form of Sabellianis, and, exiled to Rome, wanted to prove his orthodoxy. It is also identical to that of some ancient manuscripts preserved in England.

The text of the *Symbolum Romanum* was shorter than that of today's Apostles' Creed. The words *descendit in inferna* e.g. were missing—they may have been adopted from the Creed of Aquileia. Other additions from elsewhere are the clauses *Creator of heaven and earth, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered, dead, God almighty, catholic in holy church, communion of saints and life everlasting*.

The present text of the Apostles' Creed—known as the *Textus Receptus* or *Received Text*—is certainly not older than the close of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century. The oldest known copies are found in a *Psalterium Graecum Gregorii Magni* from the eighth or ninth century, first published in 1647, which contains the text in Latin and Greek; and in a booklet written by a certain Priminus, founder and abbot of the monastery of Reichneau (758), containing the Latin text. Emperor Charlemagne (813) made it the standard form of the creed in his empire, making it compulsory for his subjects to learn it by heart.

While the Church of Rome initially refused to adopt it, using the Nicene Creed instead, it accepted the Apostles' Creed in the year 1014.

### **3.3.2 The Received Text of the Apostles' Creed**

The Received Text of the Apostles' Creed reads as follows:

*Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem, creatorem caeli  
et terrae,  
et in Iesum Christum, Filium eius unicum, Dominum  
nostrum,  
qui conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto, natus ex Maria  
virgine,  
passus sub Pontio Pilato, crucifixus, mortuus et  
sepultus,  
descendit ad inferna, tertia die resurrexit a mortuis,  
ascendit ad caelos, sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris om-  
nipotentis,  
inde venturus est iudicare vivos et mortuos.  
Credo in spiritum Sanctum, sanctam ecclesiam  
catholicam,  
sanctorum communionem, remissionem peccatorum,  
carnis resurrectionem, et vitam eternam.*

The inclusion of the word *Amen* is doubtful.

## **3.4 The Nicene Creed**

### **3.4.1 Development leading to the Received Text of the Nicene Creed**

The history of the Eastern Church is more strongly typified by the struggle against heresies than that of the Western Church. This led her to the adoption of a number of creeds of a rather polemic character, containing statements on God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

This adoption took place at a number of 'ecumenical councils'.

The first Council, that of Nicea (325) had to deal with Arius' heresy. Influenced by pagan philosophy he taught that Christ is not God in the same sense as the Father, but as a creature is inferior to Him.

The result of this Council was the so-called *Nicaenum*—which is not the same as the Nicene Creed, see below—in which Arianism was condemned. It was based on an exist-

ing local creed, that of Jerusalem (Cyrill), which was extended with a number of anti-arian expressions. It read as follows:

*We believe in one God, the Father, almighty,  
maker of all things visible and invisible;  
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God,  
begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from  
the substance of the Father, God from God, light from  
light, true God from true God,  
begotten not made,  
of one substance with the Father,  
through Whom all things came into being,  
things in heaven and things on earth,  
Who because of us men and because of our salvation  
came down and became incarnate,  
becoming man,  
suffered  
and rose again on the third day,  
ascended to the heavens,  
will come to judge the living and the dead;  
And in the Holy Spirit.*

This clause was followed by Canon 1, which contained an anathema, reading as follows:

*But as for those who say, There was when He was not,  
and, Before being born He was not, and that He came  
into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the  
Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or  
is subject to alteration or change—these the Catholic  
and apostolic Church anathematizes.*

After some time Arianism appeared to be strong again, some of the emperors being in sympathy with it. Besides, Apollinaris taught that the divine Reason took the place of a human soul in Christ—another heresy. Therefore the Western churches urged a reaffirmation of the Nicaenum.

In the meantime another controversy had arisen regarding the Holy Spirit. Eunomius and the Macedonians or Pneumatomachians considered Him to be subordinate to the Father and the Son, not being personal in the same sense as the Father and the Son.

This led to the Second Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople in 381, which indeed reaffirmed the doctrine of the Nicaenum.

However, scholars are divided on some questions: Did 'Constantinople' compose another creed? The records of this Council do not produce proof of the promulgation of a new creed. Or did it adopt an existing liturgical formula? Or is what today is called the Nicene Creed (or: Nicaeno-Constantinopolitanum) a kind of extension of the Nicaenum of 325 with some additional clauses on the Holy Spirit?

The first attestation of the new creed dates from the Council of Chalcedon (451). There it was quoted as *the faith of the 150 fathers* (namely of Constantinople). Since this Council, or perhaps at an earlier date, it was used as a baptismal confession at Constantinople, later on also by the whole of the Eastern Church, replacing the local creeds.

The Third Council of Toledo (589) permitted the singing of this creed. And without consulting the Eastern Church it added the so-called *Filioque*.

Only in the year 1014 it was adopted by pope Benedict VIII under pressure from emperor Henry II, and introduced in the liturgy of the Mass.

The Filioque was one of the reasons that the split between the Western and Eastern Churches could not be healed in 1274 and 1439.

#### **3.4.2 The Received Text**

The Latin version of the Received Text, including the Filioque, reads as follows:

*Credimus in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem caeli et terrae, visibillum omnium et invisibillum.*

*Et in unum Dominum Iesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum, et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula, Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero, genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri: per quem omnia facta sunt;*

*qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis, et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria virgine, et homo factus est, cruci-*



*fixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato, passus et sepultus est, et resurrexit tertia die secundum Scripturas, et ascendit in caelum, sedet ad dexteram Patris, et iterum venturus est cum gloria, iudicare vivos et mortuos: cuius regni non erit finis.*

*Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem, qui ex Patre Filioque procedit, qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur, qui locutus est per prophetas. Et (in) unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam. Confitemur unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum. Expectamus resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.*

### 3.5 The Athanasian Creed

#### 3.5.1 The history of the text of the Athanasian Creed

This creed has for a long time been attributed to Athanasius, the champion of orthodoxy since the Council of Nicea (325).

The fact that its second part is quoted in a manuscript of a sermon on the Incarnation from the middle of the eighth century, which manuscript was found at Treves, and that Athanasius as an exile spent some time at Treves, may have contributed to this.

However, he definitely can not be its author, first of all for the simple reason that Athanasius wrote in Greek, while this creed is in Latin.

Therefore many scholars prefer the name *Quicumque* or *Quicumque vult*, according to the beginning of the first line.

Its author is unknown. Some scholars consider Vincentius Lerinum to be its author, others Caesarius of Arles.

Its contents show some signs of affiliation with statements made by the Spanish synods or Councils which, since the year 400, were held at Toledo. Its Latin text runs parallel with the language of the theologians of South Gaul who maintained close relations with the Spanish church.

Its first part is of a Trinitarian character, and may have been taken from Augustine's *De Trinitate*. Its second part presupposes the Creed of Chalcedon (451), which condemned the teachings of Nestorius and Eutyches on the natures of Christ.

The earliest quotation from it is in a canon of the Fourth Council of Toledo (633), another in the above mentioned Treves fragment.

This creed can be considered as the concluding statement made by the early church on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

Characteristic are the damnatory clauses at the beginning and the end of the first part and at the end of its second part.

The filioque is included, which may be one of the reasons why the Eastern Church has never accepted it.

### **3.5.2 Its text**

The Committee's mandate correctly speaks of 'the Received Texts of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed'. The Latin—in the reconstruction by J.N.D. Kelly—does not carry that name. This text reads as follows:

- (1) *Quicumque vult salvus esse, ante omnia opus est ut teneat catholicam fidem:*
- (2) *quam nisi quis integram inviolatamque servaverit, absque dubio in aeternum peribit.*
- (3) *Fides autem catholica haec est, ut unum Deum in trinitate et trinitatem in unitate veneremur,*
- (4) *neque confundentes personas neque substantiam separantes.*
- (5) *Alia est enim persona Patris, alia Filii, alia Spiritus Sancti;*
- (6) *sed Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti una est divinitas, aequalis gloria, coaeterna maiestas.*
- (7) *Qualis Pater, talis Filius, talis et Spiritus Sanctus.*
- (8) *increatus Pater, increatus Filius, increatus Spiritus Sanctus;*
- (9) *immensus Pater, immensus Filius, immensus Spiritus Sanctus;*
- (10) *aeternus Pater, aeternus Filius, aeternus Spiritus Sanctus;*
- (11) *et tamen non tres aeterni sed unus aeternus;*
- (12) *sicut non tres increati nec tres immensi, sed unus increatus et unus immensus.*
- (13) *Similiter omnipotens Pater, omnipotens Filius, omnipotens Spiritus Sanctus;*

- (14) *et tamen non tres omnipotentes, sed unus omnipotens.*
- (15) *Ita deus Pater, deus Filius, deus Spiritus Sanctus;*
- (16) *et tamen non tres dii, sed unus est deus.*
- (17) *Ita dominus Pater, dominus Filius, dominus Spiritus Sanctus;*
- (18) *et tamen non tres domini, sed unus est dominus.*
- (19) *Quia sicut singillatim unamquamque personam et deum et dominum confiteri christiana veritate compellimur,*
- (20) *ita tres deos aut dominos dicere catholica religione prohibemur.*
- (21) *Pater a nullo est factus nec creatus nec genitus.*
- (22) *Filius a Patri solo est, non factus nec creatus sed genitus.*
- (23) *Spiritus Sanctus a Patre et Filio, non factus nec creatus nec genitus sed procedens.*
- (24) *Unus ergo Pater, non tres Patres; unus Filius, non tres Filii; unus Spiritus Sanctus, non tres Spiritus Sancti.*
- (25) *Et in hac trinitate nihil prius aut posterius, nihil maius aut minus.*
- (26) *sed totae tres personae coaeternae sibi sunt et coaequales.*
- (27) *Ita ut per omnia, sicut iam supra dictum est, et trinitas in unitate et unitas in trinitate veneranda sit.*
- (28) *Qui vult ergo salvus esse, ita de trinitate sentiat.*
- (29) *Sed necessarium est ad aeternam salutem ut incarnationem quoque domini nostri Iesu Christi fideliter credat.*
- (30) *Est ergo fides recta ut credamus et confiteamur quia dominus noster Iesus Christus Dei filius et deus pariter et homo est.*
- (31) *Deus est ex substantia Patris ante saecula genitus, et homo est ex substantia matris in saeculo natus;*
- (32) *perfectus deus, perfectus homo ex anima rationabili et humana carne subsistens;*
- (33) *aequalis Patri secundum divinitatem, minor Patri secundum humanitatem.*
- (34) *Qui licet deus sit et homo, non duo tamen sed unus est Christus.*

- (35) *Unus autem non conversione divinitatis in carne, sed adsumptione humanitatis in deo;*
- (36) *unus omnino non confusione substantiae, sed unitate personae.*
- (37) *Nam sicut anima rationalis et caro unus est homo, ita deus et homo unus est Christus.*
- (38) *Qui passus est pro salute nostra, descendit ad inferna, surrexit a mortuis,*
- (39) *ascendit ad caelos, sedit ad dexteram Patris, inde venturus iudicare vivos et mortuos;*
- (40) *ad cuius adventum omnes homines resurgere habent cum corporibus suis et reddituri sunt de factis propriis rationem;*
- (41) *et qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam aeternam, qui mala in ignem aeternum.*
- (42) *Haec est fides catholica: quam nisi quis fideliter firmiterque crediderit, salvus esse non poterit.*

#### **4. TEXTS USED BY MEMBER CHURCHES**

##### **4.1 The three creeds**

Those churches which have among their subordinate standards the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism, have via them also adopted the Apostles' Creed. The Belgic Confession, in Article 9, says: *In this doctrine, therefore, we willingly receive the three creeds, of the Apostles, of Nicea, and of Athanasius*, while the Heidelberg Catechism includes its text in Lord's Day 7, after which a lengthy interpretation of the Apostles' Creeds is given in Lord's Days 8-22.

As for the churches which have adopted the Westminster Standards, the Apostles' Creed has been appended to the Shorter Catechism, together with the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. In the first edition of the Shorter Catechism it was published by order of Parliament, and is therefore to be considered as belonging to that catechism.

Its text in *The Subordinate Standards and Other Authoritative Documents of the Free Church of Scotland*, Edinburgh 1973, is followed by a note that includes the following lines:

*And albeit the substance of the doctrine comprised in that abrigment, commonly called The Apostles' Creed, be fully set forth in each of the Catechisms, so as there is no neces-*

*sily of inserting the Creed itself; yet it is here annexed, not as though it were composed by the Apostles, or ought to be esteemed canonical scripture, as the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer (much less a prayer, as ignorant people have been apt to make both it and the Decalogue), but because it is a brief sum of the Christian faith, agreeable to the Word of God, and anciently received in the churches of Christ.*

The Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed have not been formally adopted by the churches of presbyterian signature.

## **4.2 The Apostles' Creed**

### **4.2.1 The Shorter Catechism**

The text of the Apostles' Creed, as printed as an appendix to the Shorter Catechism, reads as follows:

*I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, which was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried: he descended into hell; the third day he arose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholick church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*

A marginal note on the clause *he descended into hell* reads: *Le. continued in the state of the dead, and under the power of death till the third day.*

### **4.2.2 Canada/U.S.A. and Australia**

The Canadian Reformed Churches have adopted the following text:

- I. 1. *I believe in God the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth.*
- II. 2. *I believe in Jesus Christ,  
His only-begotten Son, our Lord;*
3. *He was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary;*
4. *Suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried;*

- He descended into hell.*
5. *On the third day He arose from the dead;*
  6. *He ascended into heaven,*  
*and sits at the right hand*  
*of God the Father almighty;*
  7. *from there He will come to judge the living and*  
*the dead.*
- III. 8. *I believe in the Holy Spirit;*
9. *I believe a holy catholic Christian Church,*  
*the communion of saints;*
  10. *the forgiveness of sins;*
  11. *the resurrection of the body;*
  12. *and the life everlasting. Amen.*

The word *Amen* is left out in the text of the Apostles' Creed when quoted in Lord's Day 7 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia have adopted the same text with the exception of the word *Christian* in III.9.

#### **4.2.3 Korea**

The Presbyterian Church of Korea has adopted a text which, in the translation of one of our Committee members, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, reads as follows:

*I believe God the Father who is almighty*  
*and who made heaven and earth,*  
*(I) believe the only Son our Lord Jesus Christ,*  
*Who from the virgin mary, having conceived through*  
*the Holy Spirit, was born, suffered under Pontius*  
*Pilate, was nailed on a cross and died, on the third day*  
*after (the)r having buried (Him) He became alive again*  
*from among the dead, He ascended to heaven, and is sit-*  
*ting at the right side of the almighty God, until from*  
*there He will come to judge the living and the dead.*  
*(I) believe the Holy Spirit.*  
*(I) believe a holy assembly, and that the saints have fel-*  
*lowship with each other, and that (God) forgives sins,*  
*and that the body lives again, and that (I?, we?) live*  
*eternally.*  
*Amen.*

Some remarks may be added:

1. The difference between *believe* and *believe in* is not expressed in the Korea version.

2. While the Korean Bible version uses the verb *to create* the Creed has *made*.
3. The same can be said of *only*; the Korean Bible has *only begotten* in John 1:14.
4. *Having conceived*—referring to Mary—replaces the passive *was conceived*.
5. The words *descended into hell* have been omitted.
6. The active *having buried (Him)* replaces the passive *was buried*.
7. The word *assembly* is a dictionary-translation of the Korean term, which consists of two parts. These two parts must probably be translated separately, by *public* (or *general*) and *meeting*. This would explain the absence of the word *catholic*. The word for *church*, as found in the Korean Bible, is not used.

#### 4.2.4 The Netherlands

The text which is used by The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands reads as follows:

- I 1 Ik geloof in God de Vader, de Almachtige,  
Schepper van de hemel en de aarde.
- II 2 En in Jezus Christus, zijn eniggeboren Zoon,  
onze Here;  
3 die ontvangen is van de Heilige Geest, geboren  
uit de maagd Maria;  
4 die geleden heeft onder Pontius Pilatus, is  
gekruisigd, gestorven en begraven,  
neergedaald in de hel;  
5 op de derde dag opgestaan uit de doden;  
6 opgevaren naar de hemel, en zit aan de  
rechterhand van God, de almachtige Vader,  
7 vandaar zal Hij komen om te oordelen de  
levenden en de doden.
- III 8 Ik geloof in de Heilige Geest.  
9 Ik geloof een heilige, algemene, christelijke  
kerk, de gemeenschap der heiligen;  
10 vergeving van de zonden;  
11 opstanding van het vlees;  
12 en een eeuwig leven.

### **4.3 The Nicene Creed**

#### **4.3.1 Canada/U.S.A. and Australia**

The text of the English version of the Nicene Creed in the *Book of Praise 1984* reads as follows:

*We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.*

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.*

*Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.*

*And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.*

*And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

This text is under revision—as is the text of the Athanasian Creed.

#### **4.3.2 The Netherlands**

The Dutch member churches use the following translation:

*Wij geloven in één God, de almachtige Vader, Schepper van de hemel en de aarde, van alle zichtbare en onzichtbare dingen.*

*En in één Here Jezus Christus, de eniggeboren Zoon van God, geboren uit de Vader voor alle eeuwen, God uit God, Licht uit Licht, waarachtig God uit waarachtig God; ge-*



boren, niet geschapen, éénvan wezen met de Vader; door Hem zijn alle dingen geworden.

Ter wille van ons mensen en van ons behoud is Hij neergedaald uit de hemel en vlees geworden door de Heilige Geest uit de maagd Maria en is een mens geworden. Hij is ook voor ons gekruisigd onder Pontius Pilatus, heeft geleden en is begraven. Op de derde dag is Hij opgestaan overeenkomstig de Schriften. Hij is opgevaren naar de hemel, zit aan de rechterhand van de Vader en zal in heerlijkheid weerkomen om te oordelen de levenden en de doden. En zijn rijk zal geen einde hebben.

En in de Heilige Geest, die Here is en levend maakt, die van de Vader en de Zoon uitgaat, die samen met de Vader en de Zoon aanbeden en verheerlijkt wordt, die gesproken heeft door de profeten.

En éénheilige, algemene en apostolische kerk.

Wij belijden één doop tot vergeving van de zonden.

Wij verwachten de opstanding van de doden en het leven van de komende eeuw.

Amen.

#### 4.3.3 Others

As far as your Committee is aware the churches of a presbyterian character have never formally adopted the Nicene Creed.

### 4.4 The Athanasian Creed

#### 4.4.1 Canada/U.S.A. and Australia

The English version of this Creed in the *Book of Praise* 1984, used in The Canadian Reformed Churches and The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, reads as follows:

(1) Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith; (2) Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

(3) And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; (4) Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. (5) For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son and another of the Holy Spirit. (6) But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. (7) Such as

the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit. (8) The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Spirit uncreate. (9) The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible. (10) The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal. (11) And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal. (12) As also there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensible, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible. (13) So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty; (14) And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty. (15) So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; (16) And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. (17) So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord; (18) And yet they are not three Lords, but one Lord. (19) For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord; (20) So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say: There are three Gods or three Lords. (21) The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. (22) The Son is of the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten. (23) The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. (24) So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. (25) And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another; none is greater, or less than another. (26) But the whole three persons are co-eternal, and co-equal. (27) So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. (28) He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity. (29) Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. (30) For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God, is God and man. (31) God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of the substance of His mother, born in the world. (32) Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. (33) Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood. (34) Who, although He is God

and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ. (35) One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God. (36) One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. (37) For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ; (38) Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead; (39) He ascended into heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty; (40) From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. (41) At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies; (42) And shall give account of their own works. (43) And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. (44) This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

This text is under revision.

#### 4.4.2 The Netherlands

The text of this creed as adopted by the Dutch member churches reads as follows:

- (1) Al wie behouden wil worden, moet voor alles het algemeen geloof vasthouden;
- (2) als iemand dit niet volledig en ongeschonden bewaart, zal hij ongetwijfeld voor eeuwig verloren gaan.
- (3) Het algemeen geloof nu is dit, dat wij de ene God in de Drieheid en de Drieheid in de Eenheid vereren,
- (4) zonder de Personen te vermengen of het wezen te delen.
- (5) Want de Persoon van de Vader en die van de Zoon en die van de Heilige Geest zijn van elkaar onderscheiden,
- (6) maar de Vader en de Zoon en de Heilige Geest hebben één goddelijkheid, gelijke heerlijkheid, dezelfde eeuwige majestest.
- (7) Zoals de Vader is, zo is de Zoon, zo is ook de Heilige Geest.
- (8) Ongeschapen is de Vader, ongeschapen de Zoon, ongeschapen de Heilige Geest, (9) onmetelijk is de Vader, onmetelijk de Zoon, onmetelijk de Heilige Geest;
- (10) eeuwig is de Vader, eeuwig de Zoon, eeuwig de Heilige Geest. (11) En toch zijn Zij niet drie eeuwigten,

maar een eeuwige; (12) zoals Zij niet drie ongeschapenen of drie onmetelijken zijn, maar één oneschapene en één onmetelijke. (13) Evenzo is de Vader almachtig, de Zoon almachtig, de Heilige Geest almachtig; (14) en toch zijn Zij niet drie almachtigen, maar één almachtige. (15) Zo is de Vader God, de Zoon God, de Heilige Geest God; (16) en toch zijn Zij niet drie Goden, maar één God. (17) Zo is de Vader Here, de Zoon Here, de Heilige Geest Here; (18) en toch zijn Zij niet drie Heren, maar één Here. (19) Want zoals de Christelijke waarheid ons noodzaakt elke Persoon afzonderlijk als God en als Here te belijden, zo belet het algemeen geloof ons van drie Goden of Heren te spreken.

(20) De Vader is door niemand gemaakt of geschapen of voortgebracht. (21) De Zoon is door de Vader alleen, niet gemaakt of geschaen, maar voortgebracht. (22) De Heilige Geest is door de Vader en de Zoon niet gemaakt of geschapen of voortgebracht, maar Hij gaat van Hen uit. (23) Eén Vader dus, niet drie Vaders; één Zoon, niet drie Zonen; één Heilige Geest, niet drie Heilige Geesten. (24) En in deze Drieëenheid is geen sprake van eerder of later, noch van meer of minder, maar alle drie Personen zijn aan elkaar gelijk in eeuwigheid en in hoedanigheid.

(25) Daarom moet, zoals reeds genoemd werd, in alle opzichten zowel de Eénheid in de Drieheid als de Drieheid in de Eénheid vereerd worden.

(26) Wie dus behouden wil worden, moet deze overtuiging hebben aangaande de Drieëenheid.

(27) Maar het is voor zijn eeuwig behoud noodzakelijk dat hij ook de vleeswording van onze Here Jezus Christus oprecht geloof. (28) Het ware geloof nu is, dat wij geloven en belijden, dat onze Here Jezus Christus, Gods Zoon, God en mens is. (29) God is Hij uit het wezen van de Vader, voortgebracht vóór alle tijden, en mens is Hij uit het wezen van zijn moeder, geboren in de tijd; (30) volkomen God en volkomen mens, met een menselijke ziel en een menselijk lichaam; (31) gelijk aan de Vader naar zijn goddelijke natuur, minder dan de Vader naar zijn menselijke natuur. (32) En hoewel Hij God en mens is, is Hij toch niet twee maar één Christus. (33) Eén is Hij, echter niet doordat zijn goddelijke natuur in de menselijke veranderde, maar do-

ordat Hij als God de menselijke natuur aannam. (34) Eén is Hij, volstrekt niet door vermenging van naturen, maar door éénheid van Persoon. (35) Want zoals ziel en lichaam één mens zijn, zo zijn God en mens één Christus.

(36) Hij heeft geleden voor ons behoud, is neergedaald in de hel en op de derde dag opgestaan uit de doden.

(37) Hij is opgevaren naar de hemel, en zit aan de rechterhand van God, de almachtige Vader; vandaar zal Hij komen om te oordelen de leveden en de doden.

(38) Bij zijn komst zullen alle mensen opstaan met hun lichaam en zij zullen rekenschap afleggen van hun daden.

(39) En zij die het goede gedaan hebben zullen het eeuwige leven ingaan, maar zij die het kwade gedaan hebben, het eeuwige vuur.

(40) Dit is het algemeen geloof. Wie dit niet oprecht en standvastig gelooft, zal niet behouden kunnen worden.

#### 4.4.3 Others

Your Committee is not aware of other members having adopted a different version of this creed.

## 5. THE INTERNATIONAL CONSULATATION TEXTS

### 5.1 The Apostles' Creed

This text reads as follows:

1. *I believe in God, the Father almighty,*
2. *creator of heaven and earth.*
3. *I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.*
4. *He was conceived by (the power of) the Holy Spirit*
5. *and born of the Virgin Mary.*
6. *He suffered under Pontius Pilate,*
7. *was crucified, died, and was buried.*
8. *He descended to the dead.*
9. *On the third day he rose again.*
10. *He ascended into heaven,*
11. *and is seated at the right hand of the Father.*
12. *He will come to judge the living and the dead.*
13. *I believe in the Holy Spirit,*
14. *the holy catholic Church,*
15. *the communion of saints,*

16. *the forgiveness of sins,*
17. *the resurrection of the body,*
18. *and the life everlasting. Amen.*

## **5.2 The Nicene Creed**

The text of the Nicene Creed reads thus:

1. *We believe in one God,*
2. *the Father, the Almighty,*
3. *maker of heaven and earth,*
4. *of all that is, seen and unseen.*
5. *We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,*
6. *the only Son of God,*
7. *eternally begotten of the Father,*
8. *God from God, Light from Light,*
9. *true God from true God,*
10. *begotten, not made,*
11. *of one Being with the Father.*
12. *Through him all things were made.*
13. *For us men and for our salvation*
14. *he came down from heaven:*
15. *by the power of the Holy Spirit*
16. *he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and*  
*was made man.*
17. *For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate:*
18. *he suffered death and was buried.*
19. *On the third day he rose again*
20. *in accordance with the Scriptures;*
21. *he ascended into heaven*
22. *and is seated at the right hand of the Father.*
23. *He will come again in glory to judge the living and*  
*the dead,*
24. *and his kingdom will have no end.*
25. *We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,*
26. *who proceeds from the Father [and the Son].*
27. *With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and*  
*glorified.*
28. *He has spoken through the Prophets.*
29. *We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.*
30. *We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of*  
*sins.*
31. *We look for the resurrection of the dead,*
32. *and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

### 5.3 The Athanasian Creed

This creed has not been translated by ICET, most likely because it is not used in the liturgy of the various churches.

## 6. EVALUATION

### 6.1 The Apostles' Creed

#### 6.1.1 The International Consultation Text

1. *Creator* is indeed the correct translation of the Latin *creatorem*. It is, however, remarkable that this name is printed without a capital, while later the word *Church* is printed with a capital C.
2. The words *I believe* are repeated in the second article. They are not original but may replace the word *and* to bring this part of the creed into harmony with the articles regarding God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. The same is done in *Book of Praise* 1984. A variant form used in France from the eighth century has the same repetition.
3. The word *only* is a correct translation of the Latin word *unicum*. See further under 6.1.2 - 4.
4. As for the phrase *by the power of the Holy Spirit*, reference could be made to Luke 1:35 where the angel is reported to have explained to Mary: *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you*. However, when we compare the use of the name *the Most High* in this verse with that at other places in the writings of Luke, we come to the conclusion that this name is no specific indication of the Holy Spirit. In verse 32 the same angel had called Mary's Son-to-be *the Son of the Most High* (see also 8:28; and for the name *the Most High* 1:76; 6:35; Acts 7:48; 16:17; Hebrews 7:1). The Holy Spirit is here identified with *the power of the Most High*; He Himself is that power—of course without being denied as a Person in the Holy Trinity. Therefore the statement made by the same angel to Joseph (Matthew 1:22) does not mention that power, but says: *that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit*. The Consultation text could easily lead to a misinterpretation of the Holy Spirit's involvement in Christ virginal conception.

Besides, it is no accurate translation of the Received Text which reads: *qui conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto*.

5. *Mortuus* in the Received Text has been translated by the active *died*, because in the opinion of ICET *Modern usage demands an active form for this verb*. However, the surrounding verbs are all in the passive: *passus*, *crucifixus*, and *sepultus*, so that—even in spite of the fact that Christ's death was not only something He had to undergo but at the same time an act—there is no reason to translate by *died* instead of *dead*.
6. The line *descendit ad inferna* has been interpreted in some various way. The additional notes in the booklet *Prayers We Have in Common* refer to three of them. It then says: *The Consultation cannot take sides, but instead must provide a text which is open to all three*. So this translation is a matter of compromising, and as such runs parallel with similar efforts undertaken in the circles of the World Council of Churches—e.g. in the Lima-document on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* of 1982—or affiliated organizations.

Besides, the Latin word *inferna* has the meaning of: the nether world, and is related with the English *infernal*. It should be translated by *hell*.

While the next line in the Apostles' Creed says that Christ *arose from the dead* (*Resurrexit a mortuis*), ICET omits the words *from the dead*, apparently because it mentioned *the dead* in the previous line already!

For all these reasons this text is at this point unacceptable.

7. The Consultation text, together with some older English translations of the Apostles' Creed, has *rose again*. This may be an accurate translation of the Latin *resurrexit*: *re-* can be rendered by *again*. But in modern English the word *again* has the meaning of *once more*, *another time*, *further*, *besides*, and no longer of *back*. Therefore the version in *Book of Priase 1984* must be preferred, which has *He arose*.
8. The line *sedet ad dexteram Dei patris omnipotentis* has been translated by *is seated at the right hand of the Father*, *is seated* clearly expressing Christ's glory.



The reason given for the omission of the name *God* and of *almighty*—to reiterate the first line's '*God the Father almighty*' makes the line unnecessarily ponderous—is not very convincing. Here a change has been made in a text which has been used for more than a thousand years.

Besides, it is an "amputation", because the comfort of the knoweldge that our Saviour shares in the almighty governing of all things has been lost. Here another substantial alteration in the text has been made.

9. The word *inde* (from *there*) in the article on the judgment day has not been translated for an unknown reason.
10. Correctly, the words *I believe* are not repeated when the creed mentions *the holy catholic church*: they are not in the Received Text either.

*Church* may have been printed with a capital C in order not to offend the Church of Rome—to say it in a negative way!

The Latin language has no articles. Therefore we can translate *the holy catholic church*. Since the article *the* is used in the following lines for *the communion of saints*, *the forgiveness of sins*, *the resurrection of the body*, and *the life everlasting*, no objection can be raised at this point.

#### 6.1.2 Texts used by member churches

1. The text in the Appendix to the *Shorter Catechism* (hereafter: APP) has—even twice—*Almighty* with a capital, while *Book of Priase* (hereafter: BP) has no capital. Since this is not a name, but an apposition to *God the Father*, the latter is in the Committee's opinion correct.
2. APP has *maker of heaven and earth*, while BP has *Creator of heaven and earth*. *Creator* being a name of God is correctly printed with a capital, while it is the literal translation of the Latin *Creatorem*. The Westminster Confession has also *Creator* (V 1, VII 1, XIX 5).
3. BP has replaced *and* (in APP; in the Dutch version: *En*) by *I believe*. This may be in harmony with the French variant mentioned under 6.1.1 of this report, but it is

not in conformance with the Received Text (hereafter: RT). Although these modern days seem to require shorter sentences, due to a kind of spiritual impatience, your Committee is not convinced that, after the brief article on God the Father, such an alteration is necessary. We found something similar in a document from the twelfth century, wherein it is obviously one of the many liberties taken during the congregation's instruction in the meaning of the contents of the Apostles' Creed: its text was paraphrased (see further under 4).

4. While APP has *his only Son*, BP and the Dutch version (hereafter: D) have *His only-begotten Son* and *zijn eniggeboren Zoon* respectively.

Now *only* is the translated *unicum* from the RT of the Apostles' Creed, while *only-begotten* is based on the RT of the Nicene Creed.

The use of the latter term seems to follow the Heidelberg Catechism, which in its Latin text has *filium eius unigenitum* and in its German version *eingeboren Sohn*—a change which is the more remarkable because apart from some changes in the spelling of a few words which are of minor importance—the Latin version faithfully follows the RT.

It is not difficult to follow the route which this alteration has taken: from Heidelberg it reached The Netherlands, while some centuries later migrants took it to "the New World", so that e.g. in Psalters from the years 1927 and 1934 we find the words *only begotten*.

We have tried to trace this tradition back to its origin, and are of the opinion that for this purpose we must go back to the Middle Ages.

Over against the dominating position which the (Latin) Mass was taking, and which on the side of the people led to a serious lack of knowledge and to all kinds of other tragic consequences, Charlemagne, in the beginning of the ninth century, strongly promoted the re-introduction of religious instruction, even during the church services. The well-known catechetical materials, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, had to be explained, while the people

were expected to know them by heart. In the Southern part of what today is called Germany and also across the borders in France and Switzerland this led to the development of a kind of preaching-service (Predigdienst) immediately after the gospel-reading, so within what is called 'the Mass'. Later on this grew out into a separate preaching-service. The catechetical part of this service, however, did not always honour the text of the Apostles' Creed, but made also use of the Nicene Creed, with which the people were familiar because this creed was read during the baptismal ceremony. Consequently a number of 'mixed forms' came into being. At the same time some explanatory clauses were added. The result was that in the complete text of the liturgy of such a preaching-service—also called 'pronaus'—as we find it in one of the writings of the man who proudly called himself 'Honorius Augustodunensis Ecclesiae Presbyter et Scholasticus' (twelfth century), we read under the heading 'Fides Catholica' the following lines: *Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem, creatorem caeli et terrae et totius creaturae. Et credo in suum unigenitum Filium, Dominum nostrum, Jesum Christum. Et credo in Spiritum Sanctum.* (I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth of all creation. And I believe in His only-begotten Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. And I believe in the Holy Spirit). Then a few sentences follow wherein the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is confessed, after which the line of the creed is taken up again—though with a real 'Roman' addition: *Credo quod idem Dei Filius conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto et natus est de sancta Maria perpetuae virginis* (I believe that the same Son of God was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the holy Mary a virgin forever).

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, in the year of his death, 1503, a certain Johann Ulrich Surgant, professor at Basel, published a directory for the preaching-services—which in the meantime were held in the German language—called the *Manuale Curatorum*. Surgant did not like the use of mixed forms and returned to the old text of the Apostles' Creed—with the exception, however, of his translation of *sanctam*

*catholicam Ecclesiam*, which in accordance with a medieval tradition he rendered as *die heilige christenliche Kilch*—more about this tradition under 8. Generally speaking this liturgy served the Reformers as an example for their own church services. Therefore it is remarkable that, while Surgant influenced Zwingli most of all, the latter in his liturgy of the Lord's Supper, *Aktion oder Bruch des Nachtmals* (1525) had in his text of the Apostles' Creed: *seinen eingeborenen Sun*. Others took the same or similar liberties, as e.g. the liturgy of the Basel church, *Form und Gestalt* (1526), which simply had: *Wir glauben in syn sun, unseren herren*.

However, in Martin Bucer's *Teutcher Mesz* (Strasbourg 1524) the congregation sang *setnen einigen son*, while the Nuremberg liturgy (1525) had: *und den eynigen herrn Jhesum Christum*.

The tradition that was based on the Received Text was followed by John Calvin in the Catechism of Geneva. The French version of the Apostles' Creed, quoted in No. 16, had *son filz unique*, while the 1545 Latin edition literally quoted the RT: *filium eius unicum*. The brief catechism for younger children, *Institutio Puerili*, which was added to the Genevan Catechism, has the same: *son filz unique*. Calvin's interpretation of these words—in No. 46 of the larger Catechism—is similar to that in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 13.

The first Scottish Catechism, written by John Craig (1581), has also *only Son*, as the *The A.B.C. or a Catechism for Young Children* (1641) and *The New Catechism* (1644) of the Kirk of Scotland. The version of the Apostles' Creed quoted in A.A. Hodge's *The Confession of Faith*, has the same.

Our conclusion, then, is that the tradition set after the Reformation, i.e. by the Heidelberg Catechism, whereby *only Son* is replaced by *only-begotten Son*, originates from the catechesis of the Middle Ages which did not always do honour to the RT but took many liberties. John Calvin—who certainly can not be charged with reducing the Biblical doctrine of Jesus Christ as the Son of God—and those who followed him in this respect,

remained faithful to the RT. At the background of that was Calvin's desire to express unity of faith with the ancient Christian church. We should show the same desire by, as much as possible, confessing our common faith in the same formulation. Ancient texts are not sacrosanct, but should only be essentially altered as soon as they are proved to deviate in any respect from the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures.

Finally, a number of member churches have adopted not only the Apostles' Creed but also the Nicene Creed, which has *monogenes* (*only-begotten*).

The Dutch Churches in their General Synod 1975 have stated that in the liturgy of the afternoon or evening services making confession with the words of the Apostles' Creed can be replaced by the use of the Nicene Creed. This means that the word *only-begotten* (*eniggeboren*) can be heard from time to time.

5. In some respects the language of APP is somewhat obsolete. So in our *Lord, which, sitteth on, thence, the quick and the Holy Ghost*.

As for this divine name, also the Westminster Confession of Faith has it (II 3; IV 1; VIII 2; XVIII 3; XXI 2; XXVIII 2,6), and the Larger Catechism (9, 10, 11, 37, 42, 58, 83, 152, 161, 165) as well as the Shorter Catechism (6, 22, 36, 94). However, these documents also use the name *the Holy Spirit* (WC I 6; XX 1; LC 4, 72, 76, 81; SC 89), and similar names. At this point a linguistic modernization may not meet with any serious difficulties.

6. APP has *the third day he arose again from the dead*, while BP reads *On the third day He arose from the dead*. The current Dutch text has deleted the word *wederom* (*again*) from its predecessor because it is superfluous. It seems to us that the same can be said of the English word *again*, which has no longer the meaning of 'back', back to life. The idea of a return to life is included in the phrase *arose from the dead*.
7. In BP the words *I believe* (and in D *Ik geloof*) are repeated before *a holy catholic Christian Church*. This may be supported by the text in the above-mentioned book of Honortus, *Speculum Ecclesiae*, but this repeti-

tion happened to be one of the liberties taken in the Middle Ages. Restoring the original will underline the close relationship between the Holy Spirit and the church, and show the line of the history of salvation which is followed in the Apostles' Creed.

8. The RT has no articles in the last four lines. Whereas BP has the article *the* in the last three lines, APP seems to be more correct when it uses the same article also for *the holy catholic church*.

The Dutch version also has the article *een* (*a*) before the church, no articles at all in *vergeving van de zonden* and *opstanding van het vlees*, while it again uses *een* in *een eeuwig leven*. It seems to us that the use of the definite article *the* (in Dutch: *de* and *het* respectively) the stronger refers to the revelation of these graces in the Holy Scriptures on which the confession of faith is based and to which it responds.

9. Following a tradition that originates from the European continent BP has inserted the word *Christian* in the article on the church. The Dutch version, then, also has the word *Christelijke*. This is a rather old tradition indeed. However, the tradition of maintaining the Received Text is much older and in our opinion the correct one. D—on which the current text of BP is based—goes back to the original German version of the Heidelberg Catechism, which in Lord's Day 7 says: *Ich glaub in den heiligen Geist, etne heilige algemeine Christliche Kirche*. (Remarkably the Latin version has: *Credo sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam*!) This goes—partly—back to Martin Luther who in his Larger and Shorter Catechisms (1529) has: *Ich glaube eine heilige Christliche Kirche*. (The early Reformers had this in common: so Zwingli in his *Aktion oder Bruch des Nachtmals*, 1525) reads: *Die heylich, algemeine, Christlichen Kilchen*; and Leo Jud in his Catechism, 1534, has the same. However, in the Palatinate and its capital city of Heidelberg Martin Luther had still some influence at the time when the Heidelberg Catechism was written).

Luther tried to avoid misunderstanding by translating the Latin word *catholicam* by *Christliche*. The real

church should not be identified with the Church of Rome, which seemed to have the monopoly of the name *catholic*! The term *catholic*, and even the word *church*, too strongly reminded Luther of the papal church; therefore he replaced these words by *Christliche* and *Gemeinde*.

Consequently we find the same formulation in the Catechism of the London congregation of refugees, written in 1551 by John a Lasco, in the Short Catechism of Marten Micron, 1552, and in the Catechism of Emden, 1554: *een heiltge, Christelijke gemeente, de heilige, Christelijke gemeente, and een heilige, Christelijke Kerk* respectively.

The word *catholicam*—now belonging to the Received Text, but most likely added at the end of the fourth century under Eastern influence upon the Western Church; up till then the baptismal creed simply confessed the *holy church*—was translated as *karstine* in a text from the thirteenth century (*die heilige karstine Kerke* (Middle Dutch language).

This tradition obtained a firm foothold in particular in those circles in which the conviction was kept alive that the 'preaching-service' (Predigt-dienst) in the vernacular should at least supplement the Mass, which was administered in Latin, and therefore easily led to a kind of automatism, as if the mere act of attending Mass could promote one's salvation. The aim of these special services, then, was to give the people attending religious instruction. It was no wonder, then, that Johann Ulrich Sargant (see under 6.1.2—4) translated *sanctam ecclesiam catholicam* by *die heilige Christenliche Kitch*.

In a sense these Predig-dienste have done some preparatory work for the Reformation. The Reformers were well aware of this institution. They even borrowed some elements from its liturgy, called the 'pronaus'. However, over against the claim of the papal church Martin Luther had the more reason to stress the fact that the church of God is not the same as the body that called itself by the name 'church' and proudly added to it the adjective *catholic*. The real church con-

sists of the congregations, the people—not of the papal clergy and its hierarchy! Unfortunately Luther hereby gave reason to the Church of Rome to monopolize the word *catholic*! Now all this may explain the replacement of *catholic* by *Christian*. However, the German edition of the Heidelberg Catechism has both words, *al-gemeine* and *Christliche*. This means that the word *catholicam* has not only been replaced by *Christliche*, but at the same time has been re-introduced and translated by *algemein* (*universal, general*)!

The reason of this double rendering of the original word is obscure.

However, this is the weak historical ground on which the 'continental' tradition rests—a tradition which for the first time in the English-speaking world was introduced and adopted by BP.

John Calvin, who wanted the church of his own days to return to the doctrine and practices of the ancient church, went behind this medieval tradition back to the Received Text. His Genevan Catechism of 1542 has in the French version: *le croy la sainte Eglise catholique*, and in its Latin form: *sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam*.

The word *catholicam* is not used in Zacharias Ursinus' *Catechism Minor*, 1562, either—which is the more remarkable because Ursinus is the main author of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Even the 'Schilders-edition' of the Heidelberg Catechism (1611), which most likely was used at the well known Synod of Dordrecht 1618-19, has: *Ick gheloove een heylighe alghemeyne Kercke*.

So not every one on the European continent followed the example set at Heidelberg. The French, Italian, Portugese, and Spanish texts have abstained from inserting the word *Christian*. As for Great Britain, the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of England in its Catechism and baptismal form has *the holy Catholick Church*, as has the Appendix to the Shorter Catechism of Westminster.



Immigrants from The Netherlands in the United States of America adopted for their church life the old tradition of the Received Text.

The member church in Korea does not have the word *Christian* in its text of the Apostles' Creed either.

In the text which your Committee recommends to the member churches (see under 7.1 of this Report) the word *Christian* will be absent. The first reason for this is that Holy Scripture never speaks of the *Christian Church*. The biblical language—which in our confessional standards should be adopted as much as possible—is different. Scripture mostly speaks of the *church of God* (I Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; Galatians 1:13; II Timothy 3:5, 15 see also I Corinthians 12:28), or of the *churches of God* (I Corinthians 11:16; I Thessalonians 2:14; II 1:4). In I Thessalonians 2:14 we read about the *churches of God in Christ Jesus*; in Galatians 1:22 of the *churches of Judea that are in Christ* (RSV incorrectly has *Churches of Christ*). Once only we read the phrase *church of Christ* (Romans 16:16), but even this is not identical with *Christian church*.

That same kind of language, *the church of God*, is used by the 'Apostolic Fathers'. We better follow them in this respect.

Besides, in the Apostles' Creed the emphasis is put on the work of the Holy Spirit: the church is mentioned among the actions and benefits of the Holy Spirit—which is confirmed when in the Nicene Creed the relationship is shown between the Holy Spirit and the church when it says: *I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins*; a relationship which will become the clearer as soon as we realize that the structure of the Nicene Creed and its repeated use of the word *one* shows that it is based on what the apostle Paul wrote on the Holy Spirit and the church in Ephesians chapter 4.

Another remark which your Committee would like to make is that it is not clear whether the word *Christian* is intended to refer to Christ or to the Christians. It seems to us that in the medieval tradition *Christliche* pointed to the true Christians who together form the

church. Anyhow, as for Martin Luther it may be obvious that he had not so much Christ in mind but the Christians. In the German version of the creed he has *ein heilige Christenheit*, and in a treatise *On the Councils and the Church* (1539) he wrote that the church is a multitude or assembly of people who are Christians.

If this is indeed the correct interpretation of the word *Christian*—to your Committee it seems to be so—the word is repeated in the next line where its synonym is used, *saints*. This makes the insertion of the word in the text of the Apostles' Creed the more undesirable.

Finally, the text of the creeds is usually printed under the heading 'Ecumenical Creeds' as is done in the *Book of Praise 1984*. This 'ecumene' is not only a matter of 'all places' but also of 'all ages'. Why would we make our confession of our faith in a way that differs from that of the early generation of our fellow Christians? Our respect for the Scriptural way in which they confessed their faith must be shown in our joining them in this confession in the same formulation as much as is possible.

10. The Word *Amen* in APP and BP is missing in D. Your Committee wonders whether it is authentic.

## **6.2 The Nicene Creed**

### **6.2.1 The International Consultation Text**

1. This text has—no less than three times—*We believe*. This is what the original Greek text says. The Latin (liturgical) version as used in the *Missale Romanum*—also called the 'Textus Principalis'—is in the singular, having the word *Credo* once only. The 'Textus Collatus', being a literal translation from the Greek, is in the plural.
2. The fact that the ICET based its translation on the Greek text may be explained by its relationship to the World Council of Churches which includes large churches from the East.
3. The explanation given in *Prayers We Have in Common* of the *Almighty* that it is a noun and not an adjective.

may be applicable to the Greek text but not for the (Latin) RT.

4. The line of *all that is, seen and unseen* is a somewhat free rendering of what in the Latin text reads as *visibilia et invisibilia*.
5. The second *We believe* may be a stylistic repetition according to *Prayers We Have in Common*, the RT simply has *Et (And)*.
6. ICET has *only* for *unigenitum* (*monogene* in the Greek text), and gives the following explanations: '*begotten*'. This word occurs three times in the Greek to describe the Son's unique relationship with the Father as distinct from the mere process of birth. The Latin text dropped the formal equivalent in line 7 (*genitum*), and has *natum ex Patre* which seems less appropriate than its use of *natur* with *Maria* in the Apostles' Creed. It was also considered to be sufficient to use *begotten* twice in English: it was dropped in line 6 as unnecessary and restored in line 7 to distinguish the truth conveyed by the Greek from any idea that the Son was created in time, or alternatively born in eternity. However, this important term can definitely not be dropped as unnecessary. It supplements *unicum* in the Apostles' Creed.  
(It is true that in the RT there are three partly-different words in this line and in the following lines; and that it would be open to misunderstanding if we would translate *natum* by *born*—as we translate the same word in the Apostles' Creed for Christ's birth from the virgin Mary. Three times the word *begotten* in a few successive lines may sound somewhat monotonous, but seems to be unavoidable).
7. *Ante omnia saecula* has been translated by *eternally* because, according to the explanation given in *Prayers We Have in Common*, it indicates an 'ongoing process'. However, this is a clear example of 'hineininterpretieren'. The text does not say this.
8. The words *God from God* are missing in the Greek text. In this respect ICET follows the Latin text.
9. *Of one Being with the Father* is the translation of what in the Greek text is the well known term *homousios*.

Latin has *consubstantiallem Patri*. In this context many systematic theologians use the term *substance*. Together with some other translations, we follow this example.

10. *Through him* is the beginning of a new sentence. In the original the sentence simply continues.
11. The same must be said of *For us*.
12. It is interesting when in the booklet *Prayers We Have in Common* we read that for men alternatives were sought to avoid the exclusive use of one gender, but the suggested variants tended to weaken the main statement. Here the spirit of times was looking around the corner! ICET's successor, ELLC, has among its 'Guidelines for the Revisions' of the International Consultation Texts this one: *The revision should show sensitivity to the need of inclusive language*. In the information which your Committee received it somewhere says that *there is need for attention to sexist language, an obvious one being line 13 of the Nicene Creed: 'For us men and for our salvation'*. The solutions being proposed are 'For us all' and 'For us and for our salvation'. (See for ELLC sub 2.2.3).
13. The choice of the rendering *by the power of the Holy Spirit* is defended as follows: *The phrase safeguards the operation of the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation, making it clear that no carnal activity is implied*. This may be so, yet the RT simply has the word *de*, which in this case should be translated not by *from* but by *by*, because the next clause *ex Maria virgine* must be rendered as *from the virgin Mary*. (See for the doctrinal implications this Report sub. 6.1.1—4).
14. ICET has *suffered death*, while RT has *passus* (literally: *suffered*). However, patristic literature produces proof that Christ's death was understood and confessed as to be included in His sufferings. So e.g. in Melito of Sardes' *Paschal Homily* and Hippolytus's *Apostolic Tradition*. The ICET translation, then, is correct and to be adopted. In the text of the Apostles' Creed, however, special mention is made of Christ's death, so that the rendering *suffered death* regards the Nicene creed only.
15. For *rose again* see 6.1.1—7 and 6.1.2—6.

16. Just as in the Apostles' Creed ICET has *is seated*, which bewords Christ's glory better than *sits*.
17. The fact that the Filioque clause *and the Son* has been put in brackets is striking. The explanation given in the booklet *Prayers We Have in Common* says that it *was not considered to be within the province of this Consultation to make recommendations as to its excision or retention*. Here is another typical World Council of Churches compromise!
18. With the words *With the Father* another new sentence is started; also in the next line with *He has spoken*. We can not raise any fundamental objections against this linguistic modernization of the translated text. Its necessity, however, is questionable.
19. We prefer *age* above *world* in the last line.

#### 6.2.2 Texts used by member churches

1. Both BP and D use the singular, therein following the Latin text of the Missale Romanum. The text recommended by our Committee is based on the original Greek text and on the Latin Textus Collatus (see sub 6.2.1.1).
2. The addition of the word *and* to *all things visible and invisible* in BP suggests that something new is mentioned. However, these words are an apposition to *heaven and earth*. D is correct in this respect.
3. BP has *before all worlds*. D *voor alle eeuwen* (before all ages). We prefer the latter.
4. BP has three times *of in God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God*. D has *uit (from)*. *From* seems to be stronger.
5. *Very God* may be close to the Latin *Deum verum de Deo vero*, and also to the Westminster Confession (VIII-2), but the more contemporary *true* is in conformance with Heidelberg Catechism Lord's 5 No. 15, and 6 No.'s 16-18, also with No. 35 in Lord's Day 14.
6. BP: *being of one substance with* is conform the Latin *consubstantialem*. It is parallel to *of one substance... with the Father* in Westminster Confession of Faith

VII-2, which is the traditional English translation of the Greek term *homouousios*.

7. BP and D—the latter even more strongly—have split up the long sentence on God the Son into a number of shorter sentences. This may be in accordance with the requirements of these modern days (or should we say: with its weaknesses?). However, consistency requires that the very first words which typify the whole statement as a creed, are repeated—as is done in BP in *And I believe in the Holy Spirit* and *And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church*—if this modern trend is to be followed.
8. *We look for* is in our opinion somewhat weak as a rendering of *Expectamus*.
9. For *the world to come* see under 6.2.1-20.

### **6.3 The Athanasian Creed**

#### **6.3.1 Numbering**

We follow the numbering of the Roman Breviary. BP's numbering of 44, and D's of 40 rest on different traditions.

#### **6.3.2 Texts used by member churches**

1. BP starts with the Phrase *Whosoever will be saved*. This is an inadequate translation of the Latin *Quicumque vult salvus esse*.
2. *And the catholic faith* in BP neglects the word *autem* (3). D has *het algemeen geloof nu...* (*The Catholic Faith, then...*).
3. In (6) we prefer the translation *is one and the same* for *una est divinitas*. BP has here too literal a translation (*The Godhead... is all one*).
4. In (8) - (10) the RT has nowhere the word *est* (*is*); the BP text follows this line. However, insertion of the word *is* is desirable.
5. In (9) - (12) *immensus* reads in BP *incomprehensible*. The Latin word, however, includes more, referring e.g. also to God's glory. In accordance with Article 1 of the Belgic Confession of Faith we translate by *infinite*.

6. *Sed unus est Deus* in (16) has inadequately been translated in BP (*but one God*) and in D (*maar één Here*), the translated to be: *but there is one God*.
7. *Verity* in BP's No. 19, being a literal translation of the Latin *veritas*, is obsolete.
8. The same can be said of *None is afore, or after another* (25). Better is: *There is no before or after*.
9. BP's *the whole three persons* (26) is again anglicized Latin.
10. For the word *will* in (28) see sub 1.
11. *Fideliter* in the RT (29) must be translated by *faithfully*. *Rightly* in BP is too weak. *Oprecht* (*sincerely*) in D is too subjective.
12. The word *ergo* (30)—in D: *nu*—has been overlooked in BP.
13. The same applies to *partier* (*equally*) in BP and D.
14. BP has in (31) *worlds* and *and world*. In particular when the word *saeculum* is used in relation to Christ's birth from Mary, this *world* is not meant as a geographic term but is indicating the fact that Christ was born from Mary in history, in the time—over against *before all ages*. Therefore *ages* and *age* must be preferred.
15. In (32) it is desirable to maintain the word *subsisting* from BP. It reminds us of *substantia* in (31) and in the Nicene Creed. We fully agree with Gerald Bray when in his book *Creeds, Councils & Christ* he writes: *Translating ancient theological texts into modern idiom is not easy, especially since our language is not attuned to the theological subtleties of classical Christian thought. Faced with having to make the awkward choice between strict accuracy and easy intelligibility, the translator is sure to fall between stools at some point or other.... The creeds were intended to be precise statements of faith, and loyalty to them demands that we respect this intention.*
16. D is in (32)—in D: 30—losing the term *rationabili* when it translates by *een menselijke ziel en een menselijk lichaam* (*a human soul and a human body*).

17. In (33) BP has *as touching*. More up to date is *as regards*.
18. *Autem* is lost in BP (35).
19. *Omnino* in (36) has been translated by *altogether* in BP. This word strengthens *autem* in the previous line, referring to the words which follow. Therefore we recommend the translation *One, definitely not by confusion of substance*. D is correct when it says: *Eén is Hij, volstrekt niet door vermenging van naturen*.
20. The double subject in (37) (*soul and flesh*) requires *are* unlike in Latin, from which the singular *is* in BP originates.
21. For *rose again* and *rise again* in BP 38 and 41, see this Report under 6.1.2-6.
22. *The third day* is in BP 38 and D 36 an addition to RT.
23. For the translation of *sedet* in (39) see under 6.1.1-8.
24. *Those who* (41) is to be preferred above *they that* twice in BP 43.
25. *Firmiterque* in RT (42) is overlooked in BP 44.

## 7. RECOMMENDED TEXTS

### 7.1 The Apostles' Creed

Your Committee proposes to recommend to the member churches the following text of the Apostles' Creed:

- I 1 *I believe in God the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth;*
- II 2 *And in Jesus Christ,  
His only son, Our Lord;*
- 3 *Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary;*
- 4 *suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried;  
He descended into hell;*
- 5 *on the third day He arose from the dead;*
- 6 *He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the  
Father almighty;*
- 7 *from there He will come to judge the living and  
the dead.*



- III 8 I believe in the Holy Spirit;  
 9 the holy catholic church,  
     the communion of saints;  
 10 the forgiveness of sins;  
 11 the resurrection of the body;  
 12 and the life everlasting.

## 7.2 The Nicene Creed

Your Committee proposes to recommend to the member churches the following text of the Nicene Creed:

*We believe in one God, the Father almighty,  
 maker of heaven and earth,  
 of all things visible and invisible.  
 And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
 the only-begotten Son of God,  
 begotten from the Father before all ages;  
 God from God, light from light,  
 true God from true God,  
 begotten, not made,  
 of one substance with the Father;  
 by Whom all things were made;  
 Who for us men and for our salvation  
 came down from the heavens  
 and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit from the  
 virgin Mary  
 and was made man,  
 was also crucified for us under Pontius Pilate,  
 suffered death and was buried;  
 and on the third day He arose, according to the  
 Scriptures,  
 and ascended into the heavens  
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
 and will come back with glory to judge the living and  
 the dead;  
 Whose Kingdom will have no end.  
 And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life,  
 Who proceeds from the Father and the Son;  
 Who with the Father and the Son together is  
 worshiped and glorified;  
 Who has spoken through the prophets;  
 and one holy catholic and apostolic church;  
 We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of  
 sins;*

*We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,  
and to the life of the age to come.*

*Amen.*

### **7.3 Athanasian Creed**

Your Committee proposes to recommend to the member churches the following text of the Athanasian Creed:

- (1) Whosoever desires to be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith.*
- (2) Except anyone keeps it whole and unharmed, he will without any doubt perish everlastingly.*
- (3) The catholic faith, then, is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity,*
- (4) neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance.*
- (5) For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Spirit,*
- (6) but the Godhead of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is one and the same, their glory equal, their majesty co-eternal.*
- (7) Such as the Father, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit:*
- (8) uncreated is the Father, uncreated the Son, uncreated the Holy Spirit;*
- (9) infinite is the Father, infinite the Son, infinite the Holy Spirit;*
- (10) eternal is the Father, eternal the Son, eternal the Holy Spirit;*
- (11) and yet they are not three Eternals, but there is one Eternal.*
- (12) Just as they are not three Uncreated, not three Infinites, but there is one Uncreated and one Infinite.*
- (13) In the same way is the Father almighty, the Son almighty, the Holy Spirit almighty;*
- (14) and yet they are not three Almightyies, but there is one Almighty.*
- (15) Thus the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God;*
- (16) and yet they are not three Gods, but there is one God.*

- (17) *Thus the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord;*
- (18) *and yet they are not three Lords, but there is one Lord;*
- (19) *Because, just as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge each Person singly to be both God and Lord,*
- (20) *so we are by the catholic religion forbidden to say that there are three Gods and three Lords.*
- (21) *The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten;*
- (22) *The Son is from the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten;*
- (23) *The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.*
- (24) *So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons, one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.*
- (25) *And in this Trinity there is no before or after, no greater or minor,*
- (26) *but all three Persons are fully co-eternal with each other and co-equal.*
- (27) *So that in all things, as has already been said, the Trinity in Unity, as well as the Unity in Trinity is to be worshiped.*
- (28) *Therefore, who desires to be saved, he should thus think of the Trinity.*
- (29) *Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation, that he also should faithfully believe the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- (30) *Now, the right faith is that we should believe and acknowledge that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both God and man equally.*
- (31) *He is God from the substance of the Father, begotten before all ages, and He is man from the substance of His mother, born in this age,*
- (32) *perfect God, and perfect man of a rational soul and human flesh subsisting;*
- (33) *equal to the Father as regards His divinity, and inferior to the Father as regards His humanity;*
- (34) *Who, although He is God and man, yet is not two, but one Christ.*

- (35) one, however, not by the conversion of His divinity into flesh, but by taking up the humanity into God;
- (36) one, definitely not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person;
- (37) for just as the rational soul and the flesh are one man, so God and man are one Christ;
- (38) Who has suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, arose from the dead,
- (39) ascended into the heavens, is seated at the right hand of the Father,
- (40) from where He will come to judge the living and the dead, at Whose coming all people will arise with their bodies and will give an account of their own works;
- (41) and those who have done good will go into everlasting life, but those who have done evil into everlasting fire.
- (42) *This is the catholic faith.*  
*Unless someone has faithfully and firmly believed it, he cannot be saved.*

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## 9. ABBREVIATIONS

ACOL : The Australian Consultation on Liturgy  
 APP : Appendix to the Shorter Catechism  
 BP : Book of Praise 1984  
 D : Dutch version of the creeds  
 ELLC : English Language Liturgical Consultation  
 ICEL : International Committee on English in the Liturgy  
 ICET : International Consultation on English Texts  
 ICRC : International Conference of Reformed Churches  
 LC : Larger Catechism  
 RT : Received Text of the creeds  
 SC : Shorter Catechism  
 WC : Westminster Confession of Faith.

## APPENDIX

*After what we expected to be the finalizing of our report, and just before its text would be sent to the ICRC secretary, it became clear that a letter was lost between Korea and Australia. This letter included a number of proposed additions and amendments and also some reservations made by one of the committee members. It therefore became necessary to add an Appendix.*

### Additions and corrections

Ad 3.4.1 line 8 from bottom: The new sentence should read: Most likely it was based on some local baptismal creed, e.g. that of Jerusalem (Cyrill).

Ad 4.2.3.6: This should read as follows: *Having buried (Him)* replaces *was buried*. The Korean version has a temporal clause in stead of a confession regarding a part of Christ's salvation work.

Ad 6.1.2.4: to be added: The Korean text has (in translation): only Son.

Ad 6.1.1.1: The third line should read: the word *Credo* once only; the plural having been replaced by the singular because this creed was used in the *traditio symboli* and the *redditio symboli*. The 'Textus Collatus' being a literal translation from the Greek, is in the plural.

Ad 6.1.2.9: page 18 line 5 should read: The word *christianam* is not used in Zacharias Ursinus' *Catechismus Minor* (1562) and his *Catechismus Major* (approximately the same time) either—which is the more remarkable because Ursinus is the main author of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Ad 6.3.2.16: to be added: The term *rationabilis* was intentionally chosen to oppose Apollinarianism, which sometimes taught that Christ had an 'animalis' human soul, while His divinity would have taken the place of the 'rationabilis' soul. The term *rational soul* may be far from felicitous, giving the impression that being rational is one of the characteristics of the soul—which is far from biblical thought. The term *Human soul* is closer to the Scriptural language but using it we lose the above mentioned apologetic element.

#### **Reservations**

One of the committee-members, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, has made some reservations. They regard:

1.1 and 1.2: He is not sure whether it is feasible to have one form of the ecumenical creeds between the member churches but co-operated in order to establish more unity between the churches.

6.1.2.9: To his knowledge the Hungarian text has the word *Christian* (page 18 line 10). He disagrees with the proposal regarding the word *Christian* and with the arguments on which it is based.

March 1989: J. Faber, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
N.H. Gootjes, Pusan, South Korea  
G. van Rongen, Kelmscott (WA), Australia

## Rules for Inter-Church Relations

*by Dr. J. Visscher*

At the Edinburgh meeting of the ICRC attention was paid to the matter of inter-church relations; however, a shortage of time hindered the movement toward consensus and agreement. As a consequence of that it was deemed fitting to attempt to continue the discussion at this meeting of the Conference and to see whether more progress could be made.

What is the aim? The basic aim is to see whether it is possible to come to a common set of rules to govern the inter-church relations between Reformed and Presbyterian churches. At present the predominant **Presbyterian approach** is to employ what is called a "fraternal relationship" position. Its basic rules are:

- a. the exchange of delegates at each other's Assemblies;
- b. exchange of the Minutes of these Assemblies;
- c. consultation in matters of mutual concern.

Although it may not be specified in these rules, visiting ministers can be and often are invited to preach the Word.

The predominant **Reformed approach** is to employ what is called a "correspondence relationship". Its basic rules include:

- a. taking mutual heed regarding each other's doctrine, polity, discipline and liturgy;
- b. inviting delegates to each other's Synod, as well as exchanging Acts of the same;
- c. informing each other of changes made to confession, polity and liturgy;
- d. accepting each other's members and inviting each other's ministers to preach the Word;
- e. giving account to each other regarding relations with third parties.

To give you some idea of the actual wording of the above, I cite here the rules for correspondence or ecclesiastical fellowship used by the **Canadian Reformed Churches**:

- "a. To take mutual heed that the corresponding Churches do not deviate from the Reformed Confession in doctrine, liturgy, Church government and discipline.
- b. To forward to each other the agenda and decisions of the broader Assemblies and to admit each other's delegates to these Assemblies as advisors.

- c. To inform each other concerning changes of, or additions to, the Confession, Church Order and Liturgical Forms, while the corresponding Churches pledge to express themselves on the question whether such changes or additions are considered acceptable. Regarding proposals for changes in the Three Forms of Unity, the sister Churches abroad shall receive ample opportunity (at least three years) to forward their judgment before binding decisions will be made.
- d. To accept each other's attestations and to permit each other's ministers to preach the Word and to administer the sacraments.
- e. To give account to each other regarding correspondence with third parties."

(Acts 1962, Art.139; Acts 1968, Art.79, 6, b)

An examination of the different relationships by Presbyterian and Reformed churches indicates that the former tend to be more flexible and less demanding in their inter-church relations. The latter tend to be more structured and comprehensive. Yet there are some **common elements** in both frameworks:

- underlying both is the presupposition that one is dealing with a true church of our Lord;
- underlying both is the conviction that unity in Christ should take on some tangible form and should be promoted;
- underlying both is also the awareness that these relationships need to be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis with a view to faithfulness to Scripture and confession;
- exchanging of documents of the broadest assemblies; and invitations to send delegates;
- extension of common courtesies in the areas of preaching, and perhaps membership transfer.

The **differing elements** are in the fact that the Reformed churches tend to stipulate matters to a greater degree, as for example in the matter of taking mutual heed which is sometimes said to apply to doctrine, government, discipline and liturgy. Then there is also the matter of prior consultation when it comes to changes made to confessions, polity and liturgy, as well as the matter of giving account in the case of third parties. The consequence of all this is that Reformed rules tend to be viewed as quite

extensive and perhaps too idealistic and demanding in terms of application and fulfillment.

For a considerable time the Reformed churches present at this Conference have been wrestling with these Rules and wondering how to alter them in such a way that, while the basic structure remains intact, they might yet become more amiable to Presbyterian churches, as well as more realistic in terms of application among Reformed churches too. The **Reformed Churches in the Netherlands** are currently proposing the following:

- “1. The churches will pay heed to each other’s doctrine, church government, discipline and liturgy;
2. The churches will receive one another’s representatives at their Assemblies/General Synods and invite them to serve as advisers;
3. The churches will inform one another of the decisions taken at these Assemblies/General Synods by exchanging Minutes/Acts or at least by forwarding those decisions which are relevant to the churches concerned;
4. In case of changes in or additions to confessions, church order or liturgical forms, if these are of a doctrinal nature the church concerned will lay these changes before the corresponding churches, so that consultations can take place, if considered necessary;
5. The churches accept each other’s letters of testimony and consequently admit members of the churches concerned to the sacraments on presentation of such letters;
6. The churches admit, in principle, one another’s ministers into the pulpit, taking into account rules which have already been agreed upon in the churches concerned;
7. The churches will inform each other regarding new relationships with third parties.”

The Dutch deputies are also considering the possibility of applying some of these rules in certain instances and not others, as well as recognizing a fraternal relationship if no agreement can be reached concerning a relationship based on their above-mentioned rules. In this way they are attempting to build a greater degree of flexibility into their inter-church relations, as well as recognizing that some churches do not see the urgency of such a stringent bond.

The consequence of such a two-pronged approach is indeed greater flexibility, but at what expense? Does it not lead to a two-

tiered system of sister churches or fellowshiping churches? Does it do full justice to the biblical teaching on the unity of the church? Does it perhaps lead to a confusing situation in which all sorts of different tailor-made rules apply? Let us openly discuss the consequences of such an approach.

The other possibility is to continue to strive for a common set of rules. Such an attempt was made at the **Constituent Assembly in Groningen 1982** where delegates from Australia, Canada, Ireland, Korea, the Netherlands, Scotland and South Africa met informally to consider this matter. The result of that meeting was that the following re-formulation emerged as being more palatable:

- "a. to take mutual heed that the sister churches do not deviate from the Reformed Confessions in doctrine and practice;
- b. to exchange Acts/Minutes of each other's Assembly/Synod and to invite delegates to each other's Assembly/Synod;
- c. to inform each regarding changes in confession and polity;
- d. to exchange attestations or certificates of membership;
- e. to allow each other's ministers to preach the Word and to administer the sacraments;
- f. to inform each other regarding relationships with third parties."

Recently the deputies of the **Free Reformed Churches in South Africa** proposed a somewhat different redaction to their Synod 87-88:

- "1. take heed that the sister churches do not deviate from the Christian doctrine and discipline, as required in the Holy Scripture and recorded in the Reformed confessions;
- 2. inform one another of intended changes in their confessional documents;
- 3. forward the agenda of their General Synods or Assemblies to their sister churches with an invitation to send delegates;
- 4. forward the Acts or Minutes of their General Synods or Assemblies to their sister churches, with a summary in the language used in correspondence;
- 5. accept each another's attestations or certificates of membership;

6. allow one another's ministers to preach the Word and to administer the sacraments, when invited by a local church council;
7. inform one another of existing and intended official ecclesiastical relationships with other churches or ecumenical organizations."

**Proposal**

On the basis of the above, I would propose to discuss a re-structuring along the following lines:

1. to take mutual heed that the fellowshiping churches do not deviate from the Christian doctrine and practice as taught in the Holy Scriptures and summarized in the Reformed confessions;
2. to inform each other of changes proposed in doctrine and church government;
3. to forward the Acts/Minutes of each other's Assemblies/Synods and to invite delegates to each other's Assemblies/Synods;
4. to accept attestations or certificates of membership and to permit each other's ministers to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, when invited by a local church council or session;
5. to inform each other regarding relationships with third parties and membership in ecumenical organizations.

Please note that I have used the term "fellowshiping churches". I use it because our Synods have lately been speaking about "Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship" and not "Rules for Correspondence". Also I have left out any reference to "discipline" and "church government" since that is mentioned in the "Reformed Confessions". Other changes are readily apparent.

# Section III

*Conference Papers*



## Nehemiah the Rebuilder

*by Prof. C. Graham*

I have two reasons for having a special interest in Nehemiah—one of long-standing and the other of much more recent date. The one of longstanding derives from the fact that at my ordination to the ministry many years ago the sermon preached was from a text in Nehemiah—Chap. 2:17—“come and let us build up the walls of Jerusalem, that we be no longer a reproach”. The reason of more recent date is that I recently visited Jerusalem and gazed at parts of the walls of the ancient city—an experience that made history live in my mind. If the text at my ordination was used to arouse the Church to the need to attend to its own infrastructure so as to silence reproach from unbelievers, the sight of the walls in their thickness and height portrayed the difficulty of the task and also how enduring is work that is well done.

No doubt both of these motifs are still worth developing. Few will deny that, in the eyes of the outside world, the Church of God today is in a great deal of disarray. The structural disunity of the Church is one thing and a thing so obvious and so embarrassing to those whose ideal is of the Church of God, like Jerusalem “compactly built together”—that they are ready to listen to ecumenists who opt for synthetic walls. But the disarray of the Church is more serious than that of structural brokenness. It stems from repudiation of the faith, from rejection of the standards of living that express holiness of life. By that token the task of rebuilding is that much more difficult and that much more worth while. For it is when we have a community espousing the faith as it is in Jesus, and living the life that accords with godliness that we have the true city of God—the city set on a hill that cannot be hidden; the city that by its orderliness of life, its beauty of aspect, the contentment and happiness of its citizens, will silence the reproaches of the enemy. But this is not an easy achievement. This involves digging down to foundational truth: rejection of the accumulated rubbish of falsehood and vain tradition: confronting hostility within and without. It requires clarity of vision, assurance of calling, perseverance, alertness, diligence and prayerfulness and total dependence upon God. That is the formula for rebuilding an enduring structure. That is the pattern which Nehemiah exemplifies.

In our study of the book I propose to develop three lines. First to sketch the historical setting; then to summarize the narrative and finally to highlight some of the perennial lessons of the narrative.

### **I. The Setting**

Cast your mind back to the end of the 2nd Book of Kings and you recall a very sad story. It is the story of the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonian army. The first phase was when Jehoiakim was king and he and most of the nobility of Israel were taken as captives to Babylon. There was a second phase about eleven years later which completed the devastation of Jerusalem and left it in ruins. Prophets like Jeremiah had foretold such an outcome and laid the blame squarely upon the sinful idolatry of Israel. But just as prophets foretold the desolation they foretold also that there would be a return of some of the people to reinstate the worship of God in Jerusalem. Isaiah had spoken of a king Cyrus who though a pagan would yet be the servant of God to encourage a return and Jeremiah had been sure that though the captivity would endure for generations God planned the return of his people and had set a time limit to the captivity.

The great imperial power which overthrew Israel was that of Babylon under king Nebuchadnezzar. But though Babylon was famous throughout the known world for its riches and splendour its power was not to endure. A rival and ultimately a conquering empire under Cyrus—the Persian Empire—and in the year 539 B.C. Babylon fell. This meant that the centre of power moved from Babylon to Susa and the history of the Jewish exiles then makes us familiar with the names of Darius the Mede whom Daniel served; with Xerxes or Ahasuerus who figures in the Book of Esther and also Artaxerxes (464-423) whom Nehemiah served. It is generally reckoned that Nehemiah went from Susa to Jerusalem about the year 445 B.C. Already at least two groups had returned from captivity, some under Sheshbazzar and some with Ezra. Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem thirteen years after Ezra.

If there were peaceful conditions in the middle East today the journey from Susa—in modern Iran—to Jerusalem would be matter of an afternoon's flight. But in those far off days the journey was long, dangerous and wearisome. Nehemiah set out from Susa which would be a few hundred miles north-east of modern Basra. He proceeded on a route which took him some

way south of Babylon (which is south of modern Baghdad) and from there by a longish arc he approached Damascus from the north. Then he went south through Samaria to Jerusalem.

No doubt he travelled with a camel train and probably with horses and donkeys to act also as beasts of burden. Not all the territories he passed through were administered by people who like the idea of Jerusalem being rebuilt. This was particularly true of the governor of Samaria of whom we shall hear more when we turn to the narrative.

Nowadays we talk a bit about jet lag when journeys such as Nehemiah's which then took about four months are now covered in a matter of hours. There would have been no fear of jet lag in Nehemiah's case and I doubt if he was involved in change of time zone. Nevertheless one cannot but note with admiration how quickly after his arrival in Jerusalem he got down to business. He immediately introduced himself to those who mattered and then after three days began his physical survey. And that takes us on to consider the story he tells.

## **II. Narrative Summary**

### **Chapter 1**

"If I forget you, O Jerusalem may my right hand forget its skill: May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy". From the time of the captivity of the Jews in Babylon this was the nostalgic song that expressed both the religious desolations and the fervent longing of the pious Israelite. As we are introduced to Nehemiah at the beginning of his book we can readily understand how frequently such words as these would be on his lips. For Jerusalem symbolized the departed glory of Israel. There God set his name as the God of Israel. There had been the temple which Solomon had dedicated to God and concerning which he had prayed for the people who because of disobedience had been taken captive—"If they have a change of heart... and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul... and pray to you towards the land you gave their fathers towards the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for you Name, then from heaven your dwelling place hear their prayer and their plea and uphold their cause and forgive your people..." All of this made Nehemiah eager to get the latest information about the state of things in Jerusalem and one can readily appreciate how promptly he would arrange to meet

with anyone who could give him such information. But the information he got from Hanani was not to his comfort. On the contrary it occasioned him great distress. The report was of a city in ruins and its inhabitants in great trouble. Nehemiah was not a man to let disappointment and distress reduce him to a state of paralysis. Something needed to be done but action must be preceded by prayer. In agony of soul he had recourse to God and his prayer is a model of adoration, entreaty, confession both personal and general, of argument with God from God's own word and request from God's help which implied on his part a resolution to do something positive towards the restoration of Jerusalem when the way should be opened by the Lord.

## **Chapter 2**

Some four months have passed (Kislev - Nisan)—no doubt a prolonged period of prayer and reflection as what ought to be done—perhaps waiting for the right moment at which to broach the subject of leave from the palace for Nehemiah. Things are, in a way, taken out of his hands—though his own demeanour and appearance are immediately responsible. What cannot God accomplish even by the appearance of his people! There was obviously some special function where king and queen were enthroned side by side. Everyone and everything was expected to demonstrate happiness—freedom from care and anxiety. It was derogatory of Majesty to be otherwise. Yet Nehemiah was and looked sad. Putting a damper on proceedings? The king noticed and questioned and that would have been a portent of doom—Nehemiah answered the question truthfully but also diplomatically (tactfully). His answer enlisted the King's sympathy. But a king's sympathy might be fleeting. Nehemiah prayed to a greater king and then declared his desire. He wanted not only leave of absence from the palace but the necessary royal authority for safe-conduct to Jerusalem and for the acquisition of the requisite materials for the work projected. How necessary this official authorization was soon became evident by the reaction of Sanballat and Tobiah. Sanballat was governor of Samaria and Nehemiah probably traversed that province. Tobiah was also an official in the service of Persia. They didn't enjoy the prospect of Jerusalem being rebuilt.

Nehemiah did not confide immediately in the Jewish leaders his full intention. First he did a recce to see how things re-

ally were. Then he addressed the rulers and others and proposed his plan of rebuilding but all in the context of divine encouragement already received. This may have been a semi-public meeting for obviously information about it was conveyed to leaders in the neighbouring provinces and they in turn sent derisory messages to Nehemiah. Nehemiah rejected their scorn and renewed his confidence in God.

### **Chapter 3**

The work begins and a list—perhaps not exhaustive—is given of those who engaged in it. Nehemiah first mentions the Highpriest to show that there was primarily religious support for the work. But not entirely all were enthusiastic. Some nobles or magnates held aloof—perhaps allowing some of their underlings to help but not breaking sweat themselves. A policy of “a foot in each camp”?

The work was regularly organized—certain portions being assigned to specific groups. Mere energy and enthusiasm was not enough. The whole operation required skillful planning and orderly execution. But given that it went steadily ahead.

### **Chapter 4**

The good progress made with the rebuilding of the walls was noted by the adversaries. They again tried ridicule and derision. The work accomplished would prove insubstantial and unstable. Even a fox jumping on the wall would bring it down. When that failed to make the builders cease, the threat of force was made. Made and meant. Nehemiah learned of it and took it seriously. He didn't underestimate the spite of his opponents. Nor did he rely only on what force he himself could muster. Again the case was committed to God. A fine example of “watch and pray”, work and pray, do all you can and trust in God. Trusting in God is not a way of opting out of responsibility but of rendering our actions effective. The defensive force was organized to keep watch—to work at the building—and to keep in touch with the various sections. Lines of communication had to be kept open—and no unnecessary risks were to be taken—no camping overnight outside the wall.

It was very demanding on energy, patience, mutual trust and readiness to put up with inconvenience and discomfort.

### **Chapter 5**

But trouble came not only from outside. There were troubles that were by the action of some within the community

pledged to build the walls. The demand that those who lived outside should come in meant that many farmers and agriculture workers had more or less to abandon their fields. This meant loss of crops which led to shortage of food which in turn led to high prices and general hardship for the poor. It also gave opportunity to the wealthy to "make a killing". They loaned money at high rates of interest and then when these commitments could not be honoured they took people into bond service or took possession of their property. The daughters of these unfortunates were taken into bond service as second wives. And as if that was not enough there were imperial taxes which forced people into more borrowing.

Not unexpectedly there was an outcry. Things could not go on like this. Nehemiah heard the details and was indignant. But he did not let anger dictate his policy. He thought carefully what he would do. This was not a way of fudging the issue or failing to face it full on. He called an assembly of the people, accused wrongdoers, even possibly admitted a measure of fault and demanded that things be put right. Nehemiah adds a footnote which tells of the obligation he had as Persian official governor to entertain at considerable cost. But unlike those before him he did not recoup these costs by way of an extra tax. He must have met them from his own private resources. He reflects with some satisfaction on this. His prayer maybe sounds a bit complacent in our ears; it almost sounds like he thought he could buy divine favour. It was surely not so but rather a reflection that his conscience was clear before God in respect of his treatment of the people.

### **Chapter 6**

The internal troubles occasioned by food shortage, high prices and unscrupulous entrepreneurial dealings having been settled, there ensued a period of intensified opposition from the now familiar enemies—Sanballat and Tobiah.

The new campaign began with an apparently friendly and placatory proposal of a parley. Surely Nehemiah could leave Jerusalem for a little and come and talk. Differences could be discussed and ironed out. Nehemiah suspected—more than suspected—he was sure that foul play was intended so he refused the invitation. He stressed the magnitude of the work he was engaged in and his determination that it should suffer no delay due to his, even temporary, absence. But the enemies were persistent. One refusal did not make them give up. Again

and again—four times—they tried this particular maneuver and four times Nehemiah held firm. So a new tactic was employed. The offer of a parley was renewed but this time under threat. Sanballat and Tobiah concocted a story of intended revolution in Judah. Already, they claimed, the rumour was rife that Nehemiah intended to lead a coup. But that rumour could be stifled if there was a get-together of all concerned. If no meeting was arranged word of the intended rebellion would surely be passed on to King Artaxerxes. Then Nehemiah would really be in trouble. Nehemiah vehemently repudiated both the story of intended insurrection and the renewed offer of conference.

Having failed in the frontal approach the enemies adopted a more subtle and confidence-undermining strategy. They had a kind of fifth column in Jerusalem itself. They had friends, possibly bought in the school of the prophets. They, or a leader among them, pretended great solicitude for Nehemiah. He was in danger. The enemy might strike at any moment. He need not leave Jerusalem though. He should shut himself in the temple. Nehemiah had put considerable effort into building up the morale of the people of Jerusalem and now it was being suggested that he should appear to take fright himself. His answer is quite curt, "Should such a man as I flee?" The suggestion was personally insulting and would have been politically ruinous. He would not entertain it.

The fifth column continued to work—propagandizing for the enemy. Some of them indeed had open alliances with the enemy. But the walls went up.

### **Chapter 7**

Soon the wall was built and the gates fixed and Nehemiah felt free to devolve some authority on his brother and another. A register of the people was taken which was a sign that a more settled and orderly state of affairs had been achieved. The taking of the register also represented an effort to secure the purity of the covenant people. The real emphasis was not race-purity as such but on a person's claim to be a member of the covenant people. Some failed the test even some who had been recognized as priests, and they had to be excluded from the priesthood.

The establishment of a more settled and orderly way of life also made demands on the generosity of those who could con-

tribute to the on-going expenses of the state. Nehemiah himself set a good example and the story gives due credit to others also.

### Chapter 8

The signs of the adoption of a more settled way of life after the state of emergency are further indicated by the holding of a religious festival at the beginning of the seventh month. Some commentators are of the opinion that this was a New Year's Festival. Evidently there was a general disposition to learn the law of God. People had become aware of their ignorance and wanted instruction and that is a good sign in any people. So there was a general gathering and a pulpit was erected from which the law could be read so that all would hear. Reverence for the Word of God was overtly demonstrated—all the people stood up when Ezra opened the Book. This is the first reference we have in this narrative to Ezra who had come to Jerusalem some years before Nehemiah. Ezra read for a whole forenoon and the people listened. Thirteen assistants translated for those who were not entirely familiar with Hebrew. The method the helpers adopted as they tried to make everyone understand is not clearly indicated, but the fact of importance is that no one was expected to be satisfied with the mere sound of holy words. Words are for communication and communication requires understanding.

The effect on the people on their hearing the Word of God was not what the readers and interpreters expected. Perhaps indeed not what they wanted—they seemed to deem it inappropriate to the specific festival being celebrated. The people wept. No doubt they were overwhelmed by their conviction that their way of life was so different from that required by the law they had just heard. They were convicted. They broke down in tears and we should think that an acceptable sign of conviction. But strangely the leaders, Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levite helpers disapproved of the weeping. Well, perhaps not quite disapproved. But they wanted the people to recognize that there is good news in God's Word—that it tells of a favourable, gracious, forgiving disposition on God's part. Tears are in order but God loves to wipe away all tears from our eyes. So the people were told to celebrate the fact of God's favour—to do it openly and universally. Let them feast and rejoice and in their rejoicing remember the poor and deprived and enable them also to join



in the festival. Let them accept God's favour and prove that "the joy of the Lord is your strength".

The second day of assembly also brought its new discovery. The institution of the feast of tabernacles was recalled and this festival was reinstated. It had been long forgotten but was observed on this occasion with a fervour and energy unknown since the time of Joshua. And all through those seven days the words of God's law continued to be read.

### **Chapter 9**

How quickly moods change! The people had been told to dry their eyes and rejoice at the memory of God's grace and they had done so. But continued reflection and further hearing of the word appear to have reinstated the conviction of sin which had previously been felt. Reinstated and intensified conviction and emphasized its peculiarly Jewish application. So the Jews, separated from foreigners, had come together with the outward emblems of sorrow and penitence—sackcloth on their bodies and earth on their heads. Two groups of Levites led them in their devotions which at this point involved invocation of the great name of God and a general confession which included a review and recollection of God's dealing with Israel.

First there is recognition of God's universal sway—heaven and earth are His and He is the origin of all life. This is the God who chose Abraham and made a covenant with him. From then on, from the captivity in Egypt, the wanderings in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses, the occupation of the land of Canaan, the prospering of the people, the ministry of the prophets and the resistance of the people to their message and the exile and its sufferings—picture after picture is made to pass before us—each picture showing a faithful covenant keeping God and a disobedient covenant breaking people. The whole is a confession of and acknowledgment that the hardship presently experienced is a just chastisement appointed by God.

### **Chapter 10**

Confession and repentance are sterile if they do not lead to amendment of ways. Repentance indeed involved "full purpose of and endeavour after new obedience." So it turned out here; having humbled themselves before God the people renewed the covenant and sealed it and gave their oath upon it. This indeed was not a new covenant but the renewal of the age-long

covenant with special emphasis upon some of its implications as relevant to the conditions then obtaining. For example the people committed themselves to a ban on intermarriage with other races and to trading with those other races on the Sabbath. They pledged support for the temple, for the ongoing rituals of their religion and the subsistence of the priests. No doubt each of these specifics represented an area of neglect or negligence in the past. A new era was to begin.

### **Chapter 11**

In spite of the sentiment generally held with regard to Jerusalem as the holy city there are indications that it was not the most attractive place to live in. The population was sparse. People found living in the country towns more to their liking and probably affording a better standard of living. Nehemiah had to persuade more people to take up permanent residence in Jerusalem. There was, of course, the power of example. "The leaders lived in Jerusalem." But more were needed. Nehemiah did force them to come on his say so. He had recourse to the sacred lot and people so chosen agreed willingly to comply and earned the admiration of the rest of the population. We are given lists of people who lived in Jerusalem including priests, Levites and other groups. Some account is given also of the cities of Judah and Benjamin in which the people resided.

### **Chapter 12 & 13**

Chapter 12 gives us lists of priests and Levites and genealogies of High Priests—once again giving evidence of Nehemiah's zeal for the purity of the covenant people.

Then we have an account of the dedication of the wall—a very colourful ceremony with processions to right and left and a vast gathering before the temple, to witness the dedication ceremony as carried out by priests to the accompaniment of the choirs and signalized by the sacrifice of great offerings. It was a day when Jerusalem resounded to voices of joy and gladness as it had done when the temple foundations had been dedicated.

By this time Nehemiah had to return to Susa as the period set by King Artaxerxes had expired. He had some reason to believe that the reforms he had instituted would be maintained during his absence, but he did not think the situation so stable that he need not return. How right he was! When he came back he found that the assurances he had obtained about the avoid-

ance of mixed marriages had proved very brittle. People in high places were involved. Not only so but Eliashib "the priest who was appointed over the chambers of the temple" had given the use of one chamber to the notorious Tobiah, for that purpose emptying it of materials used in the temple service. Nehemiah was enraged and threw out Tobiah's stuff and purified the chambers which had been contaminated.

In other directions too the earlier reforms had been abandoned and had to be reinstated. Provision for the Levites had fallen off so they had to return to their farms and look after themselves thus neglecting the services of the temple. That had to be put right. Even if it meant threatening force against the traders who waited outside the gates until the Sabbath would be gone. The threat to the religion of Israel from foreigners had to be exposed and guarded against. Once more Nehemiah inveighed against the practice of mixed marriage, being specially angered by the bad example of some in high places.

The narrative ends rather abruptly with the statement "I cleansed them from everything foreign... Remember this, my Lord in my favour."

### **III. Perennial Lessons**

The story has been told. But it's not just the story of one man's pursuit of a personal ideal, of one man's patriotism and religious fervour involving much sacrifice, struggle and determination; requiring organizational skills, administrative abilities, powers of persuasion, cajolery, and even brow beating. The story is not just of Nehemiah the heroic rebuilder but also of Nehemiah the agent of God in re-establishing His people in the promised land and procuring the order of things religious and political that would obtain until the coming of the Messiah of promise. With this particular series of events we take a big step forward towards the accomplishment of the plan of salvation which concerned the whole world.

It is safe to say that the conquest and dispersal of the Jews had as great an educational and disciplinary input into the experience of the people as had been the bondage in Egypt and the wanderings in the wilderness in previous ages. Not that there was explicit addition to the law, but the bitter reflections of the years of exile burned into the consciousness of the people lessons already articulated but often repudiated. For centuries

the people had been acquainted with the proclamation. "Hear O Israel, the LORD thy God is one" but for centuries also there had been flirtations with the gods of the nations around. The exile seems to have effectively ended these flirtations—to have made the people aware that their glorious distinction was that their God was the Lord the Ruler of heaven and earth; that their God exercised a universal sovereignty. More than that, the experience of exile and the subsequent return of a remnant highlighted the faithfulness of the covenant God of Israel. "He that scattered Israel will gather them as a shepherd does his flock". Jeremiah had proclaimed and now they saw evidence of the fulfillment of the promise.

If it was demonstrated that God will fulfill his covenant undertakings, it was also shown that God's faithfulness is to be met with covenant obedience. God separates a people for Himself and they, in the light of all that He has done for them and in them, wait for promised redemption. To be sure the magnitude and the cosmic relevance of that redemption is beyond their comprehension. But now, as never before, though the nation is greatly reduced the people and the land are being prepared for the coming of the day of the Lord.

One commentator (Derek Kidner) has remarked that the death of the kingdom of Judah which had occurred with the Babylonian conquest, "was a death to make way for a rebirth. A millennium before this Israel had been transplanted to Egypt, to emerge no longer a family but a nation. Now her long night in Babylon was to mark another turning point so that she emerged no longer a kingdom but a little flock with the markings of a Church."

"The making of a Church" is one of the main features exhibited in this history and it involves a process of getting people enthused with zeal for God—no easy task at any time and one beset by special difficulties in the case of Nehemiah. For Nehemiah faced many of the prejudices which a missionary faces. He came to Jerusalem not as a permanent settler. Though he could claim blood relationship with the people he still came as the representative of a foreign power and was materially and financially supported from abroad.

Few, I imagine, would inquire about the sacrifices of comfort and possessions which he had made in order to fulfill his mission. Some might resent his assumption of authority and his way of "throwing his weight around". But in time, almost

all must have come to recognize the sincerity of his conviction, the courage with which he maintained and propagated his conviction and the reality of his zeal for the glory of God. He was a man in earnest, he was a man utterly convinced of the importance of the work to which he had set his hand. No one could be for any length of time in his company without being persuaded that he knew himself to be engaged in a great work. He concentrated on his task. It dominated his thinking from morning till night. That was, in part, what made him impervious to threats on the one hand or allurements and enticing promises on the other. That was what made him proof against the trickery and deceit of those who disliked his plan.

I wonder if those of us who engage in the ministry of the gospel and sometimes complain of disappointment and frustration and fruitlessness have not often ourselves to blame. We lack the all consuming passion and earnestness of Nehemiah. We wilt when we are slighted; we withdraw with ourselves when people reject our plans. We lack the courage to dominate because we are not dominated—dominated by zeal for the glory of God.

There is no doubt a very close connection between the fact of Nehemiah's being dominated by a glorious vision and the fact of his maintaining close contact with God. As Nehemiah tells his story it is interspersed with prayer. Never did he have the idea of going it alone. He was an able man; obviously a born organizer and a trained administrator. But on none of these qualities did he rely. They were for use but for use under Divine direction. He gave orders because he first took orders. He led in works of obedience—he led in piety and devotion and he looked for that in those who worked with him.

And Nehemiah knew that people must be educated in the fear of God. They must be taught the word of God; they must be taught plainly, clearly and repeatedly. Life and behaviour must be scrutinized in the light of the word of God. Nothing must be taken for granted. Ignorance of divine truth is endemic. Ignorance must be dispelled. There is no substitute for the systematic reading and teaching of the word of God. No Church can be upbuilt unless its people be taught the word of God. This Nehemiah's programme proclaims.

Let us conclude by reflection on three lessons illustrated by Nehemiah's story. These are first, the secret of Perseverance is Devotion to God, second, instruction in the truth is necessary

for continuing devotion to God, and third, the secret of success is dependence upon God.

**The Secret of Perseverance Is Devotion to God**

We are thinking here, of course, of perseverance in Christian life and activity. The secret of perseverance in any pursuit is devotion to the person for whom it is done—or the ideals which one wants to realize. That is what informs us all the time of the worthwhileness of what we are doing. We want to please the one for whom we do it. The “well done” at the end will more than compensate for all the hardships and frustrations and weariness that has been.

From time to time we meet people who have no “stickability”. They have great enthusiasm but everchanging enthusiasms. What they are keen on today does not interest them in a week or two. We attribute this to instability of character but the truth is that these people lack an enduring motivation. Novelty attracts them and novelty soon wears off. But where there is devotion to a person or an ideal the interests of that person or ideal will hold allegiance to the end. That is how it is in the things of God. When we know and love God we will persevere in the task He assigns. It is not precisely the work itself that enthralls us but the work as a work for God.

What I am saying is that the love of God shed abroad in the heart is the secret of perseverance in God’s work. Love of God is, of course, responsive. We love Him because He first loved us. The more we reflect on the goodness and mercy—the more we realize how attractive God is—the more we enthuse about God’s grace and perfection the more the devotion of our heart will be accorded to Him. Then we see that there is nothing of virtue that does not have its source in God—righteousness, truth, kindness, compassion, grace—all are of God and He is worthy of our love.

This was what motivated Nehemiah. This was why he grieved so intensely over the ruinous state of Jerusalem. This was why he determined to apply all his energies to restore the city. It was so that it would be worthy of God. It was so that people associating the name of God with that city would think highly of God.

The motivation of love to God shows directly not only in the perseverance maintained but also in regard to the method of work utilized. Not only do we keep at God’s work but we keep

at it in ways that are acceptable to Him. This means sometimes that apparently easy options are refused in favour of ways that are God-honouring. Again and again Nehemiah had proposals put to him in a friendly fashion that claimed to ease his burden of work and responsibility but always he looked to the fitness of the plan to advance God's work. Love makes for zeal and zeal fuels perseverance but zeal must always be "according to knowledge".

**The Necessity of Instruction for Continuing Devotion to God**

Perseverance is one thing, but, admirable as it is, it is only one ingredient in the success story which Nehemiah tells us. If perseverance is not just to be a stubborn blundering on by people who refuse to recognize when they are beaten, or that what they are doing is not worth the effort expended on it, then it must be towards a goal which is known to accord with God's will.

That is not all. God's will is never reduced to one single task. Nehemiah came to rebuild city walls. But he soon realized that a short-term goal like that would not, of itself, engage people to long-term permanent service to God. It is all very well for pundits to say, "Keep people busy and you'll keep them happy; keep people busy at a common task and they'll have no time for bickering and arguing and falling out." There is no doubt, psychological merit in assigning people to tasks, the progress of which can be measured day by day. Our modern Churches act on this when they propose short-term projects for people to support. But it is also true that short-term goals have limited virtue. The proximate goal must be related to the long-term goal if the whole enterprise is not to be questioned and frustrated. For the clarification of the long-term goal what is needed—as Nehemiah demonstrated—is intimate acquaintance with the Word of God and the discipline which that implies.

So, we have briefly observed, Nehemiah brought the people together in public assembly to hear God's Word. The basic fact is that we cannot love God without knowing about God. We cannot know about God without listening to and understanding what He says about Himself. We cannot therefore have the necessary motivation for the appointed tasks without clarity of mind with regard to what God tells us about Himself.

Studying God's Word can be very a disconcerting exercise. The people Nehemiah led found the unfolding of God's Word to be highly disturbing. On hearing it read and explained they broke down—they could not restrain their tears. They lost all their self-complacency. They realized that they had not served God as He required and they ought. The messengers of God had some difficulty in reassuring the people, in stilling their fears and generally cheering them up. They emphasized God's goodwill towards His people—assured them of God's readiness to accept their persons and services in spite of their unworthiness and reminded them that engagement in God's service is not something to be carried through with a heavy heart but with gladness and good cheer. "The joy of the Lord is your strength," they said. This is a theme we meet again in the New Testament apostolic teaching, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say Rejoice". If the Church of God is to project an attractive image it must demonstrate that it is engaged in work that satisfies the heart. It must show itself to be a happy community.

So, whatever the particular task assigned we need to see it within the larger perspective of the Church's ongoing work. This is another way of saying that the members of the Church must be informed as to the condition of God's covenant with His people and the way of life in Christ.

That is our second specific reflection. An important ingredient in the success of the church's work is a community intelligently informed and seriously receptive of the Word of God.

#### **The Real Secret of Success**

We have spoken of ingredients of success. Let us now finally reflect on the real secret of success. As Nehemiah shows it to us it is in absolute dependence on God.

Dependence on God does not mean that people count for nothing. Not at all! How could Nehemiah have managed without the people who had a mind to the work? No, dependence on God does not in any way underrate the necessity or value of human cooperation. But it spells out the fact that without God's help all else will be ineffective. "Unless the Lord builds the house they labour in vain that build it."

Human cooperation is at best defective. Not often is it given at its best. Nehemiah found that not only had he enemies without, but that some of those within his own community were halfhearted and some were positively obstructive—



all of which underlined the psalmist's counsel—"Put not your trust in princes".

Ultimate dependence on God does not dispose with careful planning, sound organization and the use of the most efficient methods honourably obtainable. No one would accuse Nehemiah of living from hand to mouth, planning-wise. He demonstrated the value of careful initial survey, of prudent allocation of cases even on a regular shift basis.

The point is that Nehemiah did not expect people, organization or method to procure automatic success. The secret of that, he knew, was in God's goodwill. That explains his constant resort to prayer, sometimes fairly long and intense, sometime short and ejaculatory. Some people indeed may think that some of Nehemiah's prayers exhibit a certain degree of complacency and almost ask that he be congratulated for his virtue. I would not pretend that Nehemiah had as clear a doctrine of grace as New Testament light gives to us. But I think those prayers that invite God to "think of me for good" in respect of his service, rather emphasize the fact that what he did, he did for God's sake and not for personal profit. Let God take account of it.

Prayer, by its very nature expresses dependence. It casts the petitioner on God's favour and this Nehemiah did constantly. He always entreated God's blessing upon his endeavours for he knew that, without that blessing all was in vain. Whether he knew the Psalmist's words or not Nehemiah lived by the motto *Nisi Dominus Frustra*. But for God, all is in vain.

## Baptism with the Holy Spirit

*by Prof. Dr. Jakob van Bruggen*

The most prominent promise of John the Baptist was that someone was coming after him who would baptize the people with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8). Jesus Christ is this Person. Before his Ascension He assured his disciples that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit "before many days" (Acts 1:5). And at Pentecost Peter said that it was the crucified Jesus, who "has poured out this which you see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

This promise of the beginning has been a problem ever since. What does it mean: to be baptized with the Holy Spirit? This question is an alarming one for the established churches with their water-baptism, confession, church-order and tradition. In the twentieth century the Pentecostal movement is promoting the Baptism in the Spirit and thus many Christians in the churches feel themselves threatened and uncertain when they are confronted with persons who speak in tongues and claim to be really baptized.

### **The Importance of the Theme**

Let us sum up at least four reasons why it is necessary and useful to consider this matter of "being baptized with the Holy Spirit".

1. The first one is a *pastoral* reason. In the course of church history it has become a burning question in many church denominations whether a person is elected or not, has freedom to rely on God's promises or not. In many Protestant circles there is a deep uncertainty about the genuineness of one's own faith and election. When we do not rely on the Church as Mother or on the sacraments of this Church, we have to rely immediately and personally on God and his promises. But how do we know that we are not on the wrong track when we put all our confidence in merely believing God's Word? Or do we receive a *second experience* next to the outward water-baptism and the visible church? Is this maybe the inward experience of the Holy Spirit, who is *assuring* us? But where do we find the signs of His work? In our hearts? In our sanctification? In inner voices? Or, as Pentecostals say, in outward voices, the speaking in tongues and the charismatic gifts?

Younger persons from the established churches frequently feel a certain jealousy when they meet with Christians who defend the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The pattern of thought of their traditional church does not sufficiently equip them to answer the questions of these Christians. They are in need of special help and more information about the Scriptural doctrine of the baptism with the Holy Spirit; pastors must be able to communicate in an adequate manner with members of their congregation about this issue. When church-members are confronted with questions about the baptism with the Holy Spirit, they need an adequate vocabulary and pattern of thought in order to avoid the impression that the church has forgotten and lost sight of this biblical issue.

2. In the second place there is an *ecumenical* reason for this subject. In the 20th century we see the rapid growth of the Pentecostal movement in many countries, including Russia and the third world. In addition to Roman Catholic and Protestant churches we meet the Pentecostals; the World Council of Churches is already connected with this third power in the world of modern Christianity. Will the Pentecostal movement with its emphasis upon the gift of the Spirit gain the function of yeast in the flour of the established churches in the modern ecumenical movement? The answer to this question depends upon the scriptural basis for their doctrine.
3. In the third place there is a *dogmatical* reason for our subject. At face value it seems to be a small problem in the margin of Christian doctrine. Why not maintain the orthodox confessions and only *add* a number of features?

At this point it is necessary to mention the many connections of the baptism with the Holy Spirit with the whole body of Christian doctrine and the heart of it, Christology and the doctrine of God.

As an illustration we use the work of J.G. Dunn. He has devoted all his books to our theme and its connected areas and he is especially looking for the New Testament message on these points.

In 1970 he published *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*<sup>1</sup>. He summarizes his conclusions in four sentences<sup>2</sup>:

"Faith demands baptism as its expression;  
Baptism demands faith for its validity.  
The gift of the Spirit presupposes faith as its condition;  
Faith is shown to be genuine only by the gift of the Spirit."

The central point in the conversion-initiation is the gift of the Spirit. The baptism with water also belongs to the conversion-initiation, but only at a lower level, as a symbol of the cleansing which the Spirit brings. Inevitably, the conclusions of Dunn urge him to answer the burning problem: "In what ways does the Spirit manifest his coming and his presence?"

In a second book, Dunn takes up this question. It is dedicated to the theme of the "religious experience"<sup>3</sup>. The experience (of the Spirit) becomes the focus. Not the revelation! What did Jesus experience of the Spirit? And how did Paul and John experience this Gift of God? The revelation of God in the Son is no longer the subject, but the way in which Jesus was stimulated by his experience of the Spirit. And the revelation of the apostles, their doctrine and commands, are no longer essential, but only their experience and the way in which they formulated these experiences. Dunn writes: "Their theology was produced out of the living dialectic between the religious experience of the present and the definitive revelation of the past (the Christ event), with neither being permitted to dictate the other, and neither being allowed to escape from the searching questions posed by the other—an unceasing process of interpretation and reinterpretation"<sup>4</sup>. Although the word *revelation* is used for the past of Jesus Christ, this does not

<sup>1</sup> Dunn, J.D.G., *Baptism in the Holy Spirit. A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in relation to Pentecostalism today*. (Studies in Biblical Theology 2,15). London 1970.

<sup>2</sup> *Baptism*, p.228.

<sup>3</sup> Dunn, J.D.G., *Jesus and the Spirit. A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament*. London 1975.

<sup>4</sup> *Jesus and the Spirit*, p.361.

mean that we have an objective and normative revelation in the normal sense of the word. Dunn means the revelation of an *experience* and such a revelation is not a *revelation* in the normal sense of the word, it is only a published *experience* and as such on an equal level with the later experiences of the apostles. Does this mean that the Son is subordinate to the Spirit? What about Christology, when experienced Pneumatology is dominating everything, including the Son? And what about confessions, when faith is the process of interaction between present religious experience and the original witness to the Christ event? Is freshness the same as changing Athanasius for Schillebeeckx? Inevitably an ensuing question is: what about the Incarnation?

In a third book, Dunn takes up this issue<sup>5</sup>. To our astonishment the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation is exchanged for the doctrine of modern, humanistic theology. At Christmas we celebrate "God become man" ("a shorthand phrase for all that Wisdom and Logos christology was seeking to express: that God has not abandoned his creation in all its self-centred fallenness, rather he has identified himself with it in Christ"). And at Easter we celebrate "man become God" ("again shorthand for all that the Adam and Spirit christologies were seeking to express: that in the death and resurrection of Christ God has broken the stranglehold of human selfishness"). At Pentecost, at last, we celebrate the "realization of faith that this easter hope is not focused exclusively on one man in the past". The trinitarian doctrine is changed for the doctrine of the Spirit-God, experienced by Jesus and also by us as Christians. In fact, in the theology of Dunn, the baptism in the Spirit says good-bye to nineteen centuries of belief in God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Not only the water-baptism in His name is set on a lower level, but His *Name* is set aside. No longer can we be baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, but only in the name of the Holy Spirit! So the book of Dunn about Christology ends without the Son: "In substance the trinitarian confession means that God in Jesus Christ has proved himself to be self-communicating

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<sup>5</sup> Dunn, J.D.G., *Christology in the Making. A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*. London 1980.

love and that as such he is permanently among us in the Holy Spirit"<sup>6</sup>.

We do not suggest that special attention for the baptism in the Holy Spirit inevitably leads to unorthodox statements, but the work of Dunn makes it clear that there are very important connections between this issue and the centre of Christian theology.

4. Our fourth and last point to illustrate the importance of our subject, is its relevance for *church-growth*. In Korea the churches experience a very rapid growth; also the Pentecostals are very influential in this country. So the question arises: why not accept the gifts of the Spirit *within* the churches rather than leaving them to the Pentecostals? Is church-growth not connected with the gifts of the Spirit? And can Korea perhaps not prove that young churches can combine the inherited confession of the orthodox church with the gifts of the Spirit in this modern age?

Prof. Chah made the proposal<sup>7</sup> that the Korean churches should strive after unity and dialogue in order to export this unity to other countries in the world. In this context he defends the importance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Against Gaffin he defends the perpetuity of the coming of the Pentecostal Spirit and he rejects the idea of its "once-for-allness". It is possible that the Spirit fills the Korean Christians, unites them in faith and knowledge, and makes of them a new Reformed Pentecostal Church, from which powers go out in every direction.

In this way the subject of baptism with the Holy Spirit becomes important for the issue of church-growth.

### **Our Approach**

We can approach the subject of baptism with the Holy Spirit from different sides. We can concentrate upon its place in the history of theology and its dogmatical aspects<sup>8</sup> or upon

<sup>6</sup> Christology, p.268.

<sup>7</sup> Chah, Young Paul, *The Future of the Korean Reformed Theology*.

<sup>8</sup> Gaffin, R.B., *Perspectives on Pentecost*, Phillipsburg 1980. Runia, K., "De doop met de Heilige Geest", *Rondom het Woord. Theologische etherleergang* 16 (1974) 37-55. Gootjes, N.H., "De doop met de Heilige Geest en de betekenis van Pinksteren", *Radix* 13 (1987) 139-158.

the exegetical items in the New Testament<sup>9</sup>. It is our purpose to demonstrate the importance of sound philology and exegesis for this much debated issue. First of all, we have to avoid clusters of meaning in the same lexical units, like *baptism*, and we have to be on guard against the tendency to pick out isolated passages of the New Testament without regard for their context. The Bible sometimes seems to be a mass of ingredients out of which everyone is baking his own cake. In fact, the Scriptures form a Unity, revealing God's plans and history. It is not accidental that Dunn, in connection with his three books about the work of the Spirit, wrote gave another book about the character of the Bible. This book, about *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*,<sup>10</sup> provides the hidden code for his other books. At the bottom of the discussion about the baptism with the Holy Spirit we find the issue of the acceptance of the Unity of the Scriptures, given by the Holy Spirit. Who else can teach us about His work and baptism better than He Himself? And our questions about baptism with the Holy spirit will never find a definite answer if we do not start with respect and awe for the Word of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. This respect includes careful philology and attention for the historical connections in the work of God.

**The Disturbing Influence of the Expression "Baptism with the Holy Spirit"**

In our century "*baptism with the Holy Spirit*" has become a normal expression in theology; under the influence of Pentecostalism we are used to this combination of words.

There is however something very dangerous in this expression. It suggests, that there is *one act* or *one experience*, which we can designate as *baptism with the Holy Spirit*. That which we all know about water-baptism and its once-for-all character is influential on the expression Spirit-baptism. The idea of "once-for-allness" is carried over from water-baptism to Spirit-baptism because of the *word baptism*. There are different interpretations of this once-for-allness of Spirit-baptism. Gaffin, among others, defends that at Pentecost the church has been baptized *once-for-all* with the Spirit, while many

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<sup>9</sup> Dunn, J.D.G., *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. London 1970. Floor, L., *De doop met de Heilige Geest*. Kampen 1982.

<sup>10</sup> Dunn, J.D.G., *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*. London 1977.

Pentecostals speak about their *second experience* as the individual once-for-all experience by which they have received the Spirit-baptism.

What we need at this point is philology. The expression *baptism with the Holy Spirit* does not belong to the ancient vocabulary of the orthodox dogmatics. And its formation in recent times is a degeneration of this vocabulary. Why? Because in this expression words are confused and receive an illegal connection. This causes confusion in ideas.

Let us sum up the reasons for this bold statement.

1. Nowhere in the New Testament can the word *baptisma* be found in connection with *Holy Spirit*. This is remarkable, because the noun *baptisma* is a new Christian word (in variance with the well-known *baptismos*), referring technically to the water-baptism of John and of the Christian church. A similar word is not developed for the acceptance of the Spirit and this word *baptisma* is never metaphorically used for such a thing as Spirit-baptism! This cannot be accidental. Being immersed in water is *one* event, but being immersed in the Spirit is obviously not in the same manner one event. It is confusing when in modern times the technical word for the water-immersion (*baptism*) is also used for the acceptance or the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
2. When John the Baptist gives the promise that, whereas he is only baptizing with water, the Coming One will baptize with the Spirit, the main comparison is not between *water* and *Spirit*, but between *John* and *Jesus*. The coming one will not replace water-baptism with Spirit-baptism. On the contrary, He will maintain the water-baptism (Mt.28). At Pentecost, many persons receive *water-baptism* (Acts 2:41; cp. Acts 19:3-5). What then is the difference? John could do not more than immerse in *water*, but Jesus can *also* immerse in the *Spirit*. The *verb* is used metaphorically to make a comparison between John *the Baptist* and Jesus *the Messiah*. John is not the Messiah. He stops at being *the Baptist*, but the Messiah (in terms of the Baptist) will be more and He will also 'immerse' in the Spirit. This comparison is only valid for John and Jesus. There is no comparison between water-baptism and Spirit-baptism, but between John *the Baptist* and Jesus *the Messiah, the Giver of the Spirit*. This explains why the verb *baptizesthai* is only used in connection with the Holy Spirit in specific



passages where John and Jesus are compared<sup>11</sup>. Outside this comparison the work of the Spirit is never compared or equated with water-baptism.

Does not Titus 3:5 represent an exception to this rule? St. Paul writes: "He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (NewKJV). A look into the Greek New Testament will teach us that the word *baptisma* is not used here, but the word *loutron* (washing, not: baptism). Although this word *washing* seems to contain an allusion to the water of the baptism, this is not in fact the intention of the author<sup>12</sup>.

3. In Matthew and Luke not only the baptizing with the Spirit is mentioned, but also the baptizing with *fire* (Mt.3:12<sup>13</sup>; Lk.3:16). This is the fire of the judgement of the Messiah. He will fulfill God's promises and threatenings: He will bring the definite spiritual life and the definite judgement<sup>14</sup>. This connection makes it clear that the activity of

<sup>11</sup> Mt.3:11; Mk.1:8; Lk.3:16; Joh.1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16.

<sup>12</sup> The word *loutron* is also used in Eph.5:26 (*dia tou loutrou tou hudatos en remati*). Here we find an explicit reference to *water* and the noun *rema* makes it clear that St. Paul is speaking about the act of conversion through faith in the word of the gospel and the act of baptism as symbol of the cleansing effect of this belief. But in Titus 3:5 St. Paul does not speak about *water*. He uses the expression "washing of the Holy Spirit" and interprets this connection of words with the intervening and explanatory words "of regeneration and renewing". This washing is spiritual—regenerating persons and renewing their lives. If St. Paul had water-baptism in mind, he would have used the Greek word *baptisma*. He avoids this word in order to use a more general word such as *loutron*. This word is not used for *baptism* in the New Testament and it can be used for water-baptism only by adding the word *water* (Eph. 5:26). The verb *louein* is not used in connection with the baptism, only *apolouein* (two times: Acts 22:16; 1 Cor.6:11). This verb has a different emphasis: once for all a smear is removed (a child is not cleaned but washed, but in baptism a sinner is cleaned, while the Spirit is *washing* us through renewing and regeneration as a purifying process).

<sup>13</sup> In an important number of the manuscripts the words "and with fire" are missing in Matthew 3:12.

<sup>14</sup> It is impossible to explain *fire* as an expression of the enthusiastic work of the Spirit (cp. the tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost). The context of the preaching of John the Baptist indicates that he means the fire of God's judgement (cp. Mt. 3:10 with 3:12). The outpouring of the Spirit will be definite and ultimate! Whoever rejects the baptism

*baptizing with the Spirit* is not only the once-for-all event at the day of Pentecost. This activity of the Messiah stretches forth until the day of judgement.

4. New is not the Spirit, but He who Gives the Spirit. In the Old Testament the Spirit was given by God to different persons and in different situations. John the Baptist promises that after him another one will come, with sandals on his feet. He is a man, but nevertheless strong as God. He is The Stronger One. This divine person in human clothes will give the Spirit in the future. The newness of John's promise, is the connection of the work of the Spirit of God (*Holy Spirit*) with a coming Person. Not John, but He who comes after him! The weight of the expression is not on something like *baptism*, but on the unexpected coming of a *mediator* of the Spirit.
5. The expression "baptizing with the Spirit" is chosen for this specific occasion (the Baptizer is speaking about the Messiah in the vocabulary of his own special task as Baptizer). This expression derives its *meaning* from the prophecies of the Old Testament.

The future restoration of the people of God shall be the result of the outpouring of His Spirit (Ez. 37:14). Through this Spirit generations shall join in the praise of the Lord and so there shall be salvation at the day of fire and judgment (Joel 2:28-32).

The work of the Spirit of God was well-known in the Old Testament. He spoke through the prophets (1 Samuel 10:10-11; 1 Kings 22:24-25) and was in David as a prophet<sup>15</sup> (Ps. 51:13). Israel opposed this Spirit in the desert and so He became their enemy (Isaiah 63:10).

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with the Spirit through Jesus Christ will be burned as unbeliever (cp. Mal. 4:1)! So serious is Gods gift of the Spirit in Jesus Christ! The reference to fire is absent in Mark because he does not speak so much about the enmity of the scribes and Pharisees against John the Baptist (unlike Matthew and Luke on this point).

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 51:13 is not a general expression of any Old Testament believer. It is the language of a person who has received the special gift of prophecy in order to teach the people the ways of the Lord (cp. 51:15). David is afraid that God will deprive him of this special gift because of his sin with Bathseba.

The history of God's chosen people in the Old Testament gives proof, however, that there is no guaranteed dwelling of the Spirit in their midst. Again and again He is insulted through Israel and who shall forgive their sins? There is a close connection between the needed forgiveness of sins and the possibility of a more permanent dwelling of the Spirit in God's people.

So John the Baptist prepares Israel for the coming forgiveness and promises that as a result of the remission of their sins the coming Saviour will guarantee the work of the Holy Spirit. No longer will He change from a friend to an enemy, but the people that receives forgiveness shall walk in the enduring light of the Spirit. The Messiah shall immerse them in the Spirit as John baptized people in the water of the river. Water dries up, but the Spirit lives and remains forever.

Because of the history of revelation it is impossible to look for a once-for-all baptism with the Spirit, historical (at Pentecost) or individual (second experience). The Messiah is not a once-for-all event and so it is with his Spirit. The guaranteeing and giving Messiah, the Mediator, will develop a continuous activity through which the people of God will enjoy the abiding work and grace of God's Spirit, and through His work they will be saved in the day of fire and judgment. That is John's promise!

**"Being Filled with the Spirit" in Acts**

Does not the book of Acts nevertheless support the idea of a special once-for-all work of the Spirit, comparable with water-baptism? Is it not possible to maintain the expression *baptism with the Holy Spirit*, albeit that this connection of words is not used in the New Testament, because in Acts the facts and footprints of such an event are found?

1. John's promise of being *baptized* with the Holy Spirit is repeated by Jesus before his Ascension (Acts 1:5) and Peter remembers this promise at the moment that the Holy Spirit is given to the non-Jew Cornelius at Caesarea (Acts 11:16). It is only in these two passages, that the verb *baptize* is used in connection with the Holy Spirit and in both places there is the comparison between John the Baptist with his water-baptism and Jesus with his Spirit-baptism.

2. The Holy Spirit as such is not new. He spoke already through the ancient prophets and His words came to us through the Scriptures, as can be seen at different places in Acts (1:16; 4:25; 28:25). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Old Covenant and not a Newcomer on Earth!
3. Jesus was anointed with this Holy Spirit and through this Spirit He taught and performed his mighty acts (Acts 1:2; 10:38). The Holy Spirit is not a Stranger: He is the Spirit of Jesus Christ!
4. His coming at Pentecost is fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. This prophet promised a *fullness* of spiritual gifts for *young and old, men and women*, existing in prophecy, dreams, visions, and also in wonderful signs. The reality of this promise was seen for the first time on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17-18,33). The specific verb used is "to pour out". Here we see a connection with the metaphorical use of *baptize*. The Holy Spirit is coming in fullness and in abundance. That is what is special for these last days before the day of judgment.

This "pouring out" of the Spirit is not confined to one day.<sup>16</sup> When the Holy Spirit comes upon the people at Cornelius' house, Luke uses the same prophetic verb again. The brethren who came with Peter are not surprised that the Spirit is "poured out" after Pentecost, but that He is poured out even upon the Gentiles! (Acts 10:45).

5. The "pouring out" signifies the continuing fullness of the work of the Holy Spirit. He gives his strength to the believers in order to equip them for their Christian task in different circumstances. So the apostles are strengthened to be witnesses of Jesus (Acts 1:8; 5:32). Different persons at different times become *filled with the Holy Spirit* or are *full of the Spirit* and speak decisive words (Acts 13:9; 21:4,11) because the Spirit speaks to them and gives infor-

<sup>16</sup> Gootjes, *Doop met de Heilige Geest*, p.148, says, that Peter in Acts 11:16 only makes a *comparison* between the baptism with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the events at Cornelius' house. He ignores, that in 11:17 Peter continues: "If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?". There is a complete correspondence between Acts 2 and 10 and therefore Peter concludes that as Jesus baptized *the apostles* with the Holy Spirit, so He has done with the Gentiles.

mation or instructions<sup>17</sup> (8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 11:28; 13:2; 16:6-7; 20:22-23). Through the Spirit persons speak in different tongues (Acts 2:4; 10:46) and they become apt to speak the word of God (Acts 4:8,31; 6:10; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9). People become full of wisdom and joy and faith (6:3,5; 11:24; 13:52). And the whole congregation of believers in this way is guided by the comfort of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31<sup>18</sup>). Elders are appointed through the apostles with prayer and fasting (see Acts 14:23) and therefore St. Paul can speak about appointment of elders through the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28).

6. This abundant indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the congregations of the believers does not work automatically. It is possible to *lie to the Holy Spirit* (Acts 5:3,9) or to *resist Him* as in the days of the Old Covenant (Acts 7:51). Doing so in the last days means bringing destruction upon oneself through God's wrath.

One important question is yet unanswered: what is the connection between faith and the filling with the Holy Spirit? At Samaria there is faith, but only after some time the gift of the Spirit (Acts 8). According to Dunn<sup>19</sup> and Versteeg<sup>20</sup> this was not a real faith, because it is impossible to be a Christian without the gift of the Spirit. The real content of baptism was only given at the moment when through the hands of the apostles the Holy Spirit was coming upon them. Calvin, on the other hand, defends the genuineness of their faith, as only the

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<sup>17</sup> Sometimes perhaps the Spirit guides or relocates a person without words (Acts 8:39).

<sup>18</sup> It is important to maintain the right connections within this verse. So we have to translate: "The churches [plural in most of the manuscripts] throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, while they were built up, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit they were multiplied". It is remarkable that a process of building has a peaceful rather than a stormy character! And in the second place, the remarkable result of walking in the fear of the Lord (and not men) and of walking through the guidance of the Spirit (and not other people), is that the churches do not become weak in the world, but receive a greater number of believers!

<sup>19</sup> *Baptism*, p.55-72.

<sup>20</sup> Versteeg, J.P., "Het ontvangen van de Heilige Geest in Samaria". *Uu knecht hoort*. Amsterdam 1979, p.167-189.

additional gifts of the Spirit were missing; later on they received the fullness of the Spirit, who had already brought them to faith. In a sense we have the same at Pentecost: the apostles already believed in Jesus, but at Pentecost they received a *fullness* of the Spirit. In Samaria there is nevertheless something remarkable: *after* Pentecost it is not normal that belief in Jesus is not immediately accompanied with the special gifts of his Spirit. There is, however, a reason for this exceptional way of God's work. In Samaria was Simon the magician and this city was used to explaining religion in terms of power. Therefore they need a strong lesson: the new religion of Jesus is in the first place one of faith and obedience. This faith is not without the powers of Jesus, but the powers of the Spirit support this faith and are not important in themselves. At Samaria there was the danger of a Pentecostalist movement without Jesus as Saviour and therefore God is working in slow motion here. Through this retardation they learn that Jesus' powers are not like those of Simon. This Simon himself is the living demonstration of the fact that this lesson was needed in his presence.

It is the other way around with Cornelius. There (Acts 10) the Holy Spirit is given *before* baptism. Not before faith! Why in this way? In order to convince the Jewish Christians, that the non-circumcised Gentiles are acceptable to God because of their faith in Jesus and therefore admissible to baptism (or: and therefore can be baptized). And history demonstrates often enough that this special way in which God works is necessary: it was a hard lesson for Jewish Christians to learn (Acts 11; 15). Therefore we have this significant (or: significantly) exceptional event at the house of Cornelius.

Generally speaking, it can be said, that to Pentecostals Acts 8 is normal (only through Spirit-baptism there is genuine Christianity) and Acts 10 exceptional (the water-baptism as entrance to the community of believers, and not the Spirit-baptism as such). To the churches it is the other way around. Samaria is an exception (normally the water-baptism is sufficient) and Cornelius is normal (water-baptism is the same as becoming an accepted Christian). This dilemma is not acceptable.

When we look at the special circumstances of the history of revelation, as we always need to do, then we do find reasons for Samaria and Cornelius. Both were good and normal in their

circumstances. What we can learn from the amazement of other people (the apostles in Samaria, the brethren in Jerusalem) is:

1. The water-baptism is the normal way for believers to become accepted as brethren through faith in Jesus Christ alone.
2. The baptized believers share in the gifts of the Spirit of Jesus and can expect wisdom, joy, stronger faith, ability to speak, guidance through the Scriptures, the occasional speaking in other tongues or voices to give instruction, gifts of healing or prophecy. Nobody receives everything, but all share in the gifts of some members, as in a body (cp. 1 Cor.12).

A confirmation of these points is found in the story of disciples of John the Baptist at Ephesus (Acts 19). The difference between faith and the receiving of the Spirit, but also the connection between them, is heard in Paul's question: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2). We hear his surprise when the answer is negative: "Into what then were you baptized?" (19:3). Afterwards these persons, baptized by John, become baptized in Jesus' name and when Paul lays his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came upon them. And they experience that Jesus is the Stronger One after John the Baptist. The normal way! Water-baptism and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit distinguished and yet connected.

We conclude, that the way in which the book of Acts speaks about *being baptized with the Holy Spirit*, makes it clear that this expression indicates the new situation wherein the well-known Holy Spirit of the prophets is *given* by Jesus to *believers in His name*, without distinction of male-female, Jews-Gentiles, etc. The gifts of the Spirit are not the central message nor the central focus of faith (cp. Samaria), but they signify the strength of the Lord Jesus and they equip the believers to their task in this world and to their building up of a congregation.

It is impossible to speak about a "baptism with the Holy Spirit" as a once-for-all event (on Pentecost<sup>21</sup> or as an

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<sup>21</sup> Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, p. 13-41, says that Pentecost is the coming of the Exalted Christ to His Church. The events at Samaria, Cornelius and Ephesus (Acts 8,10,19) are expansions of this once-for-all Pentecost to Samaria, Gentiles and disciples of John the

indispensable (second) experience<sup>22</sup> through which faith becomes genuine). The "being poured out" of the Holy Spirit indicates a permanent reality in which the believers share again and again and in different ways.

Within the language of Acts it is also misleading to attribute the receiving of faith to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is *the Lord* who calls to faith, and his calling is effective<sup>23</sup>. It is *Jesus* who is the central Person for this Christian faith, and in His name the believers are baptized. The *Holy Spirit* is given as Helper to those who are called by the Father and baptized in Jesus' name. The dogmatic vocabulary is quite different: it teaches us that faith is given *through* the Holy Spirit. This causes much confusion in reading Acts. Perhaps we can say that God's Spirit works faith and that the same Holy Spirit is sent by *Jesus* to strengthen and support that faith. In any case, we have to distinguish between the way of expression in dogmatics and in Acts.<sup>24</sup> There is no difference in doctrine, but of words. That is important enough!

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Baptist. In a sense these events form an appendix to Pentecost and complete it for once and forever.

<sup>22</sup> Dunn, *Baptism*, p.83-89, derives from Acts 19 the statement that water-baptism would not have been discussed with the disciples of John the Baptist if they would have answered affirmatively to the question "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

<sup>23</sup> Acts 2:47 ("And the Lord added to their number"); 11:18 ("Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life"); 11:21 ("The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number that believed [or: through belief] turned to the Lord"); 14:27 ("...how He [God] had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles"; cp.15:4); 15:8-9 ("God cleansed the hearts of the Gentiles by faith and God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as He did to us"); 16:14 ("The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul"; cp.16:15: she was baptized!). Within Acts the distinction between faith and the fullness of the Spirit is also a distinction between the Lord (God) who brings to faith and the Spirit that is given to these believers.

<sup>24</sup> Dunn, quoting Kuyper, among others, also speaks about the difference between dogmatics ("receiving the Holy Spirit precedes faith") and Acts (Baptism, p.93ff.). According to him, in Acts the coming to faith is *identical* with receiving the Holy Spirit and the act of conversion. We do not agree with him because Acts strongly distinguishes between the act of faith (worked by the Lord) and the gift of the Holy Spirit to the believers.



**"Being baptized with the Spirit" in the Epistles of Paul**

The expression "being baptized with the Spirit" is usually exchanged for "being filled with" or "having received" the Holy Spirit. That is not so strange: the metaphorical use of "being baptized" flourishes only in its original setting, namely, the comparison between John and Christ. There is, however, one exception in the letters of Paul. We read in 1 Corinthians 12:13 the following statements:

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit".

There is a diversity of opinions about the allusion in the second part of the verse<sup>25</sup>, but it seems that there is unanimity about the allusion in the first part. Is not "being baptized" a reference to water-baptism?

At this point we sense two problems. First of all, the expression *baptizein eis* is always used for being baptized *in the name of* (Christ, or: Father, Son and Holy Spirit). It seems to be a very shocking connection: "to be baptized *into* one body". In the second place, the Spirit is never mentioned as the acting person in water-baptism. It seems to be very unusual to say that we are baptized (in water) through the Spirit.

So we prefer another interpretation of verse 13a. The connection *baptize with the Spirit* is normal and so we have to connect in verse 13a the words *en henî pneumati* with *ebaptisthemen*: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized: into one body!" This suits the context, where Paul does not speak about things that all the believers have in common (their confession), but about the individual gifts of the Spirit, attributed to the believers in diversity and according to His will. The different gifts are the result of one baptism with one Spirit. And as one Spirit constitutes one Body, so one Spirit with his many gifts forms one body!

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<sup>25</sup> Robertson and Plummer (ICC) make mention of three possible interpretations of the second part (on the assumption that the first part contains an allusion to water-baptism): a. through *water-baptism* we were immersed with one Spirit; b. the *gifts of the Holy Spirit* complement our water-baptism; c. the *Eucharist* is added to our water-baptism. Since the aorist (*epotisthemen*) refers to some definite occasion, the third explanation is certainly wrong.

Which interpretation is given to the second part of the verse, depends upon the chosen text. It alludes either to the same baptism with the Spirit<sup>26</sup> or to water-baptism as leading to one baptism with the Spirit<sup>27</sup>. In both cases, the first part of 13a can speak about the baptism with the Holy Spirit. This interpretation makes sense: Jews and Gentiles received the same gifts (cp. Acts 2 and 10) and so "slave or free" no longer makes any difference, as everyone can see in the church of Corinth!

It is interesting to notice how Paul uses this exceptional reference to the promise of John the Baptist, that another Person should come to "baptize not only with water, but with the Holy Spirit". He does so in connection with spiritual gifts (12:1) and "speaking through the Spirit" (12:3)<sup>28</sup>. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 Paul is not arguing about the common confession, but about the individual and special gifts of the Spirit. This is exactly the connection we have found in Acts. After water-baptism (including confession) there is the pouring out of the Spirit. The believers receive Him and his gifts through the Mediator Jesus Christ.

The specific teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians is that we are not allowed to isolate these gifts. They are connected with one Spirit and with one Jesus Christ. Therefore they connect

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<sup>26</sup> The reading *hen pneuma epotisthēmen* (without *eis*) leads to the translation: "We were all watered, saturated, imbued, with one Spirit". In this case the allusion is to a land, being watered into fertility. And our water is the Holy Spirit!

<sup>27</sup> Reading *eis hen pneuma epotisthēmen* (with *eis*) we have to translate: "We were all watered, saturated, imbued into one Spirit". The allusion is again to the watering of a land. The purpose is the fruit of the Spirit. So the "being imbued, watered" forms in this case an allusion to the baptism with water as a promise and an expectation: the believer, immersed in water-baptism, will receive the same Spirit as the other believers. There is only one Spirit whom all baptized Christians may expect.

<sup>28</sup> In 1 Corinthians 12:3 the allusion is not to the moment of confession and water-baptism, but to the situation in the established church. Someone is "speaking through the Spirit of God" (cp. 12:8; 14:29-31). In this situation he will never curse the name of Jesus. And when Christians in their prayer or prophesying or teaching do say that Jesus is Lord, they can only speak in this way through the Holy Spirit.

us with the one body and we have to use them for the common good of all.

It is impossible to discuss all the places where Paul speaks about the work of the Spirit, but we are convinced that through all his epistles he is *not* connecting the Holy Spirit with the primary act of becoming a confessing Christian, but with the essential addition of the gifts of the Spirit (Ephesians 4). These gifts are given for the building up of the body of Christ. They do not constitute the faith of the believer nor warrant it, but they are the normal consequences of faith that connects us with the living Saviour.

#### **The Signs of Mark 16**

For many Christians the gifts of the Spirit are a condition for being accepted as a believer. This is not according to the Scriptures. We have seen in Acts and Paul that faith and water-baptism are genuine without the gifts of the Spirit, but we have also seen that faith receives in different ways gifts of the Spirit and yields the fruits of this Spirit.

This leads us to the initial promise of Mark 16:

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:16-18).

Frequently these verses are used as an accusation to church-members who do not possess these gifts that their faith is lacking. The Lord, however, does not say that "he who performs these signs will be saved" nor that "he who believes will perform all these signs". In fact, Jesus *only* promises something about the coming of these signs, but nothing about the believers as the performers thereof. We have to notice the remarkable verb He uses: "These signs will *accompany* those who believe". The Greek verb is *parakolouthēin* and it says that the believers will be *followed* or *accompanied*. So stress is laid upon the signs as such and not on the acts of the performers. The verb can be explained in the context of the command to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). The apostles and their helpers come marching into the world; and just as generals and emperors have behind them a train of trophies, so the preachers of the

gospel leave behind them traces of the majesty of their Lord. The advance of believing preachers will be marked by remarkable signs. These ascertain their message, not their faith!

This is seen in the last verse of Mark 16: "And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed *the message* by the signs that attended it" (Mark 16:20).

Here we find nearly the same verb (*epakolouthein*) as in 16:17: the signs follow or accompany or attend the believers and confirm their message. So it happened at Pentecost (Acts 2) and in Samaria (Acts 8), etc.

This specific situation also means a restriction: these signs only accompany the preaching of the Gospel in the whole world. When this Gospel has been preached to all people by the apostles, we have the *stories about these signs* and these are as valid as the signs themselves. So Israel used to remember the mighty deeds of the Lord in Egypt and in the desert. The story of the Gospel that reached us is permeated with stories about signs (see the Book of Acts and the references in the epistles to the signs of the apostles<sup>29</sup>). It is not necessary that God should repeat his signs again and again because later generations fail to look back and remember his deeds. We do not deny that the Lord can give the same signs today, but we deny that He has to do it in order to fulfill the promises of Mark 16.

### Conclusions

1. Since the word *baptism* is associated with the special and unique act of water-baptism and becoming a Christian, the current theological expression "the baptism with the Holy Spirit" is not suitable as a summary of the promise about the Christ who will "baptize" with the Holy Spirit.
2. As fulfillment of the promises of the prophets of the Old Covenant (including John the Baptist), Jesus Christ has become the Mediator of the Spirit. He brings it about that the Spirit can be dwelling continuously in the whole people of God while there is remission of their sins. So this people is "immersed" (baptized) in the Spirit, filled with Him.
3. In the New Covenant the act of water-baptism certifies that a person through confession of sins and through faith in

<sup>29</sup> More about this issue in my book *Ambten in de apostolische kerk. Een exegetisch mozaïek*. Kampen 1984, 23-36.

the Gospel is connected with Jesus Christ and with the Holy Name of the Triune God. These believers receive the gifts of the Spirit in order to be connected to one Body and in order to build together the community of Jesus Christ in wisdom and strength and as a sign to the world of non-believers.

4. This outpouring of the Spirit through Jesus Christ grants those gifts that are necessary in a certain situation. So signs accompany the apostles and other preachers of the Gospel in order to confirm their message among the Gentiles. And the churches receive the reality of spiritual gifts, necessary for the building up of the community (prophecy, prayer, foreign languages, ability to help, gifts of wisdom and learning, etc.). The whole church has the possibility to pray confidently for the necessary gifts.
5. "Being baptized with the Holy Spirit" is not a once-for-all event (historically at Pentecost or individually as second experience), but a continuing reality of the work of Jesus Christ in his believers. This work does not constitute the faith, but makes it fruitful and productive. It makes it apparent that our faith is not in vain!
6. The distinction between the call to faith and water-baptism at first and the being baptized with the Spirit afterwards is a good reminder to the churches that becoming a Christian is only the beginning. Being born is one thing, but living in the fullness of the Spirit continues throughout life!
7. There is no reason to limit the possibilities of the Spirit after the first century, but there is also no reason why He should give always the same gifts. When we have time to learn our languages for the mission-fields, it is not necessary that we speak in foreign languages immediately and without special study. Of course the Spirit can teach us languages of angels in the 20th century, but far greater than languages of angels, also in this century, is the incomparable gift of loving each other in the church (1 Corinthians 13).

## Christology<sup>1</sup>

by Prof. D. Macleod

We have heard reference during the Conference to the great Reformation watchwords: the Bible alone, by faith alone, and to the glory of God alone. And of course, these are fundamental to Reformed theology and to our present activity at the ICRC. But there is also something that is more fundamental than any of those three great principles, something which in fact gives them their foundation and their coherence. And that is the principle of *solus Christus*, Christ alone. The Bible has its unique place in our theology because it is the word of Christ. We speak of the importance of *sola fide*, by faith alone, because that faith directs our attention to Christ and links us in a transformational way to all the energies of our risen Saviour. And we say *soli Deo gloria*, to God alone be the glory, because we direct that doxology also to Christ as the one in whom God is disclosed and whose Godhead is numerically one and the same as that of God the Father. And in some ways what I want to underline here tonight is that the Reformed churches take their identity from the fact that above every other stream in Christendom they take Christ seriously and do justice to His glory and to His grandeur. I want to argue that our commitment to Christ transcends every other commitment. I speak out of a consciousness that it is at this precise point in our theology that there lies the greatest single threat—a threat to the person of our Saviour. I want to argue that our Reformed thought has made its most distinctive contributions in this area. And I want to argue that what we, as the Reformed churches, are called to bear witness to in our time and place is, above all, the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to suggest the ongoing need for Christ-centered proclamation.

Now I have nothing original to say. I simply want to explore familiar themes in the context of Reformed input and also maybe enriched by the interaction between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in the last two hundred years. Also, I wish to argue that by God's grace and in God's providence our understanding

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<sup>1</sup>Since the following speech was transcribed from a cassette tape and due to time restraints on both the author and the publisher, this document was not edited as completely as was hoped. Please excuse any grammatical errors.

of the glory of Christ has undergone enrichment even in the stressful times we have seen in the last two centuries.

I begin by drawing your attention to the Deity, the Godhead, of the Lord Jesus Christ. As all of you know, the New Testament bears eloquent testimony to this great fact. It speaks of Christ as God; it speaks of Christ as Lord; it speaks of Christ as Son of God; it speaks of Him as the son of Man; it speaks of him as the form of God, as the glory of God, as the image and the word of God. And analysis of the New Testament documents shows that there is no strand in our tradition in which this particular note, this emphasis on the deity of our Saviour, is absent. It is found in all the New Testament documents; it is found in all the assumed sources that lie behind those documents. We meet those documents very early on in the Christian era around 40-44 A.D. We find in the very earliest documents no trace of any controversy or uncertainty on this great issue. We do not see the church *coming into possession* of the dogma of the deity of Christ, but we find the church *already in possession* of it in Galatians, in James, and in 1 Thessalonians. Jesus Christ is already Lord there. In some ways the most moving testimonies are of the apostle James, the Lord's brother. Speaking as one who had shared a home and maybe a bed with our Lord and Saviour, he is yet able to speak of him as the Lord Jesus Christ, the glory. In this brother he sees Yahweh and in this Jesus already in the first earliest part of the fifth decade of the first century, he is saying that in Jesus is the *shekina* of God, the glory of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the glory. It is a great thing there that is no sign of struggle, uncertainty or controversy, but when we open the New Testament this doctrine is already so fully in the church's possession.

And of course, the church went on to build upon that great foundation in the ecumenical creeds—its own perception of and testimony to this great dogma—especially in the Nicene creed with its affirmation of Jesus as God's Son and its affirmation that as God's Son He was *homoousios* with God, He was one and the same with God the Father. And of course, that emphasis was noticeably an emphasis on some kind of genetic identity between God the Son and God the Father. It was indeed that! It was an emphasis on the part of Athanasius that every perfection of God, every attribute, in short, all that made up the glory and the *morphe*, the form of God, was found in its full-

ness in Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Saviour. But Athanasius in the *homousios* was also saying that God the Father and God the Son were one in being. They were one and the same in substance. They were not two Gods, so that all the Father was, God the Son was too. Now of course, lying behind all this sensitivity on the part of Athanasius and the Nicene Fathers was not simply an academic concern, but there was a profoundly religious concern: the perception that the Christian faith, our religion, would only survive as a religion if we could secure a doctrinal foundation for the worship of Jesus as the Son of God. And Athanasius said that if you detract from that deed or if you compromise that deed in any way then the whole posture and position of the church is wrong. The church can not bow the knee to Christ if he is a creature, no matter how great a creature. And that is still the most essential single point in the Christian religion: that we bow the knee before Christ as the Son of God.

There is a hymn that we sing in Western Europe especially around Christmas time in which we ask,

Who's seen yonder stall,  
at whose feet the shepherds fall?

That is the greatest question we can ask in the Christian Church. Who is He? And the great answer:

'Tis the Lord, O wondrous story.  
'Tis the Lord, the King of glory.  
At His feet we humbly fall.  
Crown Him, crown Him, Lord of all!

Now we can not say this except on the basis of the *homousios*, the basis that in Christ we meet all the fulness, all the *pleroma*, and all the glory of God. We bow the knee because He is very God of very God. And yet, it remained truth that even in the context of Nicene theology that there was still some kind of hesitation to fully equalize God the Son with God the Father. And the Nicene Fathers, like Tertullian before them, were speaking of the Father as the font of deity, as the origin of the Godhead, as the *arke* and as the first principle of the Godhead. And they would speak of the essence of the Son as being derived from the essence of the Father, and so on. And these strands remained in the Church's bloodstream for many centuries. In fact, I think that in some areas this element of subordinationism still remains within the Church's bloodstream today.



But then we find John Calvin, reflecting upon the *homoousios*, identifying very deliberately with the Nicene theology and yet developing it beyond the point at which he inherited it and going on to speak of Christ as *autos theos* and as God in His own right *ens a se, ipso*. And surely that is a great contribution from within Reformed theology to worldwide church's understanding of the status and glory of our Saviour. In Christ we meet one who is God in His own right, whose is God from Himself *ens a se, ipso*. No subordinationism! Of whose essence we cannot speak of as derived from that of the Father, but one who is in the fullest and to the most unqualified sense God, the living God—God in the absolute sense of that word. And I would hope that Reformed theology has taken full possession at this point of time, not only of the Nicene contribution, but also of John Calvin's enrichment of that tradition by his emphasis on the fully equal, underived deity of God the Son.

And it seems to me that emphasis on the Lord's deity has wide ramifications and far reaching implications for the whole of our theology. It has profound consequence, for example, for our concept of God. I am not going to digress widely into this field at the moment, but there is ground to lament the fact that the church of the Reformation, while so effectively subjecting medieval soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, to thorough Biblical scrutiny, yet took abroad, to a large extent uncriticized, the legacy of scholasticism in the whole area of the doctrine of God. What I want to say is simply this that it is not only true that we say that Christ is God, predicating *theos*. It is also true that we predicate the Christlikeness of *theos*. We say that in Christ we meet the truth about God. And it is enormously important to do justice to this fact that Christ is the form of God, Christ is the image of God, and Christ is the glory of God. "He who has seen me, has seen the Father." We must not take our concept of the Deity from anything that is outside of or that is alien to Jesus. There is in God no un-Christlikeness at all! I do not know how to fully do justice to that, but when Paul says that Christ was *morphe*, the form of God, and that being in the form of God, He went on to make Himself nothing, then that is telling me something magnificent about God. Namely, that is not inconsistent with the form of God to make Himself nothing. The impulse towards self-abnegation rose from the very root and the very heart of deity.

And in that impulse which gave rise to the incarnation, God shows us Himself.

You remember the story of the feet washing in the gospel according to John. You remember how the Lord, at that supper, took a towel, girded Himself, and washed His disciples' feet. And that is set in the context of a great statement. "Knowing that He came from God and was returning to God He washed His disciples' feet" (paraphrase John 13:3-5). It is almost this: feeling the impulse to do something Godlike, He washed His disciples' feet. The foot washing can be seen as revelatory, as a disclosure, not of simply something about the *human* nature of Jesus, but about the *divine* nature of Jesus. That impulse to do the foot washing had its roots in the very nature of God. And the implications of that for our own Christian lifestyle are great. "Great God of wonders all Thy ways are much less Godlike and divine." But when we sing those words, when we reflect upon what is much less Godlike and divine then do we Christologize? Do we see these things in the light of the person of Christ? Do we see the foot washing as an expression of the great God of wonders? As an act which is much less Godlike and divine? God is showing us His very heart in this act of servitude. And I am not far from suggesting that principle of service itself lies right at the heart of deity....

And I do not say all this simply in terms of God's relationship with man, but of the relations within the Godhead itself. The Word is towards God. Each person is for the other. And that finds its reflection in the constant encouragement which God the Father and God the Spirit engaged in relation to the incarnate Son.

So the deity of Christ is of such fundamental importance for our whole concept of God that we could formulate it this way: that we must allow the light of that principle to fill our concept of the divine sovereignty which by any standard is a fundamental emphasis of Calvinist thought. We speak of foreordination, of election, of reprobation, and of preterition. And yet to all of those Christ is crucial because we are elect in Christ. The decree is Christ-shaped. He is a party to foreordination; He is a party to election. That decree is not the decree of an abstract God, or of an unknown God. It is the decree of a God we know in Jesus Christ. Even when we stand with John Calvin beside the *decretum horribile*, the terrible decree of reprobation, we will say that here too there is no un-

Christlikeness at all because sovereignty is never the sovereignty of abstract principle; it is the sovereignty of the God we know and whose glory we see in the face of Jesus Christ.

Let me even say that this very point is true of our doctrine of creation also. There, too, God's act is in Christ. "Without him nothing was made that was made." By Him He made the ages; in Him all things consist. That surely is why Reformed thought is and remains so fully committed to human science, to the exploration of the universe because we know that the universe resides in Christ as its *logos*, as its wisdom, as its principle of coherence. And therefore, we face the universe in the scientific quest. And we face it fearlessly because there is never the possibility of meeting in that universe an alien truth or a truth inconsistent with the truth that is spoken of in Christ, that is given to us in Christ. And that should liberate members of the Reformed family to engage fully, freely, and fearlessly in scientific quest because in doing so, they research the universe, created in and by their Lord and their Saviour.

And I would add one thing more and that is this: that it is such an enrichment of the whole principle of fellowship, of our *koinonia*, to remind ourselves of the deity of Christ with whom we share fellowship. I have said that the deity of Christ illuminates our doctrine of God, the sovereignty of God and creation. However, it also enriches our concept of fellowship, of sharing. There is a passage in 2 Peter 1 which I regard as the single, boldest utterance to be found anywhere in the New Testament. It is one in which we are told that God has called us to His own glory and virtue, His own *doxe kai arete*, His own excellence. Well, these are bold words! God has called us to His own glory and excellence. And then, as if that were not enough, He goes on to remind us that we have become sharers in the divine nature. We have this great statement here so that through these things you might become *koinonoi*, sharers in the nature of God, the divine nature. Well, I couldn't write that! But because we are in Christ, He has prayed, "Father, I will that where I am there they may be also." And there is no limit put to that sharing, that fellowship. I ponder often: what does Christ have that we don't have? He shares His sonship; He shares His righteousness; He shares His power; He share His Spirit; He shares His *phusis*, His nature; He shares His glory. And that's what it means to be a Christian: to share the things of the Son of God. This one had prayed, "Glorify me with thine

own self, with the glory I had with thee before the world was." He is asking that His human nature should participate in the glory which, as eternal Son, He had beside God. And we may ask that we be with Him where He is: beside God in the glory He had with the Father before the world was. Well, there it is. I shall not go beyond that.

Now I will turn to the second emphasis in Reformed theology which is the true and perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now again, there is nothing novel in that emphasis. And yet, it was a distinctive of Reformed thought that, in contrast with other streams, gave very great prominence to this fact of the human nature of our Saviour. Roman Catholicism had great difficulties with this doctrine. In the context of the Byzantine Christ such a gulf emerged between the Church and her Lord that there arose a need for Mariolatry, the cult of the Virgin, to fill that vacuum and bring in some element of approachableness and tenderness to divine-human relationships. In Lutheran thought the dogma of consubstantiation also shows that this church found it difficult to adjust to the Lord's humanity because of the problem that in the Lord's Supper Christ had to be physically present in every single gathering—in, with, and under the elements. And there emerged under that doctrine a de-emphasis on the ubiquitousness of the Lord's human nature. Reformed thought, however, was not subject to those pressures. Moreover, Reformed thought was one which interacted, through John Calvin, very directly with the text of the Christian gospels and of the New Testament epistles. I believe that this interaction, or exegesis, led to a constant reminder and awareness of the reality of the incarnation, and of the unqualified genuineness of our Lord's humanity. For us in Scotland this found special emphasis in our Form of the Lord's Supper. At the Lord's Supper there is always an exposition of the sufferings of Christ in a way that brings constant reminder of His identification with His people on a human level. Now, my concern is this: that we must today, while conscious of the enormous pressure upon the dogma of our Lord's deity, not imagine that to safeguard that dogma we must abandon or minimize the incarnation and its resultant emphasis on the humanity of our Saviour because that is anti-Christ, who denies that God has come in the flesh. It is a very instructive fact that the earliest heresy we find in the New Testament is Docetism with its denial of the true humanness

of our Saviour. It is our calling to endeavour even in the current climate to do full justice to the humanity, to the manliness, the manhood of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Now, what does it mean? It means, first of all, that we affirm that Christ took a true human body, one which was in all respects identical with our own, one which according to our Reformed confessions, Belgic and Westminster, was derived from the substance of His virgin mother from whom He derives half His chromosomes and through whom He is keyed into the whole physical history of the human race. The biochemistry, the genetic code, the central nervous system, all of these He shares with ourselves. I think it is worth pondering that in the resurrection body of Jesus we find the supreme creative act of God and the elevation of matter to its *omega* point. In His body matter, the dust of the earth finds its supreme development.

He took a true body and in that body He suffered. He took a human soul, a reasonable soul, *anima rationalis*. I prefer to use this term because it reminds us that in Christ there wasn't only the *psuke* of animal existence, but also the *pneuma* of spirituality. I think it is arguable that Apollinarius, for example, would have allowed that Christ had a *psuke*, a human *psuke* at some level, but not a human *pneuma*. And that is why I think we want to insist that there is a *ratio*—a mind, a human psychology, a complete human psychology—in Jesus, the incarnate Saviour. There is a human mind which sometimes does not know; a human mind which comes to self-understanding through constant reflection upon the Old Testament Scriptures; a human mind which knows only so much about God as God. The Holy Spirit commissioned by the Father revealed to Him so that there is continuity between Christ as prophet and prophecy as it functions among his people. It is not the divine nature communicating insight to the human nature, but God the Father, through the Spirit, making known to the incarnate Son all that God thinks is needful for the church to know.

But above all, this human soul, this *anima rationalis*, this human psychology is the full developed, vulnerable, emotional life of God the Son incarnate. The disclosures of the Garden in Gethsemane where with my kind of body, my kind of mind and my kind of imagination, He pondered the trauma before Him, contemplated the agony of Calvary, and meditated on the cup which the Father had given Him. And there He becomes down-

cast, despondent and exceedingly sorrowful unto death. There He is sore amazed, experiencing not only angst, but experiencing the sense of the holy, experiencing God as intimidating. We are told of Moses on Mt. Sinai that he said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." Here in Gethsemane God's Son contemplates the agony and He contemplates it not with apathy, *apatheia*, not with stoicism, not with emotionlessness, but He contemplates it with a full range of predictable human emotion. He is depressed by it. He is afraid. He trembles. He experienced what someone called "creature feeling".

But it was more because He was going before God not simply as creature, but in that terrible word of Paul's He was made *sin ginomimos hamartia*. Also, He became flesh, *sarx egeneto*. What do we make of this? That verb suggests an identification with sin as close as His identification with humanness. He becomes there, as Luther said, the greatest sinner there ever was, bearing the sin of the world, its guilt, and answering for the sin of the world. And as He contemplates going before God as creature, going naked before God as sinner with no *hilasmos*—with no covering, with no propitiation, with no advocate, with no protection—He is sore amazed. He takes our body; He takes our emotions; He takes our need for relationships; He was with God, *pros ton theon*, towards God. He became a man made in the image of God; a man who needs relationships. He chooses twelve to be with Him... to be with Him, not to teach them, but because He had a need, a human need. And this Christ who is our model does not love all equally and does not feel equally comfortable in all kinds of surroundings, but especially close to the three. And particularly close to John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. And this is the validation for me: I, too, need relationships; I need friends; I need inner circles; I need relationships of particular intimacy about which I must not feel guilty because to Jesus John was special and there was no sin in John's being special. It is all a great word about our humanness, it is physical, it is emotional, but it is also relational.

He shared our experiences. He took flesh. He dwelt among us, coming right down into our situation. He came into our dependencies. "My servant whom I uphold." He was led, helped, encouraged, and received *paraklesis* from the Holy Spirit, from the voice of reassurance that said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He needed the encouragement, the assurance of love, the word that comforted Him be-

cause He was dependent. He was the one who came into our deprivation, into our homelessness and poverty, who saw life from below, who spoke from below, who was with the people's poor ones, who had nothing, and who spoke for those who couldn't speak for themselves. It was a terrible burden. And likewise, we cannot evangelize from above, and we cannot evangelize from outside. I accept all the dangers implicit in the concept of incarnational mission. But He left us an example that we should follow in His steps. And I doubt if we can evangelize without identification. And that is why He was there below and why He always sees human life not from the palace but from the hovel. And speaking from that perspective, which a church must never abandon, He experiences dependence, deprivation, temptation—the full force of them because He so resisted, that against Him the devil had to do his utmost. Against me a little of his energy and guile is enough, but Christ bore the full ferocity of temptation. He experienced our pain, our physical pain, our emotional pain. He experienced death. Hebrews says it so beautifully, “He tasted death”, not as one anesthetized to it, who went through it unaffected, unconscious, but for Him dying was an experience not to be relished but yet to be tasted, so that I can never say, “My pain goes beyond His pain. My darkness beyond His darkness. My dying beyond His dying.” But always He is beyond and more and further.

Furthermore, He experienced what I shall state first in these terms: *choris theou*, being without God. You remember that variant on the text in Hebrews 2, *chariti theou*. The text says, “He tasted death for every man by the grace of God.” The variant has *choris theou*. “He tasted death for every man without God.” I do not accept that variant as authentic, but that variant is still so marvelously suggestive because on the cross that is what He is: man without God. He is the Son of God *choris theou*. And it was the only comfort left to Him, and it is the only comfort left to us *in extremis*, at the end. “When other comforts fail and helpers flee, help of the helpless, O abide with me.” We pray that. We pray it in faith. There is a love that will never let us go, but here at the point of the Lord's greatest need, at the point of greatest need this universe has ever seen, He is without God. There is no hand to hold; there is no voice to comfort; there is no Spirit of reassurance. The sense of sonship is eclipsed. The perception of meaning is obscured and there is only the why of incomprehension, astonishment and

unbearable pain. Because He is *anomia*, He is lawlessness and He is sin. And being *anomia* He is in the darkness because lawlessness belongs in the darkness. Because He is *anomia*, the God of law infinitely recoils and absolutely banishes without limitation. "God so loved that he gave his only-begotten Son." Gave how far? There is no answer because there is no limit to what He has given. He has given absolutely. You remember the story of Abraham and Isaac. The refrain in the narrative, "They went up both of them together." And the Lord our Saviour went up with God His Father, both of them together all the way from Bethlehem to Calvary. He was never alone. And then at the point when the need was the greatest, He was derelict. And you see at that point the Lord and we are not together. At that point we abandon solidarity. It is not something we share with Him or something He shares with us. It is substitutionary, in our place. It is something He suffers so that we should never suffer it, so that you should never be *choris theou*. You might never be without God.

"I am persuaded that nothing created shall have the power to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil because Thou art with me." That's our comfort, but the cost and price has been that He became the derelict; He became the reject; He became the one pushed not only to the limits of the cosmos, but beyond the limits of that cosmos, pushed as *anomia* to the outside because the cosmos is ordered reality. Sin has no place in the cosmos. The lawlessness goes outside infinitely and Christ as God's Son is banished to the far country. Well, what does it all mean? It has never been better put than in these words, "He die, me no die." The infinite, absolute, limitless derelict is dealt with as sin deserved so that you and I should not be dealt with as sin deserves.

"And when I see that God, his Son not sparing, gave  
him to die I scarce can take it in.  
But on that cross my burden gladly bearing  
He bled and died to take away my sin.  
Then sings my soul O mighty God to Thee,  
How great Thou art!"

At that very point when God's Son becomes nothing, there God's Son becomes great.



Well, He shared our experiences, what is the consequence? Surely, it is His compassion as He was touched with a feeling of our infirmities. That is the great and outstanding insight of Reformed Christology. There is nothing that your Lord does not understand. There is no pain beyond His pain, no darkness beyond His darkness, no meaninglessness beyond His experience of meaninglessness, no loneliness like His loneliness, no loss of God comparable to His loss of God in the trauma of the cross. He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities. And there too you see the challenge to ongoing reflection because that compassion is not simply a dimension of the human nature of Jesus, it is a dimension of the divine person, so that God's Son understands. The Son of God understands your pain, understands your fear, understands your bewilderment as you stand and ask why. He understands as the Son of God. He can say, "I know exactly how that woman feels because I've been there and I felt as she feels."

But the point you see is this. Is it really only a dimension of the experience of God the Son? God the Father and God the Son are one and the same in being, *homoousios*. I cannot dismiss the current sympathy towards the idea of divine possibility by saying simply, "That is Moltmann" because before Moltmann it was also part of some areas of Anglican theology and because there is significant biblical evidence that the doctrine of the divine *apatheia*, divine apathy, divine emotionlessness is untenable. I am not going to dogmatize, I simply want that door open. And I think we might well ponder the constant emphasis of the New Testament upon the cost of our salvation. And not the cost of our salvation to God the Son, but the cost of our salvation as borne by God the Father. "He so loved that He gave... God did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all." God His Son not sparing. Am I bound by my presuppositions and am I bound to assume to believe tonight that God the Father looked on His broken, derelict, and accursed Son on the cross with *apatheia*? That is not a dogma I could cling to with much tenacity. And I would suggest that the Biblical data must be allowed to act upon the presuppositions to their further clarification.

I want to close on this note. You are complete in Him, *en Christo*. In Him there is all the fullness of God. In Him there is all the wealth of human experience, all the resources of incarnate compassion. And where are you and I? We are in Him, *en*

*Christo*. That is what is denied in Roman Catholicism. It is said, "No, *en Christo* is not enough. Faith is not enough. There must be more than being *en Christo*." And the Church of God during the Reformation said that we are complete in Him. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." If I am in Him, I am free from all condemnation. I am as righteous as Jesus Christ Himself. I am as righteous as God Himself—righteous with God's very own righteousness *en Christo*. That is what is denied, too, in Pentecostal theology. That is why it is no simple error. That is why it is so perilously destructive because it tampers with the *en Christo*, the principle that you are complete in Christ. It says that you can be in Christ and yet not have Spirit baptism, that is, not be filled with the Spirit. That is a much more important position than their emphasis on the continuance of charismatic gifts. I don't worry very much about these, but I do worry about this: the denial of completeness *en Christo*.

If we are in Christ then we, too, are filled with all the fullness of God. If we are in Christ then we, too, are filled with the Spirit of God. If we are in Christ then "we can be more than conquerors than Him who loved us." And I must say this: that, too, is what is at stake in the Apartheid controversy. Whether the *en Christo* is enough. Whether we are complete in Christ. There is a man in Christ. That man is filled with the Spirit of God. That man is a son of God. That man can do all things in the Christ who strengthens him. That man is a member of the body of Christ. That man can take a full adult part in the life of the Church of God. That man is a saint. That man can judge angels. And can we in Christ's name defend the denial to that man of participation in the body politic on the basis simply of his colour. I recognize the inopportuneness of the moment. I recognize the danger of moving out of my preferred register, but if in the name of Christ, in the name of Reformed theology, privileges are denied to a man *en Christo* on the basis simply of colour then we say that, too, is heresy. And then we thank the brethren who have come from that continent for the words they have spoken in terms of improvement in the situation. And we say to them that we hope and extend encouragement that they will go back and work out in the body politic the fuller implications of this fact that *en Christo* a man is filled, indeed, fulfilled *en Christo*.

I close on this note. We can do all things in the Christ who strengthens. There again is the key thing, you see, *en Christo*, the covenant with Christ, the election in Christ. That's where we are. This has not been some holy huddle. It has been, one hopes, a springboard for action, some platform from which we may launch ourselves into meaningful impact on the world around us. And often we shall be close to despair as we listen to that world and try to relate to that world. What do we do? We remind ourselves of where we are. We are in Christ. We can do all things. We can be more than conquerors because we are filled with all the fullness of God. Let us remind ourselves of the two great principles: in Christ we experience ontological and forensic salvation. Forensically, we are as righteous as God's own Son. But do we also remember that great transformational dynamic that we have *en Christo*? "I live, yet not I, but Christ who lives in me." May God grant it so.

## Apartheid

*by Dr. J. Douma*

### **The problem**

Everyone knows the problem which apartheid wanted to answer. According to statistics from 1980 there are 18.5 million blacks, 4.5 million whites, 2.5 million Coloured and 800,000 Asians living in South Africa. For all of them South Africa is their native country. Not one of these groups can say that their forefathers originally were the sole inhabitants. The Bantu tribes had come from Central Africa pushing out the Bushmen and the Hottentots (Khoikoi). The white population goes back to the days of Jan van Riebeeck, who founded a settlement of the Dutch East Indian Company (V.O.C.) on the Cape in 1652. The Coloured are the result of the mixing of these two groups, the Bantu's and the white colonists. The Asians consist mainly of Indians who, from 1860 onwards, had come from what was then British India to work on the sugar plantations in Natal. So, there is a wide variety of people living in South Africa, people who have come from all over the world and who no longer have anywhere else to go to.

Now, when we pay attention to the position of the whites in South Africa, we find that it is different from anywhere else in the world. For, when the great colonial powers like Britain and France willingly or unwillingly granted self-rule to the native populations, the white civil servant or planter was able to return to his own native country, but this was not an option open to the whites of South Africa. South Africa was and remained their native land, just as it is the case with the other peoples living there. But is their ruling position just as inherent?

The Bantus, the Coloured and the Asians claimed their rights. Just like those in similar situations in the rest of the world they no longer wished to be subjected to white rulers. And so the difficult question arose for the whites in South Africa as to how they—as a minority—would be able to live in peace with the other races. On paper the solution is quite simple: The whites in South Africa must share power with the blacks, the coloureds and the Asians! For surely the whites—as a minority of 4.5 million against a majority of over 22 million people—cannot reserve power for themselves alone. But this simple solution was rejected by the white rulers of South Africa. They were convinced that that would mean the end of

the western civilization they had built up, culturally, technically and economically. For a country where some still live in the stone age while others completely take part in western civilization, they thought they had to opt for another solution, a solution which has become known throughout the world as *apartheid*.

### **Apartheid as a System**

When, in 1948, the National Party came to power in South Africa, the policy of apartheid was pushed through with great force. There already were many forms of segregation in church and society; but apartheid as a system, enforced by law in every aspect, dates back to 1948.

For example, in 1949 marriage between black and white was prohibited by the "Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act". This had the full assent of the white Reformed Churches in South Africa. The Cape synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, even thanked the government for its "brave action" against mixed marriages. They politely requested further measures to attain three things:

- a) the prohibition of extra-marital sexual intercourse between whites and non-whites;
- b) the separation of whites, blacks and coloureds in separate residential districts;
- c) the stimulation of a healthy pride in one's own race for whites and non-whites alike in all the white and non-white state-schools.<sup>1</sup>

The first two requests were soon granted. In 1950 sexual intercourse between whites and coloured was prohibited by the so-called "Immorality Act" ("*Ontugwet*"). In the same year the "Group Areas Act" came into force; it divided towns and rural areas into zones for the different population groups. Whites and non-whites living in the same areas were separated. Hundreds of thousands of people, mostly non-whites, had to leave the place where they, and often their parents and grand-

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<sup>1</sup> J. Kinghorn, "Die belangrikste kerlike argumente en motiewe voor 1950", in *Op die skaal: Gemengde huwelike en ontug*, ed. D.E. DeVilliers and J. Kinghorn (Capetown, 1984), pg. 39. Even before the bill against mixed marriages had been submitted, a delegation of the three Afrikaner churches had pressed the government for such a law early in 1949, DeVilliers, pg. 54.

parents as well, had lived. They were brought to new residential areas allocated to them. Heart-rending scenes occurred at these forced migrations.

At a later stage the laws for the institution of the so-called homelands (*"tuislande"*) followed. Ten national units with their own land and their own government were to form the homelands for the black population. The "Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act" of 1970 made every black African a "citizen" of one of these national units, even if he or she did not and never had lived in that area. The result of this Act was that the blacks who lived in white areas for economic reasons became "foreign workers" within white South Africa. From then on they had political rights only in their own homeland.

The freedom of movement of the Bantu's in the residential areas was curbed and brought under control by a pass-system. Every Bantu from the age of sixteen was forced by the "Natives Act" of 1952 to carry a pass which contained details concerning tribe, ethnic group, employment permit, taxes, name, address and a monthly signature by his employer. The Bantu was no longer able to move freely from one town to another or between rural and residential areas.

The entire South African education system was also being stamped by apartheid. Before the introduction of the apartheid laws there had been mixed universities where white, coloured and black students were enrolled together. They often had good social contacts with each other. But in 1959 Apartheid, which had long been in existence in primary and secondary education, was also introduced in the universities.

Contact between various population groups was made impossible. Clubs and organizations were restricted by colour. It had even become impossible to play sports together. "Big Apartheid" was complemented by "petty Apartheid", and resulted in separate counters at post offices and banks, separate parks and separate beaches for whites and non-whites. The sign "*Slegs vir blankes*" (Whites only) which was put up everywhere left no doubt that apartheid in South Africa was being carried out at every level.

#### **The Church's Defence of Apartheid**

We have already seen that the Reformed Churches approved of apartheid. And that is putting it mildly, for these churches actively campaigned for the introduction of apartheid. What

biblical grounds did they have for doing so? In 1987 J.A. Loubser wrote a critical study with the title *The Apartheid Bible*<sup>2</sup>. Such a title might create the impression that the theology of apartheid claims numerous biblical passages to legitimate itself. Yet, in reality it appeals only to a few Bible passages. Let me illustrate this with the help of a well-known address, held by the South African theologian and poet Totius at a "Volkscongres" (Afrikaner Congress) in Bloemfontein in 1944. We come across the same arguments by all the defenders of apartheid.

Totius points out that God the Creator differentiated. He created a variety of plants and animals (Gen. 1:11 ff., "after his kind"). Due to divine providence mankind also, though made of one blood, has been divided into nations. God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26). The command of Genesis 1:28 ("to replenish the earth") means "trek" and to "trek" means forming a nation! When mankind tried to stay together by building the tower of Babel, the Lord scattered mankind over the earth by confounding their language (Gen. 11:9). Every nation has its own calling which shall last till the end of time. There is even talk of nations in the kingdom of glory (Rev. 21:24). The establishment of nations and kingdoms has the blessing of the Scriptures, but not the establishment of empires, which are portrayed as beasts. For they swallow up nations and extinguish barriers which have been set by God (Dan. 7; Rev. 17:13).

Gal. 3:28 (and its parallel text of Col. 3:11) is not considered to be in conflict with the above. Paul says there: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus". That points to unity; but that same Paul, according to Totius, leads a strong campaign to distinguish between male and female (1 Cor. 11:2ff.). Spiritual unity in Christ does not cancel creaturely distinctions on earth. Totius applies the calling which he considers each nation has to the Afrikaner people as well. He quotes with approval the words of Abraham Kuyper, who considered the "trek" of the Cape farmers to be the exact opposite of building the tower of Babel (where people did not go out

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<sup>2</sup> Capetown, 1987

but stayed together). The Boers formed a separate nation which, according to Totius, had received a special calling from God: the light that had shone in the North of Africa (in the days of Augustine and others), but which had been extinguished there, should again be carried across Africa—this time from the South. Africa was a dark swamp, with only glimmerings of light here and there; God had now appointed the Boer people to carry the torch into black Africa.

God did not want uniformity but a diversity of nations. The non-white should not be turned into a Dutch or British Christian. Within the Christian church he should represent his own group. What God has joined together let no man put asunder. Unity on a higher level does exist in Christ and is spiritual in nature.

Totius radically rejects mixing races, such as in Mexico and South America where white Roman Catholics were assimilated with primitive non-white races. Present-day science and history reveal that, as a result, the higher and more civilized race always disappears. The Bible is against such unnatural mixing, as can be seen from the prohibition to sow two different kinds of seed in one field, to make an ox and an donkey plough together, or to use wool and linen in the same cloth (Deut. 22:9ff.). Even though humanity consists of only one species, whites and non-whites are so far removed from each other that marriage between them can indeed be called a mixture. The behaviour of missionary J.Th. Van der Kemp of the London Missionary Society in the last century, who married a black slave woman, was unbecoming, if not unnatural. And so, Totius said, we salute our forefathers who kept that practice far from them.

For Totius the calling: "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called" (1 Cor. 7:20) is decisive. Slavery has, thank God, been abolished. Yet all the same, subordination, social authority and differences in status remain. In relation to the non-whites the Afrikaner acts as guardian.

That concludes our summary of Totius' address<sup>3</sup>. What Totius did not develop we find worked out in writings of a later date, namely that apartheid is aimed at the "autogenous devel-

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<sup>3</sup>J.D. du Toit (Totius), "Die godsdienstige grondslag van ons rassebeleid", in *Versamelde Werke*, ed. H. Venter, (Capetown, 1977), VII, pp. 330ff.



opment" of the different people in South Africa. Each people has its own culture which can only develop fully in social and political separation. Thus autogenous development means separate development. Even as recently as 1982 the well-known theologian and defender of apartheid F.J.M. Potgieter stated that every group has been given a separate national identity by God—an act of grace which we should accept and respect. This requires different institutions for different people<sup>4</sup>. It is clear from the above that the entire project of "autogenous development" was to be directed by whites. They were the stimulators or rather the directors of this development. Only under the "*baasskap*" (leadership) of the whites, superior as they were in management, administration and organization, could their vision for South Africa come true: a multitude of nations, each of which is able to develop in accordance with its own character, possessing political independence within its own homeland, and living in peace with the others.

#### **A Failed System**

Forty years after apartheid was systematically introduced in South Africa, it is clear to almost everyone that the system has failed. It is also rather easy to see why the system had to fail. On paper one can easily create ten black homelands in order to separate whites and blacks from each other. Yet as long as the white economy remains totally dependent on a black workforce, separation is impossible. What is the purpose of a homeland when the population has to live in white areas, because the homeland has nothing to offer economically? The migration of the workforce has not stopped. To put it even more strongly: the settling of black people in white areas did not stop. Go and visit the centre of Johannesburg on a Saturday morning and see how "black" this "white" city looks after so many years of apartheid!<sup>5</sup>

Karl Marx thought that the capitalist system would fall apart because of the "*Verelendung*" (impoverishment) of the labourers. He was mistaken. But no one who predicts the fall of apartheid, simply on the basis of the increasing number of

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<sup>4</sup> F.J.M. Potgieter, "Kontinuiteit tussen skepping en herskepping", in *Perspektief op die Ope Brief*, ed. D.J. Bosch et al. (Capetown, 1982), pg. 107f.

<sup>5</sup> B. Engelbrecht, *Ter wille van hierdie wêreld*. (Capetown, 1986), pg. 53.

blacks in "white" South Africa, will be mistaken. Political apartheid and economic integration are incompatible. It is said that in the year 2000 there will be 24 million blacks compared to 5 million whites living in an area which—according to the apartheid scheme—belongs to the whites. Of course it will be impossible to deny political power to 24 million people in the area where they have come to live and where they earn their livelihood. When the white farmer cannot or will not do without the black labourers, when the white woman cannot or will not do without black servants and when the white employer cannot or will not do without black employees, then the resulting *physical* integration is in itself devastating for the system of apartheid.

The large-scale resistance against apartheid in and outside South Africa has caused many apartheid measures to be abolished. "Petty apartheid" has almost completely disappeared. The laws against mixed marriages and against extra-marital intercourse between whites and non-whites have been abolished. For many non-whites in South Africa the situation has changed a great deal for the better, certainly economically. Their life has become more bearable, due also to the concessions the government was forced to make. But as long as the separate living areas (Group Areas Act) and the registration and classification according to race (Population Registration Act) are maintained, the structure of Apartheid is still standing, no matter how many cracks it may show.

The structure will collapse. I recently read in a Newsletter of the South African Embassy in The Hague that a commission, appointed by the South African government, had declared on the 11th of March, 1989, that "it is in no way possible to legally defend the fact that blacks are deprived of the right to vote". This commission petitions the government for a Bill of Rights based on the approval of the entire population, irrespective of race or colour.

#### **An Unacceptable System**

So, the dream of the Afrikaners has been brutally disrupted. But I cannot stop with this observation. We must ask ourselves if the dream had ever been praiseworthy so that its disruption is to consider as *unfortunate*. That brings me to the ethical evaluation of apartheid.

We should note first of all that this apartheid was forced on the non-whites by the whites. No one doubts that the overall majority of the non-white population rejects the policy of apartheid. The autonomous development was, in fact, laid down for everyone. Whether one was an educated black or not he was again to be bound by the tribal-system. There was no possibility to associate with another culture. Those who were black could not be white nor partake fully of western civilization.

Such a view cannot be maintained in the 20th century where the transistor radio can be heard even in primitive huts. Culture has national characteristics, but what is common to all is becoming more and more evident. Humanity is one and that will become more and more evident in its culture. This growth towards unity, however, was forbidden in South Africa by artificial means. It was made impossible to have fellowship with one another at the same university, at the same sports club or in an intimate loving relationship. Such guardianship far surpasses the boundaries allowed for government control. Here one ethnic group has decided the fate of the others who remained voteless and voiceless.

Secondly, it is morally impermissible to categorize people on the basis of their colour, as in South Africa. Certainly, the defenders of apartheid regularly link racial differences to cultural differences; yet, it is evident that colour is the decisive factor. And then it is only *one* colour which decides. For if the apartheid laws were really meant to promote the autogenous development of *all* people, it is impossible to understand why marriage and sexual contacts were forbidden between whites and non-whites only. Why not between Xhosa's and Venda's, or between Zulu's and Tswana's, who also have their own cultures? A similar form of discrimination was obvious to those who saw the signs "*Slegs vir blankes*" (whites only). Why only these signs and none with "blacks only"? Because in practice, apartheid is between two colours: white and *undifferentiated* non-white. We can imagine how humiliating this discrimination must have been to the non-whites.

It is little wonder that the policy of apartheid was stamped as racism. It is true that the philosophy of apartheid did not claim that one race was superior to an other; but it did claim that one race differed from the other culturally, and that *it had to stay that way*. What "different" and "distinctive" meant, was

evidently contained in the colour as an inherent and unchangeable characteristic. It is clearly a form of racism when inherited biological factors decide the political and social division of peoples.

South Africa, itself clearly shows the untenability of making colour the decisive factor. Focusing on culture, we see that the whites themselves do not form a cohesive culture. The Briton and the Afrikaner, the Jew and the Portuguese all have their own culture with numerous organizations of their own. On the other hand it is also a fact that in South Africa people of different colour can have one and the same cultural pattern. We only have to think of the Coloureds, many of whom have language, faith and numerous other aspects in common with the Afrikaners. But... the Jew is white and the Coloured brown, and thus they must be kept apart!

Thirdly, we should realise that apartheid, no matter how much it was depicted as necessary for the development of the various peoples, was developed by the Afrikaners to safeguard their own position as a minority group. Fear is the underlying motive for the apartheid system. It would never have been introduced if the non-white population had been the minority, as is the case in the United States. In that case there would still have been racism and separatism—as was and is the case in the United States. But there would have been no apartheid as a legalized system. In South Africa, however, the whites are a minority. Out of fear a system was developed which showed clear signs of having been designed specifically for the *self-interest* of the white minority.

I do not ignore the fact that the white minority has made sacrifices in spending billions on housing, education and health care for the non-white population. The blacks in South Africa are better off in a material sense than the blacks anywhere else in Africa. But it is not fair to compare blacks to blacks elsewhere, just like it would not be fair to tell the poor in the Netherlands that they are far better off than the poor in the Third World countries. When we make comparisons we should do so between people in the same country. Then the contrasts in South Africa will loom large. Only fifteen percent of the total land was allotted to the homelands. Education, wages, public services, freedom of movement and of organization, in fact, everything the whites had and received was better than what the non-white population got.

We can honestly admit that the fear on the part of the whites is not without grounds, and that much political wisdom will be necessary to establish peace in a multi-racial South Africa. But even in South Africa, the end does not justify the means. It is not wrong to defend your own interests; but it must be able to stand the test of the golden rule: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matt. 7:12). By that measure the apartheid system has remained below God's standards.

### **Unity of the Church**

In the above I have presented a general evaluation of apartheid. But we are here together at an ecclesiastical conference. That South African politics after 1948 grasped apartheid as the wrong means to organize its extremely pluralistic society, is morally questionable. But the fact that *churches* supported the apartheid-policy and introduced it within their own walls requires special attention. For how could apartheid in the church be reconciled with the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The powerful statement of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1829 already gave a negative answer: Joint partaking of holy communion by different races in the same church must be seen as an "irrefutable principle based on the Word of God". But this resolute answer would soon not be given so resolutely. In several churches white members asked for a separate ministry of the Word and the sacraments<sup>6</sup>. The synod of the Dutch Reformed Church was again confronted with the matter in 1857, and then it stated:

"The synod views it as preferable and scriptural that our heathen members are taken up and incorporated into our existing congregations, wherever it can be implemented; but where this measure, as a result of the weakness of some, obstructs the promotion of the Christian cause amongst the heathen, the congregation established or to be established from the heathen should enjoy their Christian privileges in a separate building or institution."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> That whites and non-whites sat in the same church does not mean that no distinctions were made. Separate seats were reserved for the non-whites (usually in the back). This also can be called "Apartheid", but then within the same church building and on a social basis; masters and servants (slaves) do not sit together.

<sup>7</sup> Loubser, pp. 11ff.

What was still an “irrefutable principle” in 1829, was only “preferable” in 1857. The further course of history reveals that joint worship of whites and non-whites was soon considered “not preferable”. And, finally, the necessity of 1857 was made a virtue: white and blacks ought not to join together in church.

The logical result of this development would be the organization of the non-white congregations into separate denominations. That began in 1881 when the Coloureds were given their own church (The Dutch Reformed Mission Church) *alongside* the Dutch Reformed Church. There were no differences in confession, church order or even in language, since the Coloureds also spoke Afrikaans. It was the colour of skin which determined the border between both churches. And it was the white church which drew up the constitution for the coloured church. No new measures could come into force in this church without prior approval of the white church<sup>8</sup>.

Similar denominations, referred to as “daughter” churches to distinguish them from the white “mother” churches, also came into existence for Blacks and Asians.

But was this a healthy development? Does not reconciliation in Christ mean unification instead of segregation? The relationship between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians in the early Christian church should set the example for all ages. Paul’s message in Ephesians 2-4 is quite clear: the Gentiles who were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. The middle wall between Jews and Gentiles has been broken down. Jews and non-Jews have been made into a new man, united into one body. There is no longer any talk of strangers, but of fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. Those who have been reconciled in Christ form one humanity, one people, one body, one family, one building.

Reconciliation without such unity is a facade<sup>9</sup>. The gospel does not set us apart from one another, but binds us together. It is striking that the New Testament leads us to seek this unity, not with likeminded people but rather with the less privileged,

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<sup>8</sup>J.C. Adonis, *Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur weer opgebou*, (Amsterdam, 1982), pg. 60.

<sup>9</sup>A. König, “Versoening en eenheid”, in *Perspektief op de Ope Brief*, ed. D.J. Bosch et al. (Capetown, 1982), pp. 55f.

so that we can carry their burdens and enable them to lead a life in accordance with human dignity<sup>10</sup>.

Cultural differences between Jews and Gentiles, though many, were clearly not allowed to be an obstacle to experiencing unity. Paul condemned Peter when the latter gave in to Jewish pressure to eat separately, so that he no longer wanted to sit at the same table with Gentile Christians. The bond with Christ and His church has priority above the bond with one's own nation (Phil. 3:4ff,20). The church which the New Testament portrays is nowhere an ethnic church where the separate identity of a group receives attention. "People" as a cultural and ethnic entity is not a theological category; it cannot but lead to mutual exclusiveness which endangers the life of the church as a new community<sup>11</sup>. The church is a community which finds its binding power only in faith in Christ.

South Africans, of course, have not denied that there is unity between the faithful of whatever colour. But in the apartheid ideology this unity was taken to be *spiritual*<sup>12</sup>. It was the unity of the invisible church, while the visible church had to portray the divinely willed diversity between peoples and cultures. And thus: apartheid without unity in worship, without unity in partaking of holy communion, and even without unity in ecclesiastical organization. We are one in heaven, here on earth we worship separately.

At a synod of the Dutch Reformed Church of Africa it was once stated that "it would not be unChristian when Christians of different races were to meet at international conferences". But, this synod went on to say that, in normal social activity, especially where ethnic customs are involved, "everyone should maintain his own ethnic identity by retreating to his own separate group"<sup>13</sup>. So, apparently, it is not unChristian to meet in Chicago or Edinburgh (international conferences are

<sup>10</sup> B.B. Keet, *Suid-Africa—waarheen?*, (Stellenbosch, 1956), pg. 44.

<sup>11</sup> J.W. de Cruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Grand Rapids, 1979), pg. 166 (quoting D.J. Bosch).

<sup>12</sup> In 1982 F.J. M. Potgieter was still saying that Eph. 2:16 ("reconcile them in one body") "can only be applicable to the *elect* from the Jews and non-Jews and must therefore refer to the invisible mystical body of Christ". In *Perspektief op de Ope Brief* (see note 9), pg. 107.

<sup>13</sup> *Handelinge van die 22ste Sinode van die Ned. Herv. of Gerk. Kerk van Suid-Afrika*, pg. 187, quoted in Keet, pg. 65.

multiracial by nature); but there should be no social intercourse between whites and non-whites in their own cities and towns!

In the light of the New Testament this attitude toward the church is impossible to sustain. There is certainly variety, but that must be expressed *within* the visible church. Totius is right when he says that unity in Christ does not cancel the differences between Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female (Gal. 3:28). But although Jew and Greek differ greatly they must still sit in the same church. It is no different with male and female. In spite of—and thanks to—the differences between them they can be one flesh and one family. Apartheid in marriage, family and church is far beyond the horizon of Gal. 3:28.

The images which Holy Scripture uses for the unity of Jew and Greek within the church (people, body, family, building, etc.), clearly point to a visible unity *within* the local church (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 2) as well as *between* the local churches (e.g. Acts 15)<sup>14</sup>.

Inevitably, the apartheid in the churches of South Africa has had serious consequences for society as a whole. Reconciliation in Christ unites, but apartheid divides people. The person of a different colour remained a *stranger*, which is evident even in the terminology utilized. A 1985 Report of the Reformed Church ("Die Gereformeerde Kerke") in South Africa<sup>15</sup> describes in detail the attitude one should take towards the "strangers" in South Africa. How is it possible that the word "strangers" referred to black Christians who had been living among the whites from one generation to another—on their farms and in their towns? If they had never been considered strangers in church, it would be less difficult to accept them as citizens in politics.

### **Diversity in Unity**

But what about the Bible texts which point to a diversity of nations, languages and cultures? Few people in South Africa

<sup>14</sup> J.H. van Wijk, "W.D. Jonker as ekklesioloog: 'n inleiding", in *Koninkryk, kerk en Kosmos. Huldigingsbundel ter ere van Prof. W.D. Jonker*, ed. P.F. Theron and J. Kinghorn (Bloemfontein, 1989), pg. 77.

<sup>15</sup> *Acta 42e Sinode van die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika*, January 8ff, 1985, (Potchefstroom, 1985), pg. 444ff.



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still believe that those texts can be used to defend the apartheid policy; let us have a look at them all the same.

It makes a difference whether one considers diversity to be a *fact* or an unchangeable *norm*. In the latter case diversity would show how the world should be organized. Nowhere, however, does the Bible claim that God created nations after their own kind, so that we should respect and keep this identity as unique and lasting.

Even the Afrikaners have not done so. Having come from different nations, they did not remain what they were: Dutch, British or French. Today they still believe that, after the "Great Trek" in the last century, they were smelted into a new nation under the providence of God. But just as this "Trek" was not without Divine Providence, neither is today's "trek" of millions of blacks to white industries. The course of history poses new problems all the time, where nations and borders are concerned. They have not been laid down as "creation ordinances". Nowhere in the Holy Scriptures is it said that nations have been created after their own kind and that those kinds should be kept separated. Plants and animals have been created in thousands of sorts "after their own kind"; but the whole of mankind goes back to one father and one mother. God wanted *different*, but not *separate* nations. Only the people of Israel between Abraham and Christ were ordained to be separate.

Furthermore, the God-ordained diversity is not violated by marriages of mixed race. Imagine what the coloured Christian in particular, descending from mixed, white and black (brown) parentage, must have felt about the fact that he was really considered to be a product of immorality. One of them writes: not *our* honour is attacked, but that of our white fathers or forefathers and their non-white wives or concubines, and vice versa<sup>16</sup>.

Nowhere in the Bible is a marriage of mixed colour forbidden, or sexual immorality between different races considered

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<sup>16</sup> R.E. van der Ross, "As die wet moraliteit voorskryf...", in *Op die skaal: Gemegde huwelike en ontug*, ed. D.E. de Villiers en J. Kinghorn (Capetown, 1984), pg. 117. See also pg. 143: The laws are experienced themselves as forbidding a man to be. By implication they prevent the coloureds from considering themselves of equal dignity to the whites.

to be extra sinful. Moses married an Ethiopian woman (Num. 12:1) and we are not given the impression that something like this was condemned in biblical times. What is condemned in the Holy Scriptures is not the marriage of mixed race but that of mixed religion. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14).

He who condemns the ecclesiastical rejection of racially mixed marriages is not saying that there are no problems with such marriages. But there are sufficient social mechanisms, conventions and values that prevent mixed marriages from becoming an everyday affair. Not promoting such marriages is something completely different from condemning them or declaring them a priori as undesirable. That, in fact, is what the well-known document *Church and Society* of the Dutch Reformed Church did in 1986 by stating: "Where racially mixed marriages do occur, the couples should be given pastoral guidance in all facets of marriage"<sup>17</sup>! I can imagine that a white and a coloured person who both speak Afrikaans, belong to the same church, have had a university education and come from reasonably well-off families, would reject such "pastoral guidance" as guardianship. Languages also come and go. We are impressed by the fact that God is praised in every language; yet that does not mean that the diversity of languages is a creation ordinance which has to be respected. The multitude of languages is the result of God's punishment (Gen. 11). Languages are not sacred, and they are still causing great divisions today. Culturally, languages are a great benefit, but that does not mean that when certain languages disappear a God ordained diversity is being violated.

#### **Just as Fundamental?**

When we look at the relation between "unity" and "diversity", it is wrong to say—like the apartheid theologians have said—that diversity is *just as fundamental* as the God ordained unity<sup>18</sup>. For all diversity in colour and culture remains

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<sup>17</sup> Bloemfontein, 1987, number 368.

<sup>18</sup> The Reformed Ecumenical Synod at Potchefstroom (1958) declared "that the fundamental unity or solidarity of the human race is at least as important as all considerations of race and colour". The report on race relations by the Dutch delegation was already stating that "every difference in race or colour is subordinate to the fundamental unity of

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subject to the unity of the church. In our faith we confess that there is one holy catholic church, and not that there is a diversity of churches.

We are not denying that within the one church of Christ there is a diversity which has consequences for worship. It is possible that differences of language and culture make the institution of separate churches, often with their own form of preaching and worship, advisable. In such cases one should not enforce an artificial unity, but acknowledge the diversity among God's people<sup>19</sup>. But such diversity is something completely different from apartheid, which separates people where union in one church is possible.

There certainly are permitted differences, due in most part to the differences in language; yet, such diversity does not set churches "apart" from others. Diversity, for example, need not lead to different synodical organizations. Within the one organization of the Dutch Reformed Church services are held in various languages (Afrikaans, English, Portuguese). Why should not the Bantu languages be among them as well?

What strikes us in particular is the ecclesiastical apartheid with respect to the Reformed church for the coloureds, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, which as a daughter-church shares a common confession and a common language with the Dutch Reformed Church. The Confession of Belhar (1982), which comes from her circles, gives a definite "no" to this ecclesiastical apartheid. This Confession states that unity in Christ should be visible, that it must be given shape and made

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the human race". See *Acta*, Potchefstroom, pp. 142, 148. Later assemblies of the RES would correctly speak in the same spirit.

<sup>19</sup> As aptly stated by the RES, Sydney 1972: "The unity of the Body of Christ should come to expression in common worship, including the Lord's Supper among Christians regardless of race. It may be that linguistic or cultural differences make the formation of separate congregations often with their own type of preaching and worship advisable; in these cases it is wise not to force an outward and therefore artificial form of unity but to recognize the differentiation within the circle of God's people. Even though different churches for different indigenous groups may exist, no person may be excluded from common worship on the grounds of race or color. The worshipping together of people of different races, is a sign of the unity of the church and the communion of saints and can be a Christian witness to the world", *Acts of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod*, Australia 1972, pp. 329f.

effective in numerous ways. This unity, according to the Confession of Belhar, can only take shape in freedom and not by force. The diversity of spiritual gifts, including the diversity in languages and cultures, offers possibilities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God. True faith in Jesus Christ, the Confession goes on to say, is the only condition for church membership. And so this Confession rejects any doctrine which absolutizes the natural diversity or sinful separation to such an extent that it hampers or disrupts the visible unity of the church or even leads to the formation of separate churches<sup>20</sup>.

The "daughter" has spoken more clearly on this issue than the "mother" has done so far!

#### **Is Violence Permissible?**

Systematically brought into practice, the apartheid which was meant to make people live together in peace, in reality brought hatred, outrage and violence. In such a climate the theology of revolution was given a chance. White church-members rightly rejected the theology of revolution and the civil disobedience connected with it. But... to what extent did they further the polarization among the non-whites by the theology of apartheid? Black theology is partly a reaction to white theology<sup>21</sup>. Those who defend apartheid within the church, must give the impression that Jews and Greek, white and black cannot live together in peace here on earth. Is it then so surprising that this is answered with such a theology?

We must reject both theologies, including the theology of revolution which produced the *Kairos Document* of 1985. It claims that the structural injustice caused by the system of apartheid can no longer be tackled by Christian "moralization". That hasn't worked. The time has dawned in which the tyrannical government, as they call it, must be replaced. In practice the *Kairos Document* asks ecclesiastical approval for boycotts and civil disobedience. It does so on the ba-

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<sup>20</sup> St. Rothe, *Kerken in Zuid-Afrika*, (Baarn, 1989), pp. 94ff.

<sup>21</sup> See J.H. Smit, "Swart ideologie, wit ideologie en skriftuurlike teologie", in *Fax Theologica van Universiteit van Die Oranje-Vrystaat*, 7 (1987, 1ff.) Cardinal terms in Black Theology are: oppression, black power, black consciousness, black liberation. According to Smit, Afrikaner experience, consciousness and self-preservation operate at the expense of Reformed theology.

sis of a Marxist analysis of the situation in South Africa, where the antithesis is between the (white) haves and the (non-white) have-nots. This document ignores the duty of the church to reject and to warn against violence, even when masters oppress their slaves. "For one is approved if, mindful of God, he endures pain while suffering unjustly" (1 Peter 2:19).

Patience will have to be exercised, no matter how difficult this may be. The church must unambiguously condemn the apartheid system, but with the authority of the Word and not by sanctioning the use of violent methods. I see no reason why the "right of rebellion", as it is acknowledged by Reformed theology, should be applied to the situation in South Africa. Freedom of religion is so obviously present that the faithful can even publicly denounce apartheid as unscriptural. And even though there is discrimination, and human rights that are respected all over the world (also by Reformed people) are being violated in South Africa, there are nevertheless signs of hope that apartheid can be abolished in the way of evolution, instead of revolution. The untenability of the system shows itself with great force, even to those who used to believe in it.

Those who use violence in such circumstances can appeal to theories influenced by Marxism, but not to the Holy Scriptures. When one's race and one's colour are considered most important, be it white or black, oppression is answered with weapons. But those who love the Kingdom of God before their own people, and who wish to belong to the universal church of Christ, do not rely on weapons but on God's promises.

#### **A Multifaceted Task**

When the Dutch Reformed Church rejects revolution in *Church and Society*, she does so quite forcefully: "In opting for peaceful reform of all facets of life, the Dutch Reformed Church must unequivocally condemn and reject the path of revolution, violence and anarchy"<sup>22</sup>. I think these words will have an even greater impact when the Dutch Reformed Church just as unequivocally rejects apartheid as a political system. Unfortunately *Church and Society* has not done so. It does not go beyond the conviction that "the application of apartheid as a political and social system by which human dignity is ad-

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<sup>22</sup> *Church and Society*, number 327

versely affected, and whereby one particular group is detrimentally suppressed by another, cannot be accepted on Christian-ethical grounds"<sup>23</sup>.

What a blessing it would be for South Africa when this influential church, which formerly stimulated apartheid so much, would now not only show signs of retracting but would state openly: "Apartheid itself (and not only its application) as an ecclesiastical, political and social system cannot be accepted on Christian-ethical grounds, because human dignity is being adversely affected by it and because all other groups are detrimentally suppressed by our own white group".

The church in South Africa with regard to the subject of Apartheid has a multifaceted task:

1. She must condemn Apartheid unambiguously and unequivocally as an ecclesiastical, social and political system, in so far as she has not done that already;
2. She must call on the government to do the same, so that new and just structures can be established within the South African society, in which all citizens receive the rights which whites already possess, in accordance with the golden rule: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12).
3. She must reject revolution and violence as tools to eliminate Apartheid; in so doing she must be conscious that this rejection will be of no effect if she does not simultaneously, as the Church of Christ in obedience to the gospel, fulfil her task against apartheid mentioned under points 1 and 2.

If the church would make such a pronouncement she would not be giving in to the theologians of revolution, but would be repeating what some of her own theologians had proclaimed more than thirty years ago, when no one had ever heard of a theology of revolution. I shall name only one. I did not need a Busak or a Tutu to form my evaluation of apartheid, but I owe a lot to the prophetic booklet from 1957 by the theologian Dr. B.B. Keet from Stellenbosch, with the title *Suid-Afrika—waarheen?* (*Whither—South Africa?*) Everything I touched upon in my speech is in essence formulated there. Let me end with a quotation of this Afrikaner who loved his own people,

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<sup>23</sup> *Church and Society*, number 306.

but who loved the gospel above all: "I acknowledge that demolition of the walls of division is an ideal to realize in our circumstances, but I do not want to appropriate to myself the right to relinquish the ideal because it is so difficult to attain. If I relinquish the ideal then I relinquish the Gospel, demoting it to the reality in which I find myself. But should the ideal be maintained, as it ought to be maintained by every Christian, then I do not determine the practice for ever, but still cherish the hope that it will one day be different"<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted by Loubser, pp. 74f.

## Contextualization

by Dr. K. Deddens

### Beginning

One of the most used terms of the seventies and eighties in mission literature is the term contextualization. This term first came to the foreground in missions and theological thinking in 1971. It was brought forward in the circles of the W.C.C. In that year a consultation on "Dogmatic or Contextual Theology" was organized by the Ecumenical Institute of the W.C.C. at Bossey, Switzerland. At this consultation the chairman Dr. Nikos A. Nissiotis noted that in the past, theology had too often been a science with no connection to real life. This, combined with the rise of a new technological society, had brought about a crisis, which in turn had led to a kind of "contextual or experiential" theology. As point of departure this theology prefers today's historical, political, and economical scene overagainst the Bible and confessional statements. Nissiotis was of the opinion that contextual theology should start at the economical, political and revolutionary situation. It would be possible that elements of the Bible are to be applied in those situations. For instance, in case of social injustice, the Exodus from Egypt could be used with the consequence that support could be given to liberation movements in a moral and financial respect.

As background we have to see the influence of theologians like Jürgen Moltmann (with his theology of hope) and Harvey Cox (with his ideas about the secular city). The year 1972, saw the publication of the third mandate program of the Theological Education Fund (an arm of the W.C.C.) in a book entitled *Ministry in Context*. The context is the whole social, political, cultural, and economical situation in which a person lives. This context appears whenever the reader of the Scriptures communicates the message to someone in a different culture. The message may be blocked or misunderstood because of the vast cultural gap. Efforts to bridge this gap may be foiled by cultural blinkers on either or both sides.

### Challenge

In 1978 Hans-Werner Gensichen (the author of the important mission book *Glaube für die Welt* (Faith for the World)) wrote an article about *Evangelium und Kultur* (Gospel and Culture) in "Zeitschrift für Mission", in which he stated that



contextualization is a *challenge* for church and mission. He says, this is a consequence of the fact that the church is conscious again of her inevitable "incarnation" in societies and cultures. We deal with contextualization in the matters concerning the proclamation of the gospel in the context of the cultures of peoples we do not know.

### **Indigeneity**

A major concern of the book *Ministry in Context* was that it was no longer sufficient to seek to develop an "indigenous" church. The word "indigenous" was first used in mission thinking by the great 19th century leaders Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn.

Rufus Anderson (1796-1880), administrator of the American Board for Foreign Missions, came to realize on his inspection tours that missions were too burdened with cultural and social activities. Mission was seen as a means to bring western civilization to "less privileged" parts of this earth. In order to be a Christian one had to dress and behave like the missionaries. Henry Venn (1796-1873), general secretary of the Church Missionary Society in Great Britain, concluded the same from his tours. He saw the additional danger of spoon-feeding the local Christians by the missionaries, thus creating so-called rice Christians. Many became Christians for material reasons, for the hand-outs of the missionaries.

To safeguard the integrity of the local church these two men formulated their "three-self concept". The indigenous church was to be *self-propagating*, *self-governing*, and *self-supporting*. Mission has to promote these three "selves" so that as soon as possible native ministers will take over the work of mission, that the young churches will have as soon as possible their own church buildings, and the fact that the churches are independent, free from any supervision by mission, and that they look for ways to have their own education and work in their own countries.

In the course of time some criticism was uttered on this 19th century concept. In the years after World War II certain weak points were stated. During the first conference of the I.M.C. at Whitby, Canada, 1947, the necessity of "partnership in obedience" was stressed overagainst the overemphasis upon indigeneity. The next mission conference of Willingen 1952 raised the matter in a slightly different context: not in the first

place concerning the relation between old and young churches, but especially the character, the nature and the goal of mission work were focal. Willingen considered the nature of mission work threatened by the "three selves". According to Willingen the "three selves" run the risk to become a goal in themselves, by which rigidity can appear. Attention has to be paid to the proper goal of mission work: the planting of the churches, who show that in their own environment they are serving and testifying congregations. In Willingen it was feared that too strong an emphasis upon the "three selves" in the process of indigenization would lead to a withdrawal from the calling of the local church to be a universal church—a church who loses the tie with her environment and with the church in the world.

Willingen did not only criticize certain aspects of the process of indigenization in the young churches. It mentioned also a number of points which could deepen the matter of indigenization. There are the following four: In the first place, an indigenous church must be able to submit the local cultures to Christ. She has to do that as a universal church with a local colour in relation to the situation in which she lives.

Moreover, she must have an adequate educated clergy, that meets the requirements which are locally in force. Furthermore, she must be characterized by an inward spiritual life that builds up the Christian community and testifies to those who do not know the gospel. Finally she has to keep an eye on the membership of the universal church in the world. She has to do this with a view to a good practice of participation in responsibility with the churches all over the world.

### **Corrections**

Willingen clearly made corrections on the current ideas on indigeneity in the mission field. No doubt the influence of J.C. Hoekendijk plays a role in this respect. Completely in the line of Hoekendijk the missiologist M.A.C. Warren declared that the church is a tent-church with categories like mobility, flexibility, initiative, pioneering, new patterns of mission activity. In the *Missio Dei*, in which the mission movement has its source in God Himself, God has solidarity with the world by Jesus Christ. The church is included in that solidarity. Therefore the church has to erect signs in the world in order to point to the presence of God's kingdom and to prepare the world for the kingdom. That happens by intensive penetration of all aspects of life—through mission. Willingen intended to

influence politics, to penetrate the state system in non-Christian societies, to cooperate in the solution of economical problems, to practice social justice and to be responsible for peace. From these motives we see the stress of Willigen on the training for ministers; indigenous ministers ought to receive an education, adequate to the concrete situation in which they work, which is in agreement with and is striving for interaction in the context of the situation in which the gospel has to be proclaimed. Although the discussions about this matter are driven out by other topics—also as a consequence of the renewed attention to the non-Christian religions—yet in Willigen one discovers the beginning of indigeneity turning into contextualization.

#### **Shoki Coe**

One of the directors of the previously mentioned T.E.F. was Shoki Coe, a theologian from Taiwan. He elaborated on the ideas already uttered in Uppsala 1968 and about the *Missio Dei*. Uppsala formulated a concept in this respect with a strong humanizing character:

"The longing for a just society is causing revolutions all over the world. Since many Christians are deeply rooted in the *status quo* they tend to be primarily concerned for the maintenance of law and order. Where the maintenance of order is an obstacle to a just order, some will decide for revolutionary action against that injustice, struggling for a just society without which the new humanity cannot fully come. The Christian community must decide whether it can recognize the validity of their decision and support them" (Goodall, 1968: 31).

As far as mission work is concerned, the following remarks were made by Uppsala 1968:

"Traditional mission board structures tend to commit the churches to institutional continuity. Too many traditional churches neglect relationships with independent, rapidly growing indigenous Christian movements. The Christian community desperately needs renewal, lest it become a spiritual ghetto, unaware of its true responsibilities... In all these, we need to recognize what is our Christian obedience in the total ministry of the Church... This is to be seen as preparation of the whole people of God for their ministry in the world" (Goodall, 1968: 33).

Shoki Coe worked out the ideas of Uppsala 1968 further. He called for the missiological distinction of the signs of times:

we have to be aware where God is at work in the cultures and where He calls us to participate in it. We have to pay attention to the signs, which are God's way of speaking in our context in practicing mission and theology.

To quote Shoki Coe himself in this respect: "Contextuality... is that critical assessment of *what makes the context really significant in the light of the Missio Dei*. It is the missiological discernment of the signs of the times, seeing where God is at work and calling us to participate in it" (Coe, 1973: 241).

In *Ministry in Context* Shoki Coe wrote that contextualization takes place at that point "where the Church, whether in the global or local sense, 'walks on the water' in faith, heeding the signs which are God's way of talking to us in our time and context" (Coe, 1972: 30).

This is all done in a *dialectic* process, and Shoki Coe can use the whole idea of dialogue very well in connection with contextualization. As the Church is called to participate in the *Missio Dei*, to the interpreter or theologian is called, not just to take the context seriously, but to participate in the context and to make the context an essential part of the hermeneutic.

### **Incarnation**

On the standpoint of indigenization of the young churches it is defended as being necessary to bring the gospel in terms of traditional culture. Contextualization, Coe says, does not deny that, but goes further. Therefore Coe uses the word incarnation.

According to Coe Incarnation is the divine form of contextualization. God has accommodated His love to the limited horizon. J. van Bruggen writes, characterizing this concept,

"According to Nida, Incarnation... means God's entry into the limited nature of mankind... God has entered the closed circle of human communication through written revelation, the Bible. The incarnation of the Word is so real that the Word is limited by the constraints inherent in all human speech because of its being in a time-bound cultural situation... His revelation is given by means of the time-bound forms of human communication... God did not give eternal truths, says Nida, but granted communication. He revealed Himself through the imperfections of human language" (van Bruggen, 1978: 74f).

The conclusion of Nida is: as God accommodated Himself, we have to accommodate in mission preaching and mission theology in a dynamic concept the "signs of times" in other cultures. We have to be aware how God is at work in the cultures of the indigenous peoples and in the radical-political situation in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In this way we have to create a starting point, from which national churches can develop more authentic, contextualized patterns—patterns which are accommodated to the cultural situation and which offer a big mission credibility. Because of incarnation this accommodation of the message to the situation of the hearers and to the hearers themselves is an inevitable necessity. This process of becoming conscious of the contexts takes place in the way of "involvement"—to entangle oneself and to enter in the situation of others—and in the way of "participation", to participate consciously in the life and thinking of men with whom one gets in contact. In this way a *theologia in loco* can be reached, a theology that is in agreement with and that responds to the situation, in which one lives and works.

From this idea it can be explained that one wants to come to an African and Asiatic theology. As far as Asia is concerned the book of Kosuke Koyama with the title *Creative Theology—The Gospel in Asiatic Perspective*, is appropriate. Koyama is working among the farmers of Thailand. He wrote that he had decided to make the great theological ideas of men like Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth subordinate to the intellectual and spiritual needs of those farmers. He is of the opinion that the greatness of theological works must be measured to the question of how far they can serve the farmers to which he is sent.

A still stronger accommodation to the local situation we meet in the so-called "black theology", an African theology, as advocated by the African Agbetti. He strives for an African theology in which the traditional idea that Africans have of God, his concept about spirits and sin are digested in an African manner and with African ideas. It can be clear that also the so-called theology of liberation—the theology from and for the oppressed in Latin America—is also dominated by the above outlined backgrounds. It is a theology which wants to move into the situation in Latin America—into the unrighteous structures in the society of that world.

**Gabrielle Dietrich**

It is clear that the dialectic contextualization concept and even more so the liberation model of contextualization has to do with a critical view on the inspiration of the Bible. So the background is a hermeneutic question, namely, is the Bible inspired by the Holy Spirit, or is it actually a man-written book? In an article, "Dialogue and Context", Gabrielle Dietrich from Madurai, South India, gave a clear answer to that question. She wrote,

"It is one of the merits of nineteenth century historical-critical research in theology to have asked for the "Sitz im Leben" of theological topics. It became clear that whatever we do, whatever we write and say, emerges from a context, and has to do with a specific environment. This kind of historical criticism produced the beginnings of contextual theology" (Dietrich, 1981: 29).

It is also clear and at the same time sad, that Gabrielle Dietrich points to the writings of Karl Marx. Also from that fact we can see the background of the dialectic and liberation concept of contextualization. I quote again Dietrich's article:

"However, the context envisaged by the historical-critical approach did not comprise the whole life of society, omitting in particular the economic and political power relations. It is one of the merits of the Marxist theory of knowledge that it points to the dialectic relationship between theory and praxis: at a different level we can also call it action—reflection" (Dietrich, 1981: 29).

Also Dietrich stresses the necessity of dialogue and liberation in connection with the whole matter of contextualization: "If we are serious that Christ has come to set at liberty the oppressed, we cannot expect this to happen just within the walls of our churches. We will have to join hands with people of different faiths and ideologies. This means a new beginning of dialogue" (Dietrich, 1981: 36).

**Accommodation**

In the circles of the W.C.C. the liberation model of contextualization, often in connection with the dialogue idea, is dominant. Looking at the Roman Catholics we see that the official policy of the church in this respect is the accommodation model. The Roman Catholic Missiologist Louis Luzebetac describes the method of accommodation as "the respectful, prudent, scientifically and theologically sound adjustment of the

Church to the native culture in attitude, outward behaviour and practical apostolic approach" (Luzebetac, 1970: 341).

Actually the whole matter of accommodation is very old. The background is the theology of Thomas Aquinas and the dualism between nature and grace. Man is by sin deprived of his supernatural gifts, but still he is able to do much good. Pope Paul XII stated that human nature in spite of original sin preserved in itself from nature something Christian. And Vaticanum II declared that not all that seldom in other cultures a ray of truth is reflected which enlightens all men. More than once there is quoted in this respect I Cor. 9:20-23, where the apostle Paul said that he became as a Jew to the Jews, and to the weak he became weak, that he might win the weak. For he did it all for the sake of the gospel. Throughout the ages this accommodation method was used in Roman Catholic mission work. The Jesuit missionary Robert de Nobili who worked in the beginning of the 17th century among the people of higher level in India, did not hesitate to call the gospel the "fifth Veda". The Hindus know four holy books, which they called Veda. De Nobili separated himself from the Christians of lower level. He whispered to people of higher level that he was in the possession of a top secret. This secret was the crown of the whole Hindu system, the climax or zenith of it. Actually in this accommodation method the gospel is considered to be the fulfillment of other religions. That theory is also propagated by advocates of the dialogue method. In this way not only in the past but also in the present Roman Catholics paved the way for dialogue with non-Christian religions. At the same time here is indicated the great purpose of Roman Catholic mission, namely to promote the supernatural unity of men in the way of planting the church. It is based on the idea that the grace of the church completes and exalts nature in heathen religions. "The missionary leaves his native country with a supernatural intention. His attitude to native languages is in the same way determined by it" (Wils, 1953: 252). I experienced that also myself when I was a missionary in Curaçao (Netherlands Antilles) that non-Christian morals and customs were used and claimed for Roman Catholic ideas. So the background of these Roman Catholic ideas is that culture as such has nothing to do with religion. It belongs to nature and it is an adaptive system which is completed to nature and it is an adaptive system which is

completed and perfected by Christianity in the way of accommodation.

### **Opposition**

Completely contrary to the accommodation theory stands the opposed model of contextualization. H. Richard Niebuhr describes this in his book *Christ and Culture* as the "God Against Culture" position. Niebuhr calls the Christians who reject culture "anticultural" or "radical" Christians. He says, for them "the whole world outside the sphere where Christ's Lordship is explicitly acknowledged is a realm of equal darkness" (Niebuhr, 1951: 106). He appeals to texts of the Bible like 1 John 2:15 and 16, "Do not love the world or the things in the world... For all that is in the world... is not of the Father but is of the world" and 1 John 5:19, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one".

Monastic orders used texts like these in order to underline their idea to abstain from the world. According to their idea "world" and "culture" are almost synonyms (cf. Garland, n.d.: 6). More or less the same is said by the Anabaptists, especially by their most extreme wing. They say: God cannot do anything any more with this world, because it is in the power of Satan and it is a total loss. He has to start again with a completely new world, in a second creation.

Overagainst the sympathetic method of accommodation in mission, also a radical anticultural idea is brought up. According to this idea the whole culture of the Gentiles is to be condemned. Without taking into account good elements of other cultures, the danger is very real that the hearer is not reached, because his whole life-style is completely rejected simply because it is different from the life-style of the mission worker.

### **Evangelicals**

Also in the circles of the so-called "Evangelicals" the matter of contextualization was discussed. An international Congress on World Evangelism was held in Lausanne, 1974 and four years later there was the Willobank Consultation. As far as Lausanne 1974 is concerned, there was a warning against contextualization ideas, propagated by the W.C.C. from Byang H. Kato, an evangelical theologian from Nigeria. In an interview with *Nederlands Dagblad* (published Jan. 31, 1976) he mentioned the fact that many Christians in Tchad were



killed because of their resistance to the rites of inauguration, in which they had to participate. "I was there", Kato said, "and many Christians affirmed that these rites are heathen practices. Yet these practices were defended by certain African Christian leaders. They give way to the ardent desire to defend the African identity rather than to the explicit command of the Scriptures." There were also other voices in Lausanne. R. Padilla warned for what he called the mixture of the "American way of life" with the gospel. "Those of us who live in the Third World cannot and should not be satisfied with the rote repetition of doctrinal formulas, or the indiscriminate application of canned methods of evangelization imported from the West" (Padilla, 1975: 275). He also pleaded for the application of the gospel in all areas of life "... in relation to such crucial issues as social justice and oppression, famine, war, racism, illiteracy, and the like" (Padilla, 1975: 275).

A committee was appointed in Lausanne 1974 that had to deal especially with questions concerning theology and education. This committee convoked a conference at Bermuda, 1978. There were present theologians, anthropologists, linguists, and missionaries. By the organizers of this conference the so-called Willowbank report was published, that dealt with the matter of contextualization. Again the name of R. Padilla must be mentioned. His contribution was entitled *Hermeneutics and Culture*. He stated that we have to transplant the biblical message from its original context into the context of the modern hearers or readers so as to produce in them the same kind of impact that the message was meant to produce in the original hearers or readers. The Word of God can only be understood and appropriated as it becomes "flesh" in a specific historical situation and all the political, social, and economical factors present in it.

B.J. Nicholls' contribution was entitled *Towards a Theology of Gospel and Culture*. He made a distinction between existential and dogmatic contextualization. The first starts from the local context, while the second regards Scripture as a fixed orientation point for contextualization. Nicholls doubts whether anyone can come to a truly objective dogmatic contextualization.

At the Willowbank Consultation there was not a clear confession of the absolute authority of the Word of God, because there was disagreement amongst the delegates concerning the

infallibility of God's Word. In the report it is said for instance that Scripture is written in the ancient Jewish and Graeco-Roman world, but that it does not address itself directly to Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam today. The reason for statements like this is the mixed company of delegates at Bermuda 1978.

**Charles Kraft**

Another evangelical who dealt with the matter of contextualization, rejecting the traditional and the old indigenous models, is Charles Kraft, Professor of Anthropology and Intercultural Communication at Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission. In an article of 1973, entitled *Towards a Christian Ethnology* he advocated adoption of a synthesis of anthropology and theology. He wrote, "unless western theology shows a greater flexibility, it would seem that the creation of a new discipline integrated theology and anthropology is called for" (Kraft, 1973: 115). In his article he warned against "absolute truths". One of the "Greek exemplifications of a God-man relationship" which is not absolute according to Kraft is the New Testament. For example, he reduces the Titus/Timothy lists of qualifications for eldership to "Graeco-Roman Culture" comparing them with American and Nigerian cultures. He implies that the doctrine of original sin at best only represents the attempts of Christians in the West to come to an understanding of eternal Truth (Kraft, 1973: 112). Kraft states that the doctrine of individual guilt "is perhaps more related to the individualism of our culture than it is necessary to faith" (Kraft, 1974: 70). He teaches that in order to be saved, a person "doesn't have to be convinced of the death of Christ" (Kraft, 1974: 71). He is advocating that Christian foreign missions should presuppose that the doctrines of the New Testament are not absolute.

The Bible can be compared with a casebook, a book with special case histories, a collection of striking examples (Kraft, 1979: 198). Also Kraft's keyword is "communication". In order to preserve the message in the process of communication the form must be changed. What is needed are "transculturations" (Kraft, 1979: 275). A transculturation is not tied, Kraft says, to the historical facts of the original, as a translation is. He concludes "I believe that the production of transculturations should in many cases be a higher priority than the production of even the best kind of translation" (Kraft, 1979: 285). Kraft

does not only speak about "dynamic equivalence" in connection with the translation of the Bible, but also in connection with "the church and all its customs". He calls that "dynamic equivalence churchness". Such a church is an original product in contemporary culture, not a badly fitted import from somewhere else. He says, in this way we have to go back to an apostolic faith. Such faith is not afraid to change cultural forms, even forms which God once used. "The Christian dynamic is in the venturesomeness of participating with God in the transformation of contemporary cultural forms to serve more adequately as vehicles of God's interaction with human beings" (Kraft, 1979: 387, cf. Agema, 1986: 59ff.).

#### Harvie Conn

Also present at the Willowbank Consultation was Harvie M. Conn, professor of Missiology at Westminster Theological Seminary, former missionary in Korea for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In 1984 he wrote a book, titled *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds, Theology, Anthropology, and Mission in Trialogue*. He says, in the past the goal of mission was often understood to be the civilization of other cultures, according to western rules and priorities. Christianity and Western culture were seen as almost identical (Conn, 1984: 84).

As for the present, the possibility of a trialogue exists—"missiology, cultural anthropology, and theology, in simultaneous interchange" (Kraft, 1984: 130). The future must be that new criteria for doing theology are accepted. Conn lists six centers from which to proceed. First the center of *Biblical Theology*, secondly the *covenant* but then as to practice faithfulness in life-style (one of most important issues of liberation theology is its emphasis on "to act"); in the third place, theology that is *culture-specific*, just as Scripture itself is. The cultures are changing again and again, so we have to address ourselves also with different issues. In the fourth place, we must accompany this theology with *up-to-date confessions*. Most of the creeds date from the times of Reformation, so they can be out of date and we have to revise them. In the fifth place, this contextual theology must also be *communal theology*; it must come from the people as a whole and not be superimposed. The last point is that this theology must be *prophetic*, challenging human cultures and socio-cultural ideologies of the world's societies. Conn deals also in his book with theological education. We still have old models. Even Calvin showed a neglect for the

real significance of the laity. Is the ministry not too much isolated from the laity? Here lies a great task for mission, and theology also has to see its task towards the world (Conn, 1984: 306). So the trialogue between missiology, cultural anthropology, and theology is absolutely necessary.

### **Possessio**

Finally there is the model of contextualization called *possessio*. It is used by J.H. Bavinck in his *Introduction to the Science of Missions*. Bavinck's position was worked out over against the Roman Catholic concept of accommodation, which is called by him "an adaption to customs and practices essentially foreign to the gospel. Such an adaptation can scarcely lead to anything other than a syncretistic entity" (Bavinck, 1960: 178). The word *possessio*, used by Bavinck, is derived from the 17th century Dutch theologian G. Voetius, who was professor at Utrecht. Already Voetius stressed over against the Roman Catholics of his days that accommodation and adaptation is to be replaced by *possessio*. The Holy Spirit takes possession by means of the gospel of the entire life of the people and of every area of their culture. Bavinck mentions a number of special points in which this *possessio* is significant: customs in marriage, initiation, eating of meat of sacrifice, customs with respect to death and burial, and agriculture. Finally he asks the question how far young churches may go in using artistic gifts and possibilities which they have at their disposal.

### **Evaluation**

I think it is important to evaluate not only the three selves of indigenization, but also the above mentioned seven models of contextualization, namely that of dialogue, liberation, accommodation, opposition, transformation, trialogue, and *possessio*.

1. As far as the "three selves" formula is concerned, namely, self-support, self-government and self-propagation, I have some problems with these terms. We have to be aware of the background of the founders of this formula. Anderson was a congregationalist, Venn was an Anglican. I want to stress that the local churches are indeed independent, but also that they need each other and that they can help each other. There is a confederation of churches, without any form of hierarchy. We confess the equality of churches, but

not in a sense of democracy, but in the sense of Christocracy. Jesus Christ is the only Head and Bishop of the church. "You have one Master, the Christ" (Matt. 23:10). See also Article 31 of the Belgic Confession and Article 74 of the Church Order. So the predicate "self-" is not without danger.

2. As for the word contextualization, of course we have to consider the people to whom the gospel is preached in their own context. But here we right away have the danger that the political or social context is seen as more important than the context of the Bible. Contextualization within the conciliar movement, sees hermeneutic as a dialectic process. As the church is called to participate in the so-called *Missio Dei*, the interpreter is called to participate in the context and to make the context an essential part of the hermeneutic. There are also objections against the term *Missio Dei*. The sending of God's Son into the world is so unique that we cannot compare it with the commitment, given to the church. Jesus Christ is God and we are sinful human beings. The same must be said of the incarnation. That word is never used in connection with human duties. In Phil. 2 it is closely connected with Christ's death and resurrection, the facts of salvation. It is important to see that we are never placed on an equal level with Jesus Christ Himself.
3. Theology of liberation (maybe it is better to speak in plural, theologies of liberation, because of the gospel variety in them) were actually a further development of the dialectic model of contextualization. This model does not start with the Scriptures but with a prior ideological commitment of the oppressed and poor in their various contexts and struggles. This ideology is usually Marxism and it becomes a kind of social pre-understanding, often misusing Bible texts which have to function as instructors for the Christian mind and conscience in showing how we have to help the oppressed and poor. But in this way the Bible is dethroned from its position of primacy and authority. Actually the Scripture is used as a book of illustrations of God's activity in history. The ultimate goal is not to preach the gospel of eternal redemption in Jesus Christ, with the demand to repent and believe, but to have a revolutionary effect on the existing structures in church and society.

4. The accommodation model of contextualization is also to be rejected. In the first place, the whole matter of culture does not belong to a neutral area in which much good and even the knowledge of God can be achieved without the light of the gospel. There are not two different areas, nature and supernature. Grace and nature are not absolute contrasts either. But God's grace in Jesus Christ has to penetrate nature and to turn it to God. The gospel of Jesus Christ may never be mixed with pagan ideas, because that would irrevocably lead to syncretism. The message of the gospel is unique, and the Word of God is the only divine Word, and never to be called a "Fifth Veda" or whatever climax of any non-Christian books. In 1 Cor. 9 Paul makes himself subservient in order to raise as little resistance as possible against the gospel.
5. Culture is not to be identified with "the world" so that we have to avoid it as such. That is the objection to the total opposition and rejection of contextualization. Culture does not belong to things that are "total loss", so that we can neglect it. If the gospel is proclaimed in the midst of a non-Christian nation, the habits and customs and the whole cultural background of that people must be studied thoroughly, in order to penetrate the world of thinking and acting of that people. Here 1 Cor. 9 is applicable where the apostle Paul is stressing that he might win the people. A negative attitude can only turn others off.
6. The transformation model of contextualization evokes more than one question. How are form and content of the Bible to be separated and how are the Scriptures to be maintained as our only rule of faith and practice? Especially the idea of God's revelational activity as a dynamic process is dangerous overagainst the confession that the Bible is God's infallible Word (cf. 2 Peter 1:19, and also Rev. 22:18-20). Here Art. 2-7 of the Belgic Confession are at stake! Here the danger is to end up with a relativism which will undermine the authority of Scripture.

God's Word is not a kind of "case-book" either. God's Word is a whole and may not be cut up in different segments or cases, some of which are useful and others not. As for the word "transculturation"- it means that events of the Bible are recreated into events of today's cultural context. But such a transculturation is not bound to the original text. So

not only the infallibility but also the clarity of the Scripture is at stake.

Finally, in the transculturation model of contextualization, the view on sin is too much underestimated and the view of man is too optimistic. The plea for cultural validity does not take into consideration the totality of man's fall into sin and the total depravity of good.

7. Although the triologue concept of Harvie Conn can be called a thorough attempt to give a scriptural answer to the questions raised in the whole matter of contextualization, there are still some objections to be brought forward to this model. In the first place: the Reformers did not try to deliver any system but they just wanted to go back to the Scriptures. Conn asks for a reformulation of the confessions; but in what respect are the confessions not useful for mission work? It is not right to speak about a "static" sense of the Scripture and to promote in this respect the "dynamic" action of, for instance, liberation theology. Also our methods of exegesis must be replaced by more dynamic models. But I am afraid that Conn gives in too much to modern concepts of contextualization. Here is still the danger that the context will dominate the text.

I appreciate Conn's stress on the necessity to study anthropology in connection with theology and missiology, but we must be aware of the fact that the Bible has the final word; that the confessions, based on God's Word have also their value in mission work; and that anthropology may never dominate the explanation of God's Word, because men may not pretend to be wiser than God Himself.

8. J.H. Bavinck's model of *possessio*, on the path of G. Voetius, has undoubtedly good elements, especially over against the Roman Catholic concept of accommodation. It has to be stressed that the whole man has been affected by sin in every respect. It is also true that the Holy Spirit will take possession of the entire life of men, when He works faith in the hearts of the hearers of the gospel. But that does not mean that He takes possession of all the parts of culture in which one lives. The Holy Spirit works with God's Word and the proclamation of God's Word. But that has also a separating and dividing aspect. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and

marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebr. 4:12).

That means that many ideas, habits, customs, etc., belonging to a non-Christian culture, must be given up. The Holy Spirit does not want to possess pagan thoughts, words and deeds. He wants to convert the people completely. That does not mean that they must be converted to Western customs and to another tradition, but it means that they have to be totally different from their former life, because they belong now to Christ. He has the say now in their life in all respects.

### Conclusion

I come to a conclusion. We have to deal with mission in the context of different situations. Today there are many models of contextualization. That is not to be denied or to be neglected. But there is only one acceptable model and that is biblical contextualization. That means, in all our mission work we have to base ourselves on the infallible Word of God. Neither culture, man, science, nor anything else may dominate over that Word of God. In the confrontation with non-Christian cultures we have to proclaim that Word of God in all its purity and in all its consequences. Not as a timeless Word, but as the living and actual Word, addressing itself to today's people in their special circumstances, also in their circumstances of a totally different culture. But then this biblical contextualization must be a model of *reformation*. The apostle Paul writes, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2).

Whatever does not conform to the Word of God in a certain culture must be rejected and transformed by the total renewal. That is what we call reformation. I remind you of the three adages of the great Reformation of the 16th century, *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola gratia*, and *Sola fide*.

*Sola Scriptura*, only the Word of God, and the whole Word of God dominates the cultures. Only the Word of God and the whole Word of God is to be preached in mission work. It is not a Word that is changeable in different circumstances, but the living, infallible Word of God, with which the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of men to reform them completely, in order that the man of God may be perfect, making holiness perfect in the



fear of God. *Sola gratia*, by grace alone, is the sharpest rejection of all kinds of self-redemption of non-Christian religions. It is also the sharpest rejection of all the efforts of men to change the world by human concepts and revolutionary ideas. Also in mission work, everything is to be expected from God's grace alone, never by any work of man. Finally, *Sola fide*, by faith alone, is the firm faith in God, overagainst the unbelief and superstition of the Gentiles, such faith alone will conquer. It stands antithetically over against the non-Christian religions. It stands antithetically over against satanic and anti-Christian powers in the world. It conquers the world and the counterpowers which fight against God.

It fulfils men of God in their different cultural circumstances. It is connected with the old antithesis, given by God Himself right after the fall: "I will put enmity....," says the Lord (Gen. 3:15). It stands diametrically overagainst the idols and it asks "What partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?" (2 Cor. 6:14-16).

Culture was beautiful in the beginning, and the first man Adam had a beautiful task of *colere*, to till and to keep the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15, cf. K. Schilder, 1977:41, where he stresses that Adam had a cultural mandate and that from the beginning religion and culture belonged together). But that beautiful culture is corrupt, poisoned, decayed by sin. But it is not a total loss. There is still the great commitment to bring the gospel to the whole creation, to the nations and the peoples in their own cultural circumstances. If they hear and believe the message, they have to give up a lot. There is still the apostolic rule that they have "to abstain from pollutions and from unchastity and from what is strangled and from blood" (Acts 15:20, cf. Wielenga, 1971: 75: "No Christian from the gentiles is forced to honor the habits of culture of Israel, because God has abolished them"). But abstaining from these former cultural habits, they will gain a new life-style that they may follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They belong to the great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, from all cultures, standing before the throne and before the Lamb (Rev. 7:9).

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## The Tangun Shrine Worship and Radical Christian Movement in Korea

*by Dr. Ho Jin Jun*

### **Introduction**

At the present the Korean Church, which is the fastest growing church in Asia with great potential for world missions in the 21st century, is facing a critical moment. The crisis the Korean church is facing should be considered from two aspects; one from the cultural identity, and the other is ideological or radical christian movement based on the political theology such as liberation theology and "Minjung theology". Around 1985 our "Kosin" group (Korean Presbyterian Church), which is known as the most conservative and pro-government group among the Korean churches, strongly protested against the government planning the Tangun Shrine erection. I suppose that our representatives who participated in the 2nd ICRC conference reported it to you. However, no longer is the Tangun Shrine worship the hot issue in the Korean Church, instead the unification and "Minjung" theology has become the debating issue. As far as the Minjung theology is concerned, this radical political theology was introduced to the world as the typical Korean theology. So I would like to explain to you the two aspects our churches are facing these days: cultural identity and ideological or theological issue. The agenda indicates that some of your papers are focusing on the "texts", on the other hand, my paper brings our "context" to you. So far our theology in Korea mainly discussed on the texts, not seriously considered context.

The so-called conservative theology in Korea did not give the right answer to the questions raised by the people; on the other hand they only give right answers to the questions nobody asked. Even the Reformed theology is facing crisis, because we do not answer how to deal with our cultural heritage and complexing socioeconomic political situation from the Reformed perspective. Now the Tangun Shrine movement is no longer a threat to us, rather, the debates on unification of the divided nation and anti-government demonstration are difficult issues for us. There is the Unification Church with its syncretism on right side, and the Christian radical move-

ments who try to realize utopia on the earth on the left side. The Tangun Shrine and the Christian radical movements contrast each other, but we feel the need to discuss them in order to let you know how the Reformed theology in Korea deals with the problem of cultural identity and sociopolitical situations.

### **I Tangun Worship: Cultural Identity in the Korean Churches**

Most nations in the world have their own myth on the founding of the nation and claim divine origin of their people or tribe. Korea is no exception. When the writer went to the elementary school in childhood, the teachers taught students that our nation was founded by *Tangunwangum* in B.C. 2333. To help you understand this myth, I quote the story as follows:

An ancient record relates: In olden times was Hang In (Heavenly god). His son, Ung, born of his concubine desired for himself an earthly life and wanted to be among human society. The father, knowing his son's intention, looked down upon the San Wei and the Taebaek and came to the conviction that his son might bring some benefits to mankind. The father gave his son three talismans and let him go. Ung descended with three thousand followers on to the top of Mount Taebaek under the trees of the sacred altar which place was called the Divine Place. He had command over the Wind Noble, over the Lord of Rain and the Lord of Clouds. Therefore, he had to attend to the planting of grain, the regulation of human life, of sickness, of punishment, and he had to judge good and evil; in short, he had more than three hundred and sixty affairs to direct.

In this world he regulated all metamorphosis. At that time there were a bear and a tiger who lived together in a cave. They often prayed to the god Ung because they wished to be transformed into human beings. Ung gave them a miraculous wormwood stalk and twenty beads of garlic. He instructed them to eat this and not to see the sunlight for one hundred days. Then they would easily acquire human form. These (herbs) the bear and tiger took and ate. They (following the instructions) remained in seclusion for three times seven days (only) and the bear acquired the body of a woman; but the tiger had not been able to abstain (from looking at the daylight) and so it was not possible for him to obtain a human body. The bear-woman could find no one to marry, whereupon under the trees of the altar she prayed to become pregnant. Ung changed his form and married her.

She became pregnant and bore a son and his name was Tangunwangum.<sup>1</sup>

According to this myth Tangunwangum established a nation and gave to the kingdom the name of Choson, land of morning calm. Its capital city was "Assadal" which is now the capital city of North Korea, but later he moved the capital city from Assadal to Mt. Kuwal in the Hwanghae province, where there is now a shrine called Sam-song (Three Holy Ones: Hwanin, the Heavenly King, Hwanung, the Heavenly Prince, and Tangun, the first human king). It is not necessary to say that this shrine has become a focus for shamanistic ritual performances in which Tangun himself is worshipped.<sup>2</sup> In the beginning of the 20th century Paek Bong, a Korean scholar, started Tangun religion whose god is Tangun. His intention was to keep the Western religion (Christianity) from spreading in Korea.

Now there are several groups among the Tangun religion. They are united to play the leading roles on the movement of the Tangun worship. To make the religious analysis of the Tangun myth, it is a origin myth of the North Korean people, which was made after the unification of Korea by the Silla Dynasty in the 7th century and just before the Koryu Dynasty in B.C. 918-1392. Frits Vos Comment on this myth in his book *Die Religionen Korea* as follows: "This myth contains some elements to give interesting speculation. Although it is not always so, the bear-worship and belief in human's descendant from bear are found in North Asia as well as in North America. In another relation we see the vestiges of Totemism in Korea" (translated).<sup>3</sup>

Most Koreanologists agree that this myth is closely related with Korea's Buddhism, Shamanism and Taoism, and accordingly we do not regard the myth as real historical fact that took place in time and space.

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<sup>1</sup> Spencer J. Palmer, *Korean and Christianity: The Problem of Identification with Tradition* (Seoul: Hollym Corporation, 1967), pp. 9-10

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pg. 10

<sup>3</sup> Frits Vos, *Die Religionen Korea* (Berlin: Verlag Kohlhammer, n.d.), pg. 27

### **1. The Tangun Shrine Worship Movement in Korea**

There was a rising of nationalism in the Third World after their independence from the Western colonialism in the early 1960's. In Korea also national consciousness was rising among the people, therefore the Tangun myth has appeared as the most important concern for the nationalists and peoples. As early as 1948 the Korean government adopted to use the Tangun year as a national chronology and October 3rd has become the national holiday in the commemoration of the national foundation based on the Tangun myth. Even the Christian president, Dr. Sung Man Rhee and some Christian politicians were not hesitant to use the Tangun year in the name of national self-consciousness. In 1966 President Park Jung Hee with strong national self-consciousness ordered our Prime Minister to erect the Tangun Shrine temple in the Namsan Park where formerly the Shinto Shrine Temple was placed during the Japanese occupation. The Korean Christians strongly protested against Park's order, and he stopped that planning. However, the government erected a Tangun Temple in the Sajik Park located in the central place of the city of Seoul. It is needless to say that this temple has become the focal point for the adherents to Tangun religion and citizens.

In the 1970's and the early 1980's the voices of the Tangun Temple's erection were silenced, which seemed to be overshadowed by the people's crying for democracy and social justice. But in 1985 the Korean government again expressed their planning to erect Tangun temples around the nation and attempted to expand the existing temple in Sajik Park. Therefore, our Church has raised the strongest possible voice and has taken strong actions against the government's planning, as a matter of fact, they have kept silence on the social justice and democratization issues. At this time some nationalistic historians and students describe the Tangun myth as a historical fact and regard Tangunwangum as a historically real figure, claiming that Japanese Scholars and the pro-Japanese Scholars advocated the Tangun myth as a non-historical and unreliable history in order to justify their colonialism on Korea. For example, Dr. Lee Byung Do, a well-known historian, argued that Tangun is not myth but a real historical figure.

Even a young student, Mr. Kom Young Ju, argues that Tangun is a real historical fact, claiming that the grass root's

culture of our nation is the father of the world culture and civilization. When we look over the world map, the Korean people is the origin from which the world culture came including Japan, Europe and America. The serious thing for the Korean churches is that the Unification Church joined this Tangun shrine movement by agreeing that Tangun is a historical figure and the Eden and four rivers of Genesis chapter two are located in Korea.<sup>4</sup>

Then why do some nationalistic scholars and people lead the Tangun Shrine movement? They argue that the need of the Tangun temple can restore people's ethics and behaviour, secondly, it brings national self-consciousness (*chuchuishik*); thirdly, it is needed for the purpose of national unity and harmony among the peoples; fourthly, it is a royal road leading to the unification of the divided nation. Despite their reasonable arguments for the Tangun worship movement, the Korean Church rejects it on the reason that Tangun worship is idolatry which can result in God's severe judgments.

## 2. The Tangun Myth and Indigenization Debate

With the rising of nationalism in Korea in the early 1960's the Korean Church had the indigenization debates, and it had to do with the Tangun myth. In August 27, 1962, D.T. Niles of Ceylon visited the Korean Church and spoke on indigenization at the Christian Literature Society in Seoul. This stimulated the indigenization debates in Korea.

"With little reaction from the conservative camp, the debate has remained largely an internecine war within broadly neo-orthodox circles. But its importance for the church as a whole cannot be overlooked."<sup>5</sup>

In his lectures Niles called for the necessity of a Korean theology. He used the following simile:

First, the gospel is seed, the Church is a flower grown from the seed. But the flowers that come from the seed differ according to the soil in which they are grown. Likewise, each church has its own distinctives according to its national culture... Second, the Gospel is theology. There is German theology in Germany.

<sup>4</sup> Yong Ju Kim, *A History of Tangun Chosen* (Kor.) (Seoul: 1987), pg. 76

<sup>5</sup> Harvie M. Conn, *Korean Theology: Where has it been? Where is it going?* (Gotema, Japan: Reformed Ecumenical Synod Pacific Conference, 1970), pg.12.

English theology in England, Indian theology in India; likewise the Korean church should have its own Korean theology.<sup>6</sup>

From 1963 onward articles and essays on indigenization increasingly began to appear. Dr. Sung Bum Yun, professor of Methodist Theological Seminary in Seoul, was the first Korean scholar to advocate Korean theology. His book *Christianity and Korean Thought* (Kor.) was a significant treatise on indigenization. Borrowing Bultmann's concept of *vorverstandigkeit*, he defines indigenization as the pre-understanding of self, or self-identity prior to receiving the Gospel. Accordingly traditional religions play an important role in making people receptive to the Gospel, because they are the soil in which the Gospel seed is planted.<sup>7</sup> Yun's study of indigenization begins with the Tangun myth. In this account, one comes upon interesting similarities with the concept of the Trinity in Scripture. Therefore, he related the Tangun myth with God's Trinity, and identified it with God. He regarded the Tangun myth as the treasure of the Korean people the *vestigium trinitatis*. Whanung in the myth stands for the Father, Whanung for the Holy Spirit, and Tangun for the Son.<sup>8</sup>

Due to the similarities between Trinity and the myth, some scholars maintain that the myth was formed under Christian influence between the fourth and eighth centuries, when Nestorian ideas spread to China and thereafter to North Korea. Non-Christian Koreanologist Byung Do Lee says that the Korean trinity is found in the Tangun myth. Il Cho Chang, Professor of Hankook Theological Seminary (the most liberal Presbyterian seminary), suggests to use the Tangun myth as the stepping-stone for evangelism by making the comparative study between the Creation story in Scripture and the Tangun myth. He argues:

Some may complain that we take again the Tangun myth seriously which people already looked down as worthless pagan myth since a long time ago. But though that is a pagan myth, it is necessary to reflect on it for mission and theology. Until now the mis-

<sup>6</sup>D.T. Niles, *The Bible Study and Indigenization: The Church and Mission in Korea* ed., Harold S. Hong, (Seoul: CLSK, 1963), pp. 279-280

<sup>7</sup> Sung Bum Yun, "Whanung, Whanung, and Tangun are god", *Thought World* (Kor.) May, 1963, pg. 267

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



stonary attitudes of the Korean church has never paid any attention to the so-called non-Biblical theory or myth... Theology does not only analyze and defend the contents of Scripture, but also it should be the meeting place to meet the situation in Scripture and our context. Although we can not expect any connection between the creation story in Scripture and the Tangun myth, however, there is possible dialogue between the two in theology. It is the task of Korean theology.<sup>9</sup>

Here we can understand that many Korean scholars take our cultural heritages seriously and they relate it to Christianity. Then what is the conservative group's response to the indigenization debates and what does it mean for us? In a word, we, the Kosin group, did not express any response to this debate by closing our eyes on it. We gave our attention to the "texts" of the Bible, but we did not teach students how to consider our cultural heritages and our traditional religions. It is needless to say that Dr. Yun's indigenization on the Tangun myth is a syncretistic approach because he made a great mistake in attempting to synthesize native culture and biblical Christianity. He sought for linkage between Christianity and traditional Korean thought. He neglected the distortion of the truth that invariably is the result of its being handled by the natural man. J.H. Bavinck tried to interpret the "moment of truth" in heathen religions in terms of common grace, and this common grace becomes the point of contact. But for Yun, however, the point of contact is the similarity between Christianity and traditional thought. In this respect, he emphasized the *analogia entis* of Karl Barth.

Even though the Kosin group did not react against the indigenization debates, some theologians of the conservative church severely criticize Dr. Yun's "Tangun theology" as a dangerous form of syncretism. Here we will quote one of the many criticisms on Dr. Yun's indigenization theology:

The forming of indigenization theology seems to be fit for the spirit of age, because Korea is attempting to establish the Korean democracy. The Korean democracy could be possible through politics, but not through Korean theology. Christian truth we believe is not a relativistic political theory of philosophy but it is an absolute unchangeable; therefore, we can not

<sup>9</sup>Il Jo Chang, "Theological Understanding on Tangun Myth", *Christian Thought* (Kor.) December, 1961, pg. 71

conceive of any Gospel truth which was only true according to the Korean situation. Seeds containing life never produce different fruits according to different soils.<sup>10</sup>

## II The Radical Christian Movement in the Korean Church

From the beginning the theology of the Korean Church was so conservative that the liberal theology of the Western church was denied by the pastors and seminary students. The American missionaries who came to Korea in the end of the 19th century mostly were from the conservative groups or fundamentalism with Puritanic zeal and Wesleyan fervor. To help you understand the characteristics of the early Korean theology and faith, I quote again Dr. Palmer:

The typical missionary of the first quarter of the century after the opening of the country was a man who still kept the sabbath much like his New England forebears a century earlier. He looked upon dancing, smoking, card-playing and the drinking of liquor as sin in which true followers of Christ should not indulge. In theology and biblical criticism he was strongly conservative, and he held as a vital truth the premillennial view of the second coming of Christ. Higher criticism and liberal theology were deemed as dangerous heresies.<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, the missionary programs of the missionaries were usually preoccupied with direct evangelism, baptizing and church planting, not with social concern. Community reform and social betterment were regarded as the use of time and energy that could be more gainfully employed in evangelism. This may be a weakpoint, but this could be a reason for the rapid church growth in Korea. Dr. Samuel Moffet, formerly a Presbyterian missionary to Korea, put his finger on the reasons of the church growth in Korea as follows:

Many reasons have been given for the amazing Protestant growth, which was particularly notable in the Presbyterian church. The most important reasons seem to have been a stress on people-to-people evangelism, Bible training for the entire church membership, the adaptation of the Nevius method (which promoted self-support, self-government and

<sup>10</sup>Eui Hsan Kim, *Gospel and Truth* (Kor.) (Seoul: Christian Literature Crusade, 1975), pg. 24

<sup>11</sup>Palmer, op.cit., pg. 26

self-propagation), and the unique outpouring of the Holy Spirit in revival.<sup>12</sup>

However, this strong conservative theology was especially challenged and criticized from the more progressive church, liberal theologians and students. The John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* faith was almost accused of being individualistic, neglecting the social responsibility of Christians. Bonhoeffer has become a hero for the young men and liberal minded people in the Korean church. In the 1960's the liberal group expressed social concern by protesting against the military dictatorship of president Park's regime. While this liberal group made a strong protest against the military dictatorship, they accused the conservative church of isolationism, literalism and verbalism. Despite their strong criticisms on the conservative theology and faith, this "new theology" was acceptable to some but was rejected by the majority.

In the 1970's this "new theology" raised a strong wind on the church as well as in the society by introducing the liberation theology of Latin America to Korea. The radical political theology made great impacts on the church as well as on the society because this theology gave a good theoretical foundation to those who fought against the Korean government on the human right issues. Strictly speaking, liberation theology was introduced to Korea in 1970 and Moltman's theology of hope in 1973. This radical theology gave the awareness of political responsibility to the church. Anyway, the liberal group and conservative group have their concerns on this because the former studies to learn from it while the latter studies to criticize it. The liberation theology of the WCC was implemented by the KNCC's churches and its theologians.

The climax of liberation theology came in a theological declaration made by some liberal theologians and the church leaders in the protest against the "Yusin Constitution" (Reform Constitution) which seems to perpetuate Park's military regime. It is a "Human Rights Statement", an important theological statement. It says:

The present reality of Korean society is that human rights have been mercilessly trampled upon. Politically, the people have been deprived of their

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<sup>12</sup> Samuel Moffet, "Korea", *The Church in Asia*. ed., Donald Hoke, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), pg. 378

sovereign rights, and there is only a facade of democracy, while the people's religious freedom is withheld. At this time when even religious freedom is being withdrawn, the Church must earnestly repent of its former negative attitude of being just an onlooker, and it must make a new decision to fight until it achieves the freedom to establish human rights.<sup>13</sup>

As a matter of fact, another theological declaration already appeared six months prior to the statement mentioned above, which is the 73 Christian Manifesto, the so-called Korean Barmen Declaration. This was more radical and somewhat more critical of the traditional apolitical stance of the Korean church and even the declaration of human rights by the KNCC. The statement declared:

We stand in a historical tradition of such struggle for liberation as the independence movement by Christians against Japanese colonialism. We realize that our Christian community has often lacked the courage to take a decisive stand, and that the theological outlook of the official bodies of Christian churches has been too pietistic to take up revolutionary roles. It is not needless to say that this statement reflects liberation theology, and Hockendijk's Messianic Kingdom also is seen in the statement. Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, lived and dwelt among the oppressed, poverty-stricken, and sick in Judea. He boldly stood in confrontation with Pontius Pilate, a representative of the Roman Empire, and he was crucified in the course of his witness to the truth. He has risen from the dead to release the power of transformation which sets the people free. We solve that we will follow the footsteps of our Lord, living among oppressed and poor people, standing against political oppression, and participating in the transformation of history, for this is the only way to the Messianic Kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

## 2. Minjung Theology in the Korean Church

The liberation theology in Korea has soon developed to Minjung theology. "Minjung" is a Korean word for people in English, and accordingly "Minjung theology" is liberation

<sup>13</sup>KNCC, "Declaration on Human Rights", *The Christian Press* (December 1, 1973), pg. 2

<sup>14</sup> "Theological Declaration by Christian Ministers in the Republic of Korea", *Mission Trends* No. 3, ed, Gerald Anderson, (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Pub., 1976), pg. 232

theology contextualized in the Korean Church. It started in 1974 when Chi Ha Kim (Kim Chi-Ha), a young Roman Catholic poet, who was in jail for many years, used the term "Minjung" to describe a fighting by the people against an authoritative government. The Minjung theologians are very proud of having established a pure Korean theology and many theologians outside the Korean Church think highly of this "Korean Liberation theology". But this theology is not pure Korean theology, because "the poor" in liberation theology is only replaced by a Minjung which has become popular term in the society as well as in the church.

Here we need to make brief mention on the poet Kim, for his poetry was much read in Korean society and he was awarded "Lotus" of Asia-Africa Writers' Association in 1975 and "The Great Poet" by Poetry International in 1981. But for the conservative minded people he is a very radical man to construct a dialectical synthesis of Christianity with Marxism. He understood Christianity in terms of liberation, and accordingly, he believed in the validity of violence to achieve liberation. While he was accused by the government as a Communist and was in jail, he as a Roman Catholic was in contact with liberation theology through the Roman Catholic priests. At that time many Roman Catholic priests and student groups were also involved in the anti-government struggle. Of course, Kim played a leading role in this anti-government struggle and he boldly expressed his radicalism by affirming revolutionary actions for the realization of democracy and social justice in his famous "A Declaration of Conscience". He says in the declaration that we need the violence of love for the oppressed "Minjung".

Violence and destructiveness obviously bring suffering and hardship. But we must sometimes cause and endure suffering. Never is this more true than when the people are dozing in silent submission, when they can not be awakened from their torpor. To preach non-violence at such a time leaves them defenseless before their enemies. When the people must be awakened and sent resolutely off to battle, violence is unavoidable. Ghandi and Franz Fanon agonized over this dilemma. Father Camillo Torres took a rifle and joined the people.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Sekai, ed. *Letters from South Korea* (New York: IDOC, 1976), pg. 395

Minjung theology was advocated by Nam Dong Suh, a professor of Yonsie University in Seoul under the influence of Chi Ha Kim (Kim Chi-Ha) in 1974. After professor Suh's article on Minjung appeared in 1974, other liberal theologians and professors joined this new Korean theology and they put much efforts in basing their theological foundations on the Bible. The study of Minjung theology came to a climax in the theological consultation sponsored by the Theological commission of the KNCC on the subject "Minjung and the Mission of the Church", which was held in Seoul in October 22-24, 1978. It is very interesting to note that President Park Jung Hee was assassinated by his own KCIA chief two nights after the consultation. We suppose that there are about twenty Minjung theologians in Korea, but the ideas of Minjung theology slightly differ on minor details. To put Minjung theology in a word, it is "Bonhoeffer's worldly interpretation of the Bible and the secular meaning of the Gospel. It is a development of the political hermeneutics of the Gospels in terms of the Korean reality".<sup>16</sup> The book *Minjung Theology*, a product of the consultation and published by the Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia, is very helpful for those who want to get more information and knowledge on it. Due to the limitations on time and space, we are not able to discuss Minjung theology in detail. Let us say that it is contextual theology in Korea reflecting the Korean reality. So this Minjung theology made a great impact on the church as well as on the society. Now Minjung theology has almost become ideology to guarantee the utopia to the "Minjung".

Liberation theology and Minjung theology gave its birth to the radical Christian movements who struggle to establish the Messianic Kingdom in which the Minjung can become the "master" of history. The KNCC and many Roman Catholic priests and laymen are involved in social and political actions. Other radical groups within the Protestant churches challenging the status quo represented by the government are the Korean Student Federation (KSCF) and Urban Industrial Mission (UIM). All these seek to translate liberation theology into political action. They are motivated by the strong conviction that the realization of social justice is mission, and be-

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<sup>16</sup> Yong Bok Kim, "Korean Christianity as a Messianic Movement of the People", *Minjung Theology* (Singapore: CTCCA, 1981), pg. 19

lieve that the corporate salvation of society is more important than any form of individual salvation. They largely focused on social justice. Many students of KSCF became involved in disruptive political activities and were put into jail. In this regard, the WSS's "presence is mission" theory was widely practiced by this group. Besides the students of the KSCF, other Christian students got involved in anti-government protests and demonstrations by appealing to "Christian socialism". For them capitalism is injustice, immoral, and irrational and America is an imperialistic nation. Many "conscientized" students interpret the Bible from the ideological viewpoint in which the Bible condemns capitalism. For example, they interpret the Babylon in the Revelation as the symbol of capitalism to be destroyed by revolution. It is a serious danger for the Korean church that we have many students distorting the Scriptures in this way.

With respect to Urban Industrial Mission, it is the most radical dissident group threatening the government and the industrial world. Their main concern is not evangelism in the industry and factories, rather their involvement is in labor-management disputes and the struggle for better wages for low paid workers. In other words, UIM appears to industrialists and managers as a political pressure group. This type of activity is consonant with a radical understanding of mission. Accordingly, UIM's minister and evangelists have not been hesitant to level charges against what they regard as the injustices of employers or to fill an arbitrating role between the employer and the employed. Inevitably, they tend to side with the weak in labor-management disputes. However, such activities of UIM have precipitated much anger, hatred and strong opposition from the employers. It is also well known that UIM is strongly supported by the CWME of WCC. This is seen in the Nairobi Report:

confrontation with government economic and church structures has come about almost inevitably in many localities where groups engaged in Urban Industrial Mission are taking seriously the Bible's demand for faithful witness to the Gospel among urban peoples of low economic and social status. Clergy and people in Chile, the Philippines, Thailand and Zimbabwe, among other places, have suffered physical abuse, harassments, imprisonment, loss of jobs and even exile for their part in urban and industrial mission activities... The CWME has tried to provide a frame

work for international exchange of information and mutual encouragement of some local UIM groups on all six continents through regional contact groups and in international advisory groups.<sup>17</sup>

Here we need to mention another group practising "doing theology" in Korea in the 1970's. This group consists of the foreign missionaries who engaged in the so-called socio-political mission. Some Protestant and Catholic missionaries also assumed challenging attitudes towards the government on human rights issues. Since they were not hesitant to charge the Korean government of having violated human rights and social justice, the Korean government deported them on the grounds of their having illegally "meddled in domestic political matters". So they responded by sending "An Open Letter" to their fellow missionary colleagues around the world. The letter emphasized that social concern is the duty of all Christians, and that this should be extended to all areas of human life: cultural, social, economic and political.

When the Korean government insisted that missionaries should regard themselves as guests, they replied that they were not guests but prophets for the Korean society.

Aside from the fact that the presence of any foreigner in Korea today is in itself of deep political significance, we feel that this issue could be approached from a number of directions. How long, for example, must a missionary live in a foreign land before he ceases to be a guest? If a missionary chooses to identify himself as a guest, does this mean that the demands which the Lord places on him become secondary to those which the Korean government places upon him? What of Amos, who journeyed to a foreign land and spoke prophetically? And if we are really guests, who is the host? Is it the rulers of this nation or its people? Furthermore, what is the responsibility of the guest to the host? Does the guest sit quietly even if he discovers that his host has become ill or is dying? Why does a guest have the right to "meddle" in the most crucial aspect of life—the religious—but not the human?<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>David Johnson, *Uppsala to Nairobi* (New York: Friendship Press, 1975), pg. 87

<sup>18</sup>"An Open Letter" *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 65 No. 258, (April 1976), pg. 179



### **III The Unification Debates and Political Involvement**

In the 1980's the radical Christian movement can be characterized by their involvement in political party and unification debates. In 1988 Korea had general elections to elect the lawmakers in each area. Some ministers and theologians who engaged in socio-political mission joined the party for Peace and Democracy led by Dae Jun Kim (Kim Dae-Jung), opposition political leader and well known around the world. Dae Jung Kim (Kim Dae-Jung) is one of our most famous political leaders. During Park's government regime, he spent many years in jail and in exile in the USA because he was opposed to the government. Now that democracy has been restored he is president of the largest opposition party (PPD).

Although this party claims that they are taking an anti-Communist line, it is said that they have leftist elements and some radical Christian groups usually support KDJ. For example, Rev. Dong Whan Moon (Moon Dong-Whan), formerly a professor in Hankook Theological Seminary, has been appointed one of the vice-presidents of the party. On the other hand, many ministers and church leaders of the radical Christian groups now play the important role in leading the anti-government struggles outside the churches.

In Korea we do not have Christian political parties like in Germany or the Netherlands, but we can say that we have the Christian socialists who try to combine Christianity and Marxism. They changed Christian theology to ideology by which they attempt to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth. The means to establish it is not reformation of the society but revolution. Accordingly the society considers them too radical or revolutionary. Our society still regards "middle of the road" approach better and usually rejects radicalism.

The radical Christian groups in Korea began to change from the struggles for democratization to the struggles for the reunification of the divided nation from 1985, because they judge that democratization is already at least partly being realized. The unification issue appeals to our students and is the favourite theme now used by our radical students. For them, the Korean government and the presence of the US army in Korea are becoming a hindrance to the realization of the divided nation, so the government should be overthrown and the US army should withdraw from the peninsula. The anti-

American spirit is so strong in these radical groups that we often hear the shout "Yankee, go home!"

As far as the unification debates in Korea are concerned, the WCC played an important role in it. The WCC's theology of peace is reflected and practiced in Korea. The WCC held a consultation on peace and justice in North East Asia from October 29 to November 2, 1984 in Tozanso, Japan, in which they decided to send the official delegates to North Korea and South Korea in order to seek the possibility of reunification. Subsequent to their visit to North Korea, many visits were made by the delegates of the NOC of Japan, the US, Germany and Australia, and many consultations were held from 1985 until now discussing the unification of the peninsula. In this way the WCC expressed their solidarity with the Korean Church. The dominant theme of these conferences discussing unification of the peninsula was peace and justice. However, the WCC's idea of peace is horizontal rather than vertical by which the realization of peace in international order through the reconciling works of Jesus Christ is more important than the reconciliation of the fallen man and God through the Cross of Jesus Christ. To help understand their idea of justice and peace let us quote from the Tozanso Statement:

The peoples of the world stand in need of peace and justice. Peace is not just the absence of war. Peace cannot be built on foundations of injustice. Peace requires a new international order based on justice for and within all nations, and respect for the God-given humanity and dignity of every person. Peace is, as the Prophet Isaiah has taught us, the effect of righteousness. The churches today are called to confess anew their faith, and to repent for the times when Christians have remained silent in the face of injustice and threats to peace. The biblical vision of peace with justice for all, of wholeness, of unity for all God's people, is not one of several options for the followers of Christ. It is an imperative of our time. The ecumenical approach to peace and justice is based on the belief that without justice for all everywhere, we shall never have peace anywhere<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Erich Weingartner, "The Tozanso Process: An Ecumenical Contribution to the Struggle for Peace and Justice in North-East Asia", *Reunification: Peace and Justice in Korea, Christian Conference of Asia* (Seoul: KNCC, 1988), pg. 18

Last April the Korean society got involved again in the great controversy on unification since Rev. Ik Whan Moon (Moon Ik-Whan), formerly professor in Hankook Theological Seminary and an elder brother of Rev. Dong Whan Moon, made his illegal visit to North Korea and exchanged a hug with the dictator Il Sung Kim (Kim Il-Sung), which is an unusual custom to the Orientals. Most people were shocked to see Rev. Moon's visit to North Korea and his meeting with Kim Il-Sung. However, some people support his visit and as a consequence the society was again polarized. The conservative groups sharply criticize Rev. Moon's action, while the radical groups and the KNCC applaud him and said that his action would promote the reunification of the divided nation. This Rev. Moon is a liberal Presbyterian pastor and is a strong advocate of Minjung theology. In practice he seems very favorable to Communist North Korea and very critical of our society and government in South Korea.

#### IV Conclusion

As Jürgen Moltman once said,

The modern church in the world is faced with the crisis of identity-involvement, and it is just the same in the Korean Church. Now the Korean Church is still wrestling with how to deal with its cultural heritage and how to be involved in the complex socio-political situation. The issues that the Korean Church is facing can be described as indigenization and contextualization. Some missiologists consider the two terms as the same, others understand that contextualization is broader than indigenization, and there are those who make the distinction between the two terms.<sup>20</sup>

We would also like to make the distinction between these two terms.

Concerning the Tangun shrine worship, the Korean Christians do not like to worship Tangun as a national god, but they recognize the significance of the myth. Tangun is not a historical figure. In this regard we can agree with Levi-Strauss's words that myths have an internal logic of their

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<sup>20</sup> Al Krass illustrated the difference by comparing indigenization to what one reads in the National Geographic and contextualization to what one reads in Time magazine.

own. But they are not about the real world.<sup>21</sup> Regardless of this, the Tangun shrine issue challenges us to think about how we deal with our cultural heritages. We learn Abraham Kuyper's cultural mandate from the Reformed theology in the Netherlands, so we, the student of Korea Theological Seminary in Pusan, quite often discuss Calvinism and culture. Many books on that are translated into Korean. However, we did not take our traditional culture and values of the old religions seriously. It seems to us that Reformed theology might be irrelevant to issues such as demon possessions, angels and ancestral worship in Korea, since it seems unconcerned with these matters. Therefore, our professors may sometimes be teaching subjects that have less practical value to our Korean students. Seminary professors are scratching where it does not itch!

Contextualization is also the urgent issue for the Korean church. While the radical Christian groups are too keen in socio-political issues neglecting the essential tasks of the Church; the conservative group are too keen in orthodox doctrines neglecting the social application of the Gospel to the controversial issues such as social justice and unification. We need the relevancy of Reformed theology to the Korean context. We will close this paper by quoting from Dr. Richard R. Deridder:

The real task of the witness of Christ is to enable men to be obedient within the context of covenant, to make the covenant relevant, and to let the tradition touch today's situation in a life-giving way. This is not always easy since the implications of covenant life are not always easy and it can not always be said with the kind of definiteness we would like what the covenant life must be like in the present. The record of the past is crystal clear concerning God's gracious and liberating deeds in the past; to assert the same thing as positively in the present is difficult. One witnesses God's continuing work of grace when he walks the way of obedience. The stipulations of the covenant are one of its gracious elements; God has not left his people in the dark concerning his expectations from them in their covenant life.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Harvie M. Conn, *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub., 1984), pg. 322

<sup>22</sup>Richard R. Deridder, *Discipling the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), pg. 222

## The Elder As Preserver and Nurturer of Life in the Covenant

by Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam

### Introduction

A characteristic of churches in the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition is surely that the office of elder is dear to all of us. Indeed, there is good reason for statements such as that of G.D. Henderson: "the eldership is perhaps the most distinctive feature of those Churches of the Reformation which honour the Calvinistic tradition".<sup>1</sup> It would appear that if our coming together as Churches in the ICRC is to be as beneficial as possible, basic issues like the office of elder, should be discussed for our mutual edification. The church cannot really function and flourish without a vibrant exercising of this office. The combination of our different heritages and our common purpose suggests that it would be profitable to start to consider this office in the ecumenical context of this conference in order that we may benefit from each other's insights as influenced by our different histories.

The purpose of this introductory paper is therefore to stimulate further discussion on this office with the hope that the result may be not only a renewed appreciation and love for this office, but also a deeper insight into how we regard the eldership so that the functioning of this office may be as fruitful as possible in the churches.

To this end let us first survey the Biblical data and see the basic task of this office, namely to be God's servants and instruments to stimulate and preserve the life with God in the covenant community and so to labour for the rule of Christ and His Word in the church. Next, let us briefly look at the development of this office in the subsequent history of the church and finally, to bring the matter into a practical focus, pose two questions for further consideration.

### The Old Testament Background

The office of elder in the New Testament cannot be understood without first considering the background of this office in the Old Testament and inter-testamental times. It is, however,

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<sup>1</sup>G.D. Henderson, *The Scottish Ruling Elder* (London: James Clarke 1935)

especially the Old Testament that should be carefully considered. The fact that this background is sometimes hardly acknowledged can lead to an insufficient appreciation of what this office entails.<sup>2</sup>

The Hebrew term for elder (*zāqēn*) derives from a noun meaning beard (*zāqār*). Etymologically it thus basically refers to a man with a beard. The term practically always refers to old men or to the elders as officials.<sup>3</sup> We are interested in the latter usage. We do not read anywhere of the origin of this office (which as such was also well-known outside Israel)<sup>4</sup> and it may be assumed that it has developed from the tribal structure of Israel. An elder was probably a head of a family or tribe. Presumably after his death, his oldest son would take his place. However, if he was incompetent, then it could go to a younger son. The point is that to be an elder involved recognition by others, not only because of one's age as well as one's legal position, but also in view of one's gifts, authority and ability to lead and, if necessary, to represent the interests and wishes of the people.<sup>5</sup> The basic criterion of age, inherent in the term for elder, was important because it carried connotations of wisdom and experience associated with older age (Deut 32:7; cf. Ps 37:25; 1 Kgs 12:6-8,13). The elders, therefore, commanded respect and could be expected to know the history of God's people (Deut 32:7; Lam 4:16; 5:12).

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<sup>2</sup>Happily the new Canadian Reformed form for the ordination of elders now includes Old Testament references to this office as a basis for the New Testament data, unlike the preceding version of the form which barely referred to the Old Testament at all. See respectively, *Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter* (rev. ed.; Winnipeg: Premier 1984) pp. 628f. and the first complete edition published in 1972 (Hamilton: Committee for the Publication of the Anglo-Genevan Psalter), p. 533.

<sup>3</sup>Once the term refers to an old woman. See Zec 8:4; cf. J. Conrad in J.G. Botterweck and H. Ringgren eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, IV (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1980) 122-123.

<sup>4</sup>Gen 50:7; Num 22:4,7. Cf. J.L. McKenzie, "The Elders in the Old Testament", *Biblica*, 39 (1958) 529-532.

<sup>5</sup>This latter point can be inferred from tribal customs generally in the East. Cf. McKenzie, *Biblica*, 39 (1958) 532-534; J.P. van der Ploeg, "Les anciens dans l'Ancien Testament" in *Lex tua veritas* (Festschrift für H. Junker; Trier: Paulinus 1961) 191.

It is an intriguing question how exactly the elders were organized in the nation of Israel. However, for our purposes this point can be bypassed for the most part.<sup>6</sup> Suffice it to note for now that elders functioned on a national level as elders of the people (e.g. Ex 3:16), on a tribal level as elders of a particular tribe (e.g., Judg 11:5), and locally as elders of a city (e.g., Judg 8:14). What especially concerns us now are the key duties that the elders in Israel had. These can be summarized as: firstly, the task of judging and discipline generally and, secondly, the task of ruling and guiding the people and the affairs of the nation in an orderly way.<sup>7</sup> It is especially through these responsibilities that the elders were instrumental for preserving the life with God in the covenant community. It is no accident that these same two major elements also essentially constitute the task of the elders in our congregations today.<sup>8</sup>

It is remarkable that in the early history of Israel as a nation we three times read of the special appointment of elders: twice specifically for judging, and once for ruling. In Exodus 18:24-26 we read that Moses appointed what were apparently elders (heads of tribes, cf. Deut 1:15) to act as judges in the relatively simple matters of justice so that he could concentrate on the more difficult ones. It has been suggested that Moses here-with perhaps restored them as elders to their former office.<sup>9</sup> So important was this action that it receives a prominent place at the beginning of Deuteronomy where we are told (Deut 1:13) that Moses had said to the people: "Choose wise, under-

<sup>6</sup>See on this especially H.R. Schenck, "The Old Testament Eldership—Its origin and functions", *The Presbyterian Quarterly*, 11 (1897) 433-466.

<sup>7</sup>See, e.g., F.C. Fensham, "Elder in the OT", in G.W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, II (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1982) 54; R.S. Rayburn, "Three Offices: Minister, Elder, Deacon", *Presbyterion*, 12 (1986) 109.

<sup>8</sup>See, e.g., the "Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons" of the Canadian Reformed Churches in *The Book of Praise* (1984) p.630 and "The Form of Government" in *The Standards of Government, Discipline and Worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia: Committee on Christian Education of the OPC 1980) 18.

<sup>9</sup>W.H. Gispen, *Exodus* (Bible Student's Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1982; first published in Dutch 1932, 1939), 177. Also see J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926) 504 re p.35 n.2.

standing and experienced men according to your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads" (these are the judges of v.16) and the people agreed (v.14). Notice how the congregation of Israel was involved. With the appointment of the judges to help him, the normal functioning of justice became an attainable goal while Israel lived in the wilderness. At the same time it prepared God's people for a clear recognition of the importance of maintaining righteousness and justice also later in Canaan.

The command to appoint judges in Canaan as recorded in Deuteronomy 16 is a further development. "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns [lit. 'gates'] which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes" (Deut 16:18). This command is addressed to the people, so once again they are involved in the appointing of judges, although we are not told how. Whereas during the wilderness wanderings the people all lived around the tabernacle, in Canaan, they will spread out in the different towns and cities and the local town or city gate becomes the place where God's law is upheld (by the elders of the city). In effect, there is a certain decentralization here (a principle dear to us in Reformed church polity).<sup>10</sup> If however a case was too difficult, then (according to Deut 17) "you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God will choose, and coming to the Levitical priests, and to the judge who is in office in those days, you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision" (Deut 17:8b,9). There was thus a higher tribunal, which however did not function as a court of appeal. It was for cases too difficult (cf. also Deut 19:17). This reminds one of the place of Moses (in Ex 18) who dealt with the difficult cases. With the coming of the office of king in Israel, the function of the chief judge fell to him (cf. 1 Sam 8:5,20 where Israel asks for a king to judge them; RSV "govern"; 2 Sam 15:2-4; Ps 72). As such a godly king could be expected to have a keen interest in the maintenance of justice in the land (2 Chr 19:8-11).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup>See on this B. Holwerda, *Oudtestamentische voordrachten, III* [=lectures on Deuteronomy given in 1946-1952] (Kampen: Van den Berg, 1957) 420.

<sup>11</sup>See further on elders and judging, L. Koehler, *Hebrew Man* (London: SCM Press 1956) 149-175; C. Van Dam, "The Elder in the Gate", *Diakonia*, 1:4 (1988) 11-16.



We also read of elders being appointed by Moses on the command of the LORD in order that Moses have help with ruling the people. We read in Numbers 11: "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; and bring them to the tent of meeting... and I will take some of the Spirit who is upon you and put Him upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone'" (vv. 16-17).<sup>12</sup> These men are clearly different from those appointed by Moses in Exodus 18 to help in executing justice.<sup>13</sup>

Elders remained involved with the rule of God's people subsequent to the time of Moses, whether government was decentralized as in the period of judges or more centralized as Israel moved toward a theocratic monarchy.<sup>14</sup> In accordance with their office, they exercised God's rule over the people on behalf of God Himself. The LORD made this rule possible by entrusting to them, along with the Levites, the care of His law and will, as well as the duty of imprinting this law on the hearts and minds of His people. We read in Deuteronomy 31 that Moses, after writing the law, "gave it to the priests the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel". Then follows the command that this law be read to the people at the end of every seven years at the feast of booths (Deut 31:9-13). The elders had a special responsibility to see to it that Israel knew the law and lived by it. Together with Moses they commanded the people to keep the law in Deut 27:1 and they were summoned first by Moses before he delivered his final song (Deut 31:28) for they had a specific obligation to make sure that Israel would know its contents. Indeed Moses told Israel in his final song that Israel should ask their

<sup>12</sup>On the involvement of the Holy Spirit also see, Ps 106:33; Isa 63:10-11; Neh 9:20; and cf. J.H. Scheepers, *Die Gees van God en die Gees van die Mens in Die Ou Testament* (Kampen: Kok 1960), 151-153 and *passim*.

<sup>13</sup>However, since these elders were chosen from the "officers" [*šōtērîm*], they may also have had judicial functions; cf. Deut 1:15.

<sup>14</sup>Cf., e.g., the survey of D.W. Amram, "The Zekenim or Council of the Elders", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 19 (1900) 34-52 and P.R. Gilchrist, "Government", in G.W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, II (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1982) 540-541.

fathers and the elders for instruction in the history of God's dealings with His people (Deut 32:7). The weight of the office is also seen in Joshua 24:31 where we read; "And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work which the LORD did for Israel" (similarly Judg 2:7). The implication is that the elders led Israel in the ways of the LORD. So the elders' rule of Israel included that crucial obligation of placing the demands of the great King of Israel, the LORD God, before the people. This made possible their guiding Israel in the ways of the covenant.

Now the task of ruling belonged to the elders from earliest times. Hence, in order that Moses's leadership over Israel be recognized, the LORD instructed Moses to gather the elders of Israel together and there present, so to speak, his credentials; namely, that the God of their fathers has sent him to them because God is going to deliver them (Ex 3:13-18). If the elders recognize his leadership, so will the people. This aspect of the ruling task of the elder continued after the time of Moses. During the period of the judges, the elders of Gilead saw to it that Jephthah became their leader to meet the threat of the Ammonites (Judg 11:4-11). It was also the elders who asked Samuel for a king (1 Sam 8:4-5). The important place of the elders is later underlined in the words of Saul after Samuel told him that God had taken the kingdom away from him. Then Saul acknowledged his sin and said: "yet honour me now before the elders of my people" (1 Sam 15:30). With respect to David's kingship, the elders of Israel anointed him king over all Israel (2 Sam 5:3; 1 Chron 11:3; cf. 2 Sam 3:17-18; cf. also the presence of the elders in 2 Sam 17:1-4).<sup>15</sup>

With this type of involvement in leading and ruling the nation, it is to be expected that the elders would also serve with their counsel and advice. Sometimes their advice was bad as in the days of Eli when they decided to send the ark into battle (1 Sam 4:3). Generally, however, they could be expected to give good advice and wise counsel became associated with the elder (cf. Ezek 7:26 and Jer 18:18).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>For the possible involvement of the elders in the anointing of Solomon as king, and Zadok as priest, see Schenck, *The Presbyterian Quarterly*, 11 (1897) 456.

<sup>16</sup>For the involvement of elders in counsel cf. 1 Kgs 20:7-9.

In summary, elders were to be able men who feared God and were trustworthy (Ex 18:21,25), wise, understanding, and experienced (Deut 1:13) and who were enabled by God with His Spirit (Num 11:16,17) to do their vital tasks of judging and ruling. The people were involved in placing elders in their office and the authority of the elders was recognized. Their primary responsibility however was to God for their task of judging and ruling was to be in accordance with God's law. Indeed, the latter task even included their having responsibility for the imprinting the law of God in the hearts and minds of the people (Deut 31:9-13). In this way they were to serve God and the people and work for the preservation and development of the life with the LORD in the covenant community.

#### Transition

Although the period after the exile through to New Testament times was one of profound change, the office of elder basically stayed intact. On the national scale, with the effective dissolution of tribal units, the individual families grew in importance and elders from this nobility had the leadership.<sup>17</sup> By the beginning of the second century B.C. there is evidence of the existence of "a council of elders" consisting of 70 (71) members, the Sanhedrin. At first the members are generally spoken of as *presbyteroi*, "elders". However, the term is used more and more to distinguish the "lay" members, who probably came from the patrician families in Jerusalem, from those with a priestly lineage as well as (after c. 70 B.C.) those drawn from the ranks of scribes.<sup>18</sup> This situation is reflected in the New Testament.<sup>19</sup> The system of local elders continued (Ezr 10:7-17) and each Jewish community had its council of elders associated with the synagogue (cf. Luke 7:3), an institution generally dated from Ezra or during the exile.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup>See, e.g., G. Bornkamm in G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [hereafter TDNT] VI (9 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1964-1974) 658.

<sup>18</sup>Bornkamm, TDNT, VI, 659; S. Safral, "Jewish Self-government", in S. Safral and M. Stern, eds., *The Jewish People in the First Century, I* (CRINT I.1; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974) 383-385.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. the expressions, "the chief priests, with the elders and scribes and the whole council" (Mk 15:1) or "the chief priests and the elders" (Matt 27 and elsewhere). See Safral, "Jewish Self-government", 385.

<sup>20</sup>W. Schrage, TDNT, VIII, 810; Bornkamm, TDNT, VI, 660-661.

These elders were responsible for discipline in the congregation (cf. Matt. 10:17; John 9:22). It is this local eldership that is of particular importance for our topic for it retained the essential features of the Old Testament office of elder and it lay behind the office of elder in the Christian church. This brings us to the New Testament elder.

### **The New Testament Elder**

For our purposes the first thing that needs to be noted is that the first Christians were Jewish and that the office of elder was well-known to them from the synagogue.<sup>21</sup> For that reason Luke can mention Christian elders for the first time in Acts 11:30 (regarding Jerusalem) without any need for explanation. The office was a familiar one, known also from what Luke had written earlier.<sup>22</sup> On their first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23). The verb used for appoint (*cheirotoneō*) leaves open the possibility that the congregation participated in the process.<sup>23</sup> Paul also charged Titus to do the same in Crete (Titus 1:5). This office belonged to the local congregation (cf. also Acts 20:17; James 5:14; 1 Pet 5:1).

<sup>21</sup>Indeed, the gathering of the church for worship or the place of worship is even called a synagogue (*synagōgē* in James 2:2; RSV renders "assembly").

<sup>22</sup>J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*. A revised text with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1953; first pub. 1913), 191-193. Earlier references to the office all refer to the Jewish one. Luke 7:3; 9:22; 20:1; 22:52; Acts 4:5,8,23; 6:12. For the view that the elders in Jerusalem (as in Acts 11:30) were witnesses of Christ's suffering and that their office is thus to be distinguished from that of the elders elsewhere, see J. van Bruggen, *Ambten in de apostolische kerk: Een exegetisch mozaiek*. (Kampen: Kok 1984), 78-91.

<sup>23</sup>The basic meaning of *cheirotoneō* is "stretch out the hand, for the purpose of giving one's vote in the assembly". H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Dictionary* (revised and augmented by H.S. Jones with R. McKenzie; with a supplement; Oxford: Clarendon Press 1968) 1986a; also see E. Lohse, *TDNT*, IX, 437 (who does not think that this meaning is present in Acts 14:23) and F.W. Grosheide, *De Handelingen der Apostelen, I* (Korte Verklaring; Kampen: Kok 1962) 227.

In the second place, in the New Testament elders (*presbyteroi*) are also called bishops (*episkopoi*)<sup>24</sup>, and by implication "shepherds"<sup>25</sup> without implying any essential difference in the office referred to.<sup>26</sup> To be sure, the apostle Paul does distinguish between those elders who rule well, especially those who labour in the preaching and teaching (1 Tim 5:17) whom we generally call ministers of the Word, and others. However, common to all elders is the task of oversight and discipline of the congregation as well as the responsibility to rule and guide the people of God with the Word in a manner that is pleasing to God. In other words, the task of the elders (not including all the implications of the specific mandate of the ministers of the Word) is basically the same as their Old Testament predecessors; that is, also elders in the new dispensation are to preserve and nurture life with God in the covenant community. They may do so in the service of the risen Lord and are enabled by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Coming to specifics, it can be noted that the elders' task of oversight and discipline is described in various ways in the New Testament. Some examples: in bidding farewell to the Ephesian elders the apostle Paul said: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [*episkopoi*], to care for [*poimenein*] the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son" (Acts 20:28). Peter wrote: "So I exhort the elders [*presbyteroi*] among you as a fellow elder [*sumpresbyteros*]... tend the flock of God

<sup>24</sup>See, e.g., Acts 20:28; Philip 1:1. Lightfoot has pointed out that only in Gentile churches is this term found, although even there the term elder served as a synonym for bishop. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, 193-194.

<sup>25</sup>Acts 20:28 "...Be shepherds (*poimainein*) of the church of God..." For other possible names for *presbyteros*, see F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles. The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 380.

<sup>26</sup>In Acts 20:17,28 and Titus 1:5,7 *presbyteroi* and *episkopoi* are used interchangeably and the requirements for the office of *presbyteros* and *episkopos* are very similar; cf. Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Tim 3:1-7. See further, e.g., H. Ridderbos, *Paulus. Ontwerp van zijn theologie* (Kampen: Kok 1966), 510-511. The term elder is the name of the office, but also stresses the connection with the age of the office bearer; while the term bishop or overseer, superintendent (*episkopos*) stresses more the nature of the task that is to be done. See H. Ridderbos, *De Pastorale Brieven* (CNT; Kampen: Kok 1967) 259.

that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet 5:1-2). The pastoral and ministering nature of their oversight and discipline is obvious. They have to watch over souls (Heb 13:17) and protect and nurture life with God in the covenant community. This may mean correction and admonition (1 Thess 5:12; cf. Acts 20:31) and if there is no repentance it may eventually lead to excommunication (Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:13; Titus 3:10).

As far as the elder's task of ruling and guiding the congregation is concerned, it is clear from the New Testament that they have been set over the congregation in the Lord (1 Thess 5:17). They rule (*proistēmi*; 1 Tim 5:17). The elder (*episkopos*) is also called a steward of God (*theou oikonomos*; Titus 1:7). The term steward literally indicates that the elder is a manager of God's household. However, the figurative meaning probably is uppermost here, meaning that the elder is an administrator of spiritual treasures.<sup>27</sup> This says something about the nature of the elder's position of authority. Uppermost in the ruling of the congregation is to be the administration of the glad tidings. Therefore false doctrine must be opposed and the true safeguarded (Acts 20:28,31; Titus 1:9-11). Therefore, like their Old Testament counterparts they have responsibility to see to it that the gospel and the demands of the Lord are imprinted in the hearts and lives of God's people (cf. 1 Thess 2:11,12; 2 Tim 2:24-26).

With such responsibilities, it is no surprise that the prerequisites for the office are high. For our purposes now I would like to stress that like his Old Testament predecessors, the elder in the last age has to command the respect of others because he is blameless and God-fearing and shows from his walk of life the fruits of the Spirit (1 Tim 3:2-4,7; Titus 1:6-9; cf. Gal 5:22-23). They also have to be able to teach others the way of the Lord (1 Tim 3:2; cf. 5:17). As Paul wrote Titus: "He [the *episkopos*] must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and

<sup>27</sup>Cf. 1 Cor 4:1; Matt 13:11,52; also see O. Michel, *TDNT*. V. 150-151; W. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (NTC, Grand Rapids: Baker 1957) 60.

also to confute those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9). Although the office of elder is not in the first place a teaching, but a ruling office, yet a good knowledge of the Word of God was essential. They needed to know it! Think of the crucial role of the elders in Acts 15:1-6 who with the apostles had to make far reaching decisions. This knowledge of the Word and the ability to teach others also had to be accompanied by a mature sensibility so that the elder is not quarrelsome (1 Tim 3:3) and does not enter senseless controversies (cf. 1 Tim 1:3; 6:4-5).<sup>28</sup>

All these requirements suggest that elders be chosen very carefully after they have clearly proven themselves and shown themselves endowed with the necessary gifts. If Jewish tradition and indirect Biblical data are heeded, then a candidate for an elder must be at least thirty years of age.<sup>29</sup> There is no direct Biblical data informing us how long an elder is to serve. The Old Testament background of the office would, however, strongly suggest that the eldership is a lifelong office. There is also nothing in the New Testament to suggest otherwise. Indeed it could be argued that the high requirements of the office would seem to indicate that it may not be easy to find suitable candidates for the office and that therefore the church will not too readily let go of good officebearers.

#### **Decline and Recovery**

In spite of the long and illustrious history of the office of elder, the office was eventually taken up in the priesthood in what became the Roman Catholic church.<sup>30</sup> It was not until the time of the Reformation that this office came to its own again.

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<sup>28</sup>For the teaching office of the elder cf. the Church Order of the Canadian Reformed Churches, Art. 22 which circumscribes the elder's task in part as visiting the members of the congregation in their homes "to comfort, instruct, and admonish them with the Word of God". The Form for Ordination has similar terminology (*Book of Praise*, 630).

<sup>29</sup>Qumran set the age of eldership at 30. When the Lord was 12 years old, his wisdom impressed many in the temple (Luke 2:46-47), but superior knowledge was not enough. Christ waited until he was 30 (Luke 3:23). Thirty was also the age that the Levites entered full service (Num 4:3). See on this E. Glasscock, "The Biblical Concept of Elder", *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 144 (1987) 67-68.

<sup>30</sup>See, e.g., A. van Ginkel, *De Ouderling* (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland 1975) 41-44 and Bornkamm, *TDNT*, VI, 672-680.

The story of how the office of elder was rediscovered is an intriguing one, but lies outside the scope of this presentation. Suffice it to say that it was especially under Calvin (who could build on the work of Oecolampadius and Martin Bucer) that a true Biblical insight into the office could be had.<sup>31</sup> However, it should also be mentioned that Calvin himself apparently never came to a fully consistent and clearly focused Scriptural exposition of the office of elder.<sup>32</sup> This had consequences for the churches of the Reformation.

What should have our attention now is how we can learn from each other with a view to this office, keeping in mind the brief review of Biblical data that has earlier had our attention. There is much food for thought in discussing the eldership as Reformed and Presbyterian confessors. However, since this is but an introductory paper, let us start modestly and consider two very basic and probably related issues, namely, the preparation for the office and the length of service.

#### **Special Training for the Office?**

In view of the high demands of the office, should elders receive some type of special training as preparation for the office?<sup>33</sup> This matter is not a new one within the history of the Reformed churches. Already in the seventeenth century Jakobus Koeleman argued for such a training on the ground of 1 Timothy 3:10 so that the churches would receive competent and knowledgeable elders. The Rev. Dr. A.C. van Raalte in 1839 gave lessons to elders and deacons. Also, in the Classis Apeldoorn it was for a long time the custom to make inquiries about the Bible knowledge of elders and deacons. In 1913 Prof. L. Lindeboom defended the necessity of a separate training for the elders. His reason was basically that the many duties required of the office of elder demanded it. Dr. H. Bouwman however opposed him.<sup>34</sup> As reasons he adduced that firstly,

<sup>31</sup>D. Cornick, "The Reformed Elder", *The Expository Times*, 98 (1987) 235-236. Cornick's characterization is to the point. "Calvin is the father of the Reformed eldership, or perhaps more precisely, the Reformed elder is his adopted child, growing to maturity under his care" (*ibid.*, 235).

<sup>32</sup>See Soon Gil Huh, *Presbyter in volle rechten*, 121-131.

<sup>33</sup>What follows is based on Bouwman, *Gereformeerd kerkrecht*, I, (Kampen: Kok 1928), 538.

<sup>34</sup>For what follows see Bouwman, *Gereformeerd kerkrecht*, I, 538-539.



the Reformed character of the office would be threatened for a new type of clergy could be the end result. Secondly, if elders are only chosen from people specially educated for the office, then you will have bypassed many. Thirdly, not scientific instruction, but the practical training received in the catechism class, the Bible study societies and in their own investigation of the Scriptures was important. Fourthly, the more modest and better qualified would not participate. Fifthly, not all would support such an institution of training and it would thus be doomed to failure. Sixthly, it would promote life long elders. Seventh, the admonition of Paul in 1 Timothy 3:10 that the deacons be tested first refers to practical life experience not to an academic exam.

Experience has taught many a pastor that these counter-arguments of Dr. Bouwman are not all to the point. It is the elders themselves who usually ask why there is not some sort of training (and training within an institute is usually not envisaged). Such questions are raised in the awareness of the burden and importance of the office of elder. Should not every effort be made to have elders who are as well prepared as possible? It has been suggested that although there is no explicit Scriptural demand for any special training for the elder, yet, the fact that "teaching elders" (ministers) are given an extensive and detailed training does suggest that something is amiss when "ruling elders" receive none whatsoever.<sup>35</sup> Their tasks, although differentiated, have much in common. They are both called elders in the Scripture (cf. 1 Tim 5:17) and they both labour with the Word.<sup>36</sup> Could such a training be im-

<sup>35</sup>L.E. Eyres, *The Elders of the Church* (Philipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed 1979) 53-55.

<sup>36</sup>On the question whether the teaching elder and the ruling elder are two different offices or not, see respectively, e.g., Rayburn, *Presbyterion*, 12 (1986) 105-114 and G.W. Knight III, "Two Offices: A New Testament Study", *Presbyterion* 11 (1985) 1-12; Van Bruggen, *Ambten in de apostolische kerk*, 100-105. Also see J.D. MacMillan, "Eldership Today", *The Monthly Record*, 1988, pp. 78-79. The controversy about the number of offices is an old one. (Cf. the historical survey by I. Murray, "Ruling Elders - A Sketch of the Controversy", *Banner of Truth*, No. 235 [1983].) The issue is actually not the number of offices as such, but who is called to the public proclamation of the Word. Cf. E.P. Clowney, *A Brief for Church Governors in Church Government* (unpublished paper, no date [1968?]).

plemented and at the same time take into account some of the concerns of Dr. Bouwman?

Let me pass on the suggestions of Lawrence R. Eyres who as an Orthodox Presbyterian minister wrestled with this issue. First there should be a return to the practice of encouraging and grooming young men for possible leadership. It is important that churches recognize gifted men. Secondly, these men need some sort of training. Of great importance is a good grasp of doctrine and how that arises out of Scripture. A knowledge of church government is also important. Thirdly, there should be training in ministering the Word. After all an elder is a co-shepherd with the pastor. A good manual would go a long way here. Fourthly, elders-elect should be tested in the areas mentioned above before they are ordained.<sup>37</sup> The above list of suggestions is not an isolated phenomenon in the Presbyterian world and it has several attractive elements.

To be sure not all Presbyterians have some form of training. The Free Church of Scotland, for example, does not appear to have anything in place.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church specifies in the 1980 edition of their *The Form of Government* that one is normally eligible for election to the office only after they

have received appropriate training under the direction of or with the approval of the session, and shall have served the church in functions requiring responsible leadership. Men of ability and piety in the congregation shall be encouraged by the session to prepare themselves for the offices of ruling elder or deacon so that their study and opportunities for service may be provided for in a systematic and orderly way.<sup>39</sup>

A specific example may illustrate how such a preparation has been provided. An elder ordained in a Canadian Presbyterian church related to me how he initially was interviewed (in effect examined) by his Session to determine his interest and desire in being ordained as a ruling elder (1 Tim 3:1;

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Also see on the office of elder and the administration of the Word, C. Trimp in *De Reformatie*, 48 (1973) 154-156, 163-164.

<sup>37</sup>L.E. Eyres, *The Elders of the Church*, 55-57.

<sup>38</sup>J.D. MacMillan, *The Monthly Record*, 1988, p.80.

<sup>39</sup>*The Standards of Government, Discipline and Worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, 80.

5:22). Only when the current elders were satisfied that he understood the responsibilities of eldership and had the necessary qualifications for the office was he told to prepare himself for a pre-ordination examination (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim 3:2-7). Such preparation could involve being trained formally by the minister. The three hour examination was open to the congregation and covered Bible knowledge, Old and New Testament exegesis, Reformed doctrine, Church History and Pastoral Care. The only difference from an examination of a minister ("teaching elder") was that Biblical languages were omitted and there was no sermon proposal. Also congregation members were able to ask questions if they so desired. After a successful examination the congregation voted in as elder.<sup>40</sup> Such or similar procedures strike me as doing justice to the great importance of the office of elder and would go a long way to meeting some of the concerns that many new elders now voice. Furthermore, it avoids some of the concerns Bouwman raised over against a more institutionalized form of training. Should those who generally speaking have given little thought to the training of elders prior to their election and ordination (like the Canadian Reformed Churches<sup>41</sup>) not start thinking of how we could help in the equipping of men for this very important but demanding office that Christ has given His church? After all, the bottom line is that the life with God be nurtured as well as possible by the effective ministration of the full covenant Word.

#### **Length of Service**

A second point is the length of service. As those with both Presbyterian and Reformed backgrounds, this matter can be discussed in the realization that our specific histories exhibit

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<sup>40</sup>Personal correspondence from elder Henry Moes dated March 8, 1989 and used here with his permission. The Scripture references are his.

<sup>41</sup>The Rev. G. Van Dooren has stressed the importance of training for the office of elder (both before and after their ordination) in his pastoral ministry and in his capacity as lecturer of the Diaconological disciplines at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches. However, to my knowledge virtually nothing is being done in the way of special training to prepare men for the office of elder in these churches.

both possibilities, namely life service or term eldership.<sup>42</sup> Calvin was apparently in favour of term eldership (of one year), but he did not exclude the possibility of a longer time period. In his Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541 Calvin wrote: "And at the end of the year after their election by the Council they [i.e. the elders] shall present themselves to the Seignury so that it may be decided whether they should be retained or replaced, though, so long as they are fulfilling their duties faithfully, it will be inexpedient to replace them frequently without good cause."<sup>43</sup> In Scotland, The First Book of Discipline [1560] reflects Calvin's view. In the Eight Head (Touching the Election of Elders and Deacons) we read: "The election of Elders and Deacons ought to be used every year once... lest of long continuance of such officers men presume upon the liberty of the kirk. It hurteth not that one be received in office moe years then one, so that he be appointed yearly by common and free election".<sup>44</sup> Here we see one of the primary motives for a yearly election; namely the fear that some by virtue of their office "presume upon [i.e. usurp] the liberty of the kirk". This was not an idle threat, for somewhat like the situation in Geneva where elders were chosen from civil councils<sup>45</sup>, also in Scotland elders were initially taken from the Lords of the Congregation and the Burgh Councilors<sup>46</sup>.

When the Second Book of Discipline was adopted in 1578, the office of elder was recognized as a permanent one (although all need not serve simultaneously or continuously) and thus

<sup>42</sup>The Rev. G.I. Williamson has suggested at the meeting of the ICRC in Langley that the issue is not really properly stated in terms of life versus term office. Rather it would be more appropriate to speak of indefinite or definite tenure. Since his suggestion appears to have merit I would like to mention it here but unfortunately at this point I cannot elaborate on it.

<sup>43</sup>According to the translation of the Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541 found in P.E. Hughes, trans. and ed., *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1966) 42.

<sup>44</sup>*The First Book of Discipline* (with introduction and commentary by J.K. Cameron; Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press 1972) 175, cf. 36.

<sup>45</sup>Ecclesiastical Ordinances, 1541 as given in Hughes, ed. and trans., *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 41.

<sup>46</sup>T.F. Torrance, "The Eldership in the Reformed Church", *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 37 (1984) 505.

rather than being appointed annually, they now entered the office for life. This was reaffirmed by the Act of the General Assembly of 1582.<sup>47</sup> However, "it took some time for the impact of these acts of the Assembly to take effect, as there is evidence of annual elections of elders continuing to take place, while in 1656 it was still believed that 'the order and practice' of the Church was regular elections".<sup>48</sup> As late as 1705 an overture was presented to General Assembly asking that new elections for elders be for a four year term.<sup>49</sup> Other evidence suggests that "the eldership was regarded as an annual office till the beginning of the eighteenth century".<sup>50</sup> It is clear however that lifetime eldership was the official norm and as far as I know that is still the case with the Presbyterian churches associated with the ICRC.

In the Reformed Churches, life eldership was known; but, eventually all had a limited term of office. Elders were chosen for life in the Reformed congregations in sixteenth century London and Cologne.<sup>51</sup> Questions were raised about the practice among the Dutch refugee congregations in England. A conference held in 1560 dealt (among other items) also with this point. It was decided to maintain life eldership for the following reasons, given here in summarized form. Firstly, there is an essential unity of the office of minister of the Word and elder. The ministers are called elders and the elders are called bishops or shepherds (1 Pet 5:1; Acts 20:28). Secondly, those who served faithfully as elders or deacons were not removed from their office but were placed in the ministry of the Word as Stephen and Philip (cf. Acts 6:8-14; 21:8). Only Nicolaus is re-

<sup>47</sup>Torrance, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 37 (1984) 506; Henderson, *The Scottish Ruling Elder*, 204.

<sup>48</sup>Torrance, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 37 (1984) 506. "The office of a ruling elder ought to be for his life no less than the pastor's, yet must we not condemn those churches which dispense with the intermission of their actual attendance for a certain space, and permit them to exercise their office by course, as the Levites did of old". George Gillespie in 1641 as quoted in Henderson, *The Scottish Ruling Elder*, 189.

<sup>49</sup>Henderson, *The Scottish Ruling Elder*, 203.

<sup>50</sup>Henderson, *The Scottish Ruling Elder*, 204. The discussion on the length of service has not died out completely. Cf. Cornick, *The Expository Times*, 98 (1987) 239.

<sup>51</sup>See Van Ginkel, *De Ouderling*, 241.

moved from his office, but then due to unfaithfulness (Rev 2:15). Thirdly, the office is not temporary for Paul exhorts the elders of Ephesus to take heed to themselves and to the flock without indicating how long they should serve. They are told to persevere. Fourthly, on a more practical level, from the fact that some elders had to leave the office in order to be able to provide for their families does not follow that it is profitable to have term eldership. As apprentices in normal life are trained for a long period of work in which experience becomes an important asset, so also the congregation is not served by having constantly new officebearers.<sup>52</sup> On a more practical level, the influence of hierarchial tendencies in the Church of England have been seen as important factors in the maintaining of lifetime eldership in the Dutch churches there.<sup>53</sup>

Also in the Netherlands, the practice of life eldership was not unknown. In North Holland, it was known until 1587 (possibly due to lack of candidates)<sup>54</sup>. Also, it is of interest to note that the "provinciale synode" of Utrecht declared in 1612 that it was desirable for elders to be chosen for life although it recognized that this was no longer possible and thus accepted the established practice of term eldership. However, in the province of Groningen elders were chosen for life until the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

Nevertheless, already very early in the history of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, namely at the meeting

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<sup>52</sup>Bouwman, *Gereformeerd kerkrecht*, I, 603-604.

<sup>53</sup>Bouwman, *Gereformeerd kerkrecht*, I, 605. For more on this point and on how the matter of eldership constantly demanded the attention of the Dutch churches in England because of continuing lack of unanimity on length of service, see F.L. Rutgers, *Bespreking der hoofdpunten van het kerkrecht naar aanleiding van de Dordtsche kerkenorde. Aantekeningen van de colleges van Prof. Dr. F.L. Rutgers. Cursus 1892-1893* [unofficial lecture notes], 71-72.

<sup>54</sup>Bouwman, *Gereformeerd kerkrecht*, 605.

<sup>55</sup>See Van Ginkel, *De Ouderling*, 241-243. Rutgers (*Besprekingen der hoofdpunten*, 73) writes that it was the city of Groningen that was the exception (and not the province). Bouwman (*Gereformeerd kerkrecht*, 605) notes that life eldership in the city of Groningen was due to political circumstances. Four elders were chosen from the "Burgemeesters" and "Raadsheeren", four from the academic circle, and four from the citizenry. See further Rutgers, *Besprekingen der hoofdpunten*, 73-74.

in Wezel in 1568 and three years later at a synod in Emden, the idea of term eldership was strongly supported for practical reasons and became the accepted norm within the churches.<sup>56</sup> Thus the reason for a restricted period of service for elders that was given at Wezel already is that it is too heavy a burden and thus impacts negatively on their normal employment or business. This reason must be seen in the context of the persecution of those days.<sup>57</sup> The Synod of Dordrecht 1578 also gave this as the chief reason (and it allowed for exceptions).<sup>58</sup> However, that practical consideration was not the only reason. In a requested advice to the Synod of Middelburg 1581, Professor L. Danaeus of Leiden gave as reasons for term eldership the following. Firstly, Scripture does not demand a life eldership; secondly, lifetime eldership can lead to ecclesiastical tyranny; thirdly, with term eldership more people can an opportunity to get involved in the government of the church and fourthly, term eldership is now a general practice although, if desired, one can deviate from that.<sup>59</sup>

#### **Some Recent Discussion on Length of Service**

More currently the issue of whether the length of office should be for life or not has been discussed in recent decades in both Presbyterian and Reformed circles. In 1955 John Murray felt it necessary to publish a strong article in favour of lifetime eldership when the Form of Government in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was being revised and a proposal had been made contending for term eldership.<sup>60</sup> After making clear that an elder can still be removed from or relieved of the office for a number of reasons, Murray gives the following Scriptural arguments. Firstly, "there is no overt warrant from

<sup>56</sup>See F.L. Bos, *De Orde der kerk* ('s Gravenhage: Uitgeverij Guido de Bres 1950) 102 and Van Ginkel, *De Ouderling*, 242.

<sup>57</sup>Bos, *De Orde der kerk*, 102; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd kerkrecht*, 606.

<sup>58</sup>Van Ginkel, *De Ouderling*, 242; Rutgers, *Bespreking der hoofdpunten*, 73.

<sup>59</sup>The reasons as summarized by Van Ginkel, *De Ouderling*, 242-243; cf. the quotations from Danaeus' advice given by Bos, *De orde der kerk*, 102. Also see Rutgers, *Bespreking der hoofdpunten*, 74.

<sup>60</sup>John Murray, "Arguments Against Term Eldership", *Presbyterian Guardian*, February 15, 1955 and reprinted in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth 1977) 351-356, especially p. 354.

the New Testament for what we call 'term eldership'" (p. 352). Murray goes on to argue that inferences drawn from the New Testament militate against the practice. "The permanency of the gifts which qualify for the office, and the judgments of the church that Christ is calling this man to the exercise of the office" (p. 354) are inconsistent with a limited term, all the more when one considers that the gifts increase in fruitfulness and effectiveness with the usage of them in time. Finally, there is "the unity of the office of ruling. In respect of ruling in the church of God, the ruling elder and the teaching elder are on complete parity" (p. 354).<sup>61</sup> If there is no term office for the one, why should there be for the other? Murray even goes on to say that "one cannot but feel that the practice of term eldership for ruling elders is but a hangover of an unwholesome clericalism which has failed to recognize the basic unity of the office of elder and, particularly, the complete parity of all elders in the matter of government" (p.355). Over against the argument that the minister of the Word makes this calling his life work, whereas the ruling elder does not, Murray responds, first, that this does not invalidate the permanency of the call to the office of elder; second, with respect to 1 Timothy 5:17-18, that the ruling elder can be remunerated part-time as well as full-time and, thirdly, that also the ruling elder is worthy of his hire.

Coming now to a discussion held in Canadian Reformed circles in 1974, it can be noted that the Rev. W. Huijzinga was asked (presumably by an office bearers' conference) "to evaluate Scriptural data concerning the periodic retirement of elders and deacons (ad art. 27, C.O.) keeping in mind the historical developments in the Reformed churches on this matter". He concluded on the basis of the Old Testament evidence that "whenever the LORD appointed or had someone appointed to an office the office bearer usually served for life unless the character of the office itself required only a short term office-bearer. Only unfaithfulness is found as a reason for dismissal

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<sup>61</sup>This point was important in 1560 in justifying the life eldership among the Dutch refugee churches in England (see above). For more on how the elder and minister were regarded over against each other in the Reformed churches see Van Ginkel, *De Ouderling*, 243-263 (passim). For this matter in Presbyterian history (Hodge and Thornwell) see Soon Gil Huh, *Presbyter in volle rechten* (Groningen: De Vuurbaak 1972) 140-153. Cf. also note 35 above.



from office, for example in the case of Saul".<sup>62</sup> As far as the New Testament evidence is concerned, he concluded that "the New Testament evidence gives us the *impression* that elders and deacons were installed for life" (p. 5). The evidence brought forward dealt firstly, with the continuity of the Old and New Testament office bearers; secondly, with the seriousness of the office (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim 5:22). Once in office, the elder would stay an elder. Thirdly, some passages give clearly the impression of a life long calling. For example, does aspiring for the office (cf. 1 Tim 3:1), imply life long service or only a few years? Acts 20:28 indicates that the Holy Spirit made the elders overseers of the flock. "Would the Holy Spirit say, for example, after 3 years,—now you are no longer needed? You may go and I will call you again if I need you? Would this not be like a licensed tradesman saying to his apprentice whom he has trained at great costs to himself—all right, you can go back home now and do your regular old job full-time again? Is this appointment by the Holy Spirit not easier to explain, if we presuppose long-term instead of short-term eldership?" (p.4).<sup>63</sup> Rev. Huijzinga then reiterated the arguments of the London congregation at the 1560 conference. His final conclusion is, however, that it is still questionable and debatable whether we should be forced to abandon the Reformed custom of periodically retiring and replacing elders and deacons (p.5).

The well-known H. Bouwman in his work *Gereformeerde kerkrecht*, vol. 1 stated summarily that although the New Testament gives the impression of office for life, yet that part of the Reformed churches that were influenced by Calvin have decided on term eldership in order to avoid hierarchy and to increase the influence of the congregation on the government of the church. Further one should not forget that the distinc-

<sup>62</sup>W. Huijzinga, "Periodic Retirement of Elders and Deacons?", *Clarion* 23:6 (1974) 3. The emphases in this and a subsequent quotation are from him.

<sup>63</sup>It can be countered that the office does not have an indelible character as if it cannot be separated from the bearer of the office. J. Jansen, *Korte verklaring van de kerkenordening* (Kampen: Kok 1923) 126. On the Roman Catholic idea of the indelible character of the office see C. Trimp, *Ministerium. Een introductie in de reformatische leer van het ambt* (Groningen: Vuurbaak 1982) 40-46.

tion between the teaching and the ruling elder was just starting to take shape in the first century.<sup>64</sup>

It would seem to me that the arguments from Scripture for life eldership significantly outweigh those of term eldership. Obviously, there has been no unanimity on this matter in the history of the church and it thus seems unlikely to come about now. Another factor important within the context of this introduction is what would serve the congregation best. It would be good if our Presbyterian brothers could later address this matter from their own experience for our mutual edification.

### **Conclusion**

The eldership of course includes many more issues than have raised here. However, with respect to what has been broached in this introduction, it would appear that the office of elder merits continued study and stimulation in the church. The importance of this office is difficult to overestimate. All through the history of God's people the elders were used by the Lord as His instruments to stimulate and work for the preservation of the life with God in covenant holiness and faithfulness. Meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches should never forget this gift of our Lord Jesus Christ to His church and so lose touch with the daily concerns of the local congregation. The differences that exist among us in precisely how this office functions in the church can serve as a positive stimulant to consider this office again for the mutual benefit of us all.

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<sup>64</sup>H. Bouwman, *Gereformeerd kerkrecht*, 1, 601, also see pp. 607-608.

# Section IV

*Miscellaneous*

**Constitution and Regulations**  
of the  
International Conference of Reformed Churches  
(Revised, 1989)

**CONSTITUTION**

**ARTICLE I — NAME**

The name shall be The International Conference of Reformed Churches.

**ARTICLE II — BASIS**

The basis of the Conference shall be the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort) and the Westminster Standards (the Westminster confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms).

**ARTICLE III — PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Conference shall be:

1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ;
2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches;
3. to encourage cooperation among the member churches in the fulfillment of the missionary and other mandates;
4. to study the common problems and issues that confront the member churches and to aim for recommendations with respect to these matters;
5. to present a Reformed testimony to the world.

**ARTICLE IV — MEMBERSHIP**

1. Those churches shall be admitted as members which:
  - a. adhere and are faithful to the confessional standards stated in the Basis;
  - b. furnish
    - i. their confessional standards;
    - ii. their form of government;
    - iii. their form of subscription;
    - iv. their declaratory acts (if applicable);
  - c. are accepted by a two-thirds majority vote of the member churches, every member church having one vote;

- d. are not members of the World Council of Churches or any other organization whose aims and practices are deemed to be in conflict with the Basis.
2. Termination of membership shall be by a two-thirds majority whenever the Conference is of the opinion that the member church in its doctrine and/or practice is no longer in agreement with the Basis.

#### **ARTICLE V — AUTHORITY**

The conclusions of the Conference shall be advisory in character. Member churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation.

#### **ARTICLE VI — AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the member churches.

The proposed amendment(s) shall be sent to the Corresponding Secretary two years before the meeting of the Conference. He shall send it to the member churches immediately.

## **REGULATIONS**

#### **ARTICLE I — MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE**

1. The Conference shall convene every four years.
2. Each meeting of the conference shall determine the time, place and convening church of the next Conference.

#### **ARTICLE II — EXECUTIVE OFFICERS**

Each meeting of the Conference shall elect the following officers: a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Recording Secretary and a Corresponding Secretary.

1. The Chairman shall:
  - a. call the meeting to order at the appointed time and see to it that each session is properly opened and closed;
  - b. insure that the matters on the agenda are dealt with as expeditiously as possible;
  - c. put to the meeting every motion that is made and duly seconded, as well as take the vote;
  - d. rule on all points of order, subject always to an appeal from two voting delegates.
2. The Vice-Chairman shall:
  - a. take the chair when the Chairman desires to express himself on any question before the meeting;

- b. assume the duties and privileges of the Chairman in his absence;
  - c. render all possible assistance to the Chairman.
- 3. The Recording Secretary shall:
  - a. call the roll every day once the devotions have concluded;
  - b. keep an accurate record of all the proceedings of the meeting;
  - c. insure that all documents are properly cared for;
  - d. forward three copies of the proceedings to the member churches as soon as possible after compilation;
- 4. The Corresponding Secretary shall:
  - a. during the meeting of the Conference, assist the Recording Secretary whenever and wherever possible;
  - b. in between the meeting of the Conference:
    - i. attend to all correspondence;
    - ii. receive all reports from committees of the Conference and distribute them to the member churches;
    - iii. assist the convening church;
    - iv. publish materials, reports or other publications as authorized by the Conference;
    - v. report to the next meeting of the Conference on his activities and in the interim be responsible to the Interim Committee.
- 5. The Executive shall manage the proceedings of the meetings, arrange and propose the business to be transacted in every session and make recommendations concerning committees.

#### **ARTICLE III — INTERIM COMMITTEE**

The Interim Committee shall consist of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the Recording Secretary.

It shall:

- 1. oversee the work of the Corresponding Secretary;
- 2. invite one of the alternate committee members to serve when necessary;
- 3. report to the next meeting of the Conference;
- 4. be dismissed subsequent to its report to the next meeting of the Conference.

**ARTICLE IV — COMMITTEES**

1. The Conference may appoint a committee to study any matter that is deemed to be of mutual concern to the member churches.
2. Every attempt shall be made to make the members of these committees as representative as possible. The Conference shall also appoint members who can serve as substitute members should original appointees no longer be able to serve.
3. Committee reports shall be in the hands of the Corresponding Secretary at least one year prior to the next meeting of the Conference.

**ARTICLE V — PARTICIPANTS**

The following are to be seated at the meetings of the Conference:

1. Voting delegates from the member churches.  
Each member church shall be entitled to send two voting delegates to the meeting.
2. Advisory delegates from the member churches.  
Each member church may appoint two advisors, but they shall have no vote.
3. Observer delegates from churches that have made application for membership in the Conference.  
They may be invited to take part in all discussion but will not be accorded the right to vote nor be present at closed sessions.
4. Visiting delegates from churches which have not yet applied for membership.  
They shall be granted the right to attend the open meetings of the Conference and have extended to them the usual courtesies for such occasions.

**ARTICLE VI — CONVOCATION OF THE CONFERENCE**

1. The convening church shall organize a prayer service prior to the opening session of the Conference.
2. The convening church shall appoint one of its members to preside at the opening of the Conference.
3. The convener shall designate three delegates who will collect, examine and report on the credentials of each delegation.
4. The convener shall supervise the election of the Executive Officers.

**ARTICLE VII — AGENDA MATERIAL**

1. The Conference shall place on its agenda:
  - a. correspondence from member churches;
  - b. applications for membership from other churches;
  - c. reports from its special committees and Corresponding Secretary;
  - d. reports from its Interim Committee;
  - e. recommendations from any two member churches to extend an invitation to another church to send observers to the Conference.
2. Materials for the agenda should be received by the Corresponding Secretary one year in advance. Recommendations should also be in the hands of the Corresponding Secretary one year in advance and be circulated as soon as possible thereafter. Amendments to Committee proposals can be received by the Corresponding Secretary up to the opening session of the next meeting of the Conference. Other agenda material received less than one year before the opening of the next meeting of the Conference shall only be considered if the Conference so decides.
3. The agenda must be finalized three months in advance and a copy sent to all member churches.
4. Additional subjects for the agenda introduced by a delegate of a member church shall be restricted to those matters which are important and urgent and which could not have been placed on the agenda in a regular way. In such cases the meeting of the Conference shall decide by a two-thirds majority whether to place these matters on the agenda.

**ARTICLE VIII — RULES OF ORDER**

1. To obtain the floor each speaker must be recognized by the chair. He shall address himself to the Chairman with decorum and respect.
2. If a delegates fails to adhere to the point under discussion or becomes unnecessarily lengthy in his remarks, the Chairman shall call him to order.
3. If any delegate has spoken twice on a given issue, others who have not yet spoken shall be given priority by the Chairman.
4. When the Chairman believes that a motion has been sufficiently discussed, he may propose that debate be drawn to a



close. Any delegate convinced of the same may move to close the discussion.

5. Decisions shall be taken on the basis of a simple majority of votes cast, with the exception of Article IV, 1, c., IV, 2., VI of the Constitution and Article X of the Regulations.

**ARTICLE IX — FINANCES**

(cf. Session 5 Minute 3.1 of ICRC, 1989)

**ARTICLE X — AMENDMENTS TO THE REGULATIONS**

These Regulations may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast.

The proposed amendment(s) shall be sent to the Corresponding Secretary one year prior to the meeting of the Conference.

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