

## DOCUMENTARY SUPPLEMENT

### THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN CHURCH AND WORLD

DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES AND THE SECRETARIAT FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY: 1970-77

This report was put into its final form and approved in March, 1977, by the joint commission responsible for it, and it was presented to the authorities under whose auspices the dialogue took place. The Executive Committee of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity have accepted the proposal put forward in the letter accompanying the report, signed by the co-Presidents of the Commission (see below), and have arranged that the report be sent for study by the Episcopal Conferences and by the Churches which

are members of the World Alliance. For that same purpose of study it is agreed that it may also be published. The positions taken as a result of that study will be jointly evaluated by a new mixed Commission that will be set up by mutual agreement.

Attention is drawn to the status of this document: at this stage it remains exclusively the responsibility of the Commission which prepared it and it does not constitute a document of the authorities under whose auspices the dialogue took place.

#### COVERING LETTER

To the sponsoring authorities of the Roman Catholic/Reformed Joint Study Commission, The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and The World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

In writing this letter, we the co-chairmen of the Joint Study Commission wish to set on record on behalf of all the members of the Commission our deep sense of appreciation for the privilege of having shared together in these years of study. Above all we wish to testify to our sense of gratitude to our God, whom we seek to serve, for all that has been given to us of his grace in this venture of learning together in the things of the faith. While there are certainly remaining differences of a substantial nature our work evidences a remarkable series of convergencies and agreements.

In submitting this official report of the Reformed/Roman Catholic dialogue, we would respectfully request that the following matters be considered by our appropriate authorities.

We believe it to be very important that:

1) After due reflection the respective authorities of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches submit this report for the widest possible study, e.g., in episcopal conferences of the Roman Catholic Church and in member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and in theological seminaries and faculties of both constituencies.

2) After a due period for study and reflection within the respective constituencies reactions be requested by a mutually agreed date.

3) Consideration be given to the appointment of a new Joint Commission, having some continuity with that whose work is now ending, which new Commission would have the task of evaluating together the reactions received from the partners in dialogue.

4) Many questions still require careful theological discussion which a reading of the report will demonstrate. Along with these there will be issues arising from the process of study and reaction to the report. All this material along with the original theological mandate proposed by the preliminary meeting in Vogelenzang (1969) will help to clarify the agenda for the next phase of the dialogue.

5) As soon as this report has been received by the sponsoring bodies, consideration be given to the eventual joint publication of this report in book form, including a selected symposium of the position papers presented throughout the dialogue.

With regard to those points mentioned above the undersigned indicate their availability for consultation, if required.

We conclude this letter by emphasizing the strongly expressed belief of the members of the Commission that the growth in understanding registered in the years of dialogue behind us should be further developed in continuing work. In the previous paragraphs we have therefore outlined some of the steps which could serve as a part of the next phase of theological conversations between the two partners.

On behalf of the Joint Study Commission,  
Respectfully submitted,

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## THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN CHURCH AND WORLD

*Consultations between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church.*

### INTRODUCTION

1. "The Presence of Christ in Church and World" is the topic treated in the series of dialogues between representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church.

2. The choice of that topic and the enabling process for such a series at the international level go back to informal conversations among participants from both bodies who were present at the Uppsala Assembly of the World Council of Churches. These proved sufficiently promising for the Executive Committee of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to meet in June, 1968, to "explore elements in the new situation that may make the initiation of Reformed/Roman Catholic dialogue wise at this time". The Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II made it clear that readiness for such dialogue existed also on the Roman Catholic side. As a result, two preliminary meetings between staff of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity were held, one in Geneva in November of 1968, and one in Vogelenzang (Holland) in April of 1969. These two preliminary meetings affirmed the desirability and feasibility of proceeding with official Reformed/Roman Catholic conversations on a world level.

3. In doing so, neither body wished to detract from the importance of similar, more-or-less official conversations which had been going on for some time at the national level in Holland, France, Switzerland, the United States and other countries. Such national discussions have the advantage of being able to focus on problems common to the Church in the local situation. Since they are undertaken with the aim of being responsible to their respective official sponsors and of engaging them in the issues, these national dialogues deal with matters of considerable consequence, such as the significance of the mutual recognition of Baptism. Still, there are limitations which restrict the full significance of national talks. In many countries and areas dialogues are not occurring nor are likely to occur soon—areas, for example, where Christians are persecuted or where either Reformed or Roman Catholics are a restricted minority, or in areas where both find themselves in a society which severely discourages reconciling conversations among Christian bodies. Even where there are national dialogues, they often are conducted independently of other conversations going on between the same bodies in other contexts, which leads to much unnecessary duplication. Moreover, because of the world-wide implications of some of the issues under discussion, and because of the need to influence the centres

of universal authority and coordination, it was felt that the international dialogues were called for as ways of exploring new avenues in Reformed-Roman Catholic relations and of making wider use of the results already being obtained at the national level. It is therefore understood that the dialogues at various levels are complementary.

4. In deciding to proceed with these official conversations at the international level, both Roman Catholic and Reformed officials were mindful of the utility of bilateral consultations with other partners then underway. These would not be duplicated, though, since there are tensions which are peculiar to the relations between these two traditions. Both parties were convinced that by addressing the other in these bi-lateral consultations they would be exercising a responsibility each feels for the other and which both feel would be mutually enriching. Both parties were strongly motivated by the need to keep the discussions in the broader perspective of how these would advance their common concern to manifest the relevance of Christ in the world today.

5. The Geneva meeting in November of 1968 chose for the session in Vogelenzang the theme "The Presence of Christ in Church and World" "...because it seemed to have a bearing not only on the ultimate salvation of man but also on his life and happiness here and now. It was also expected that the discussion on the presence of Christ in Church and World, especially the meaning of his saving humanity, would tend to bring to light the differences between the two communions and that an honest appraisal of these differences could help the two traditions to overcome them and discover together what they must do in order to become more credible in the eyes of the world". (Joint Report, Vogelenzang, April 17-19, 1969).

6. The expectations for this theme were borne out. Its discussions at Vogelenzang uncovered a need to attend to three traditional problems related to the central one of understanding the Lordship of Christ today: Christology, ecclesiology, and the attitude of the Christian in the world. Though the problems are traditional ones, the Church confronts them in a new form today: the historical conditions which shaped their earlier formulations have radically changed, developments in the secular world cry for urgent attention, and the findings of the historical sciences and biblical exegesis demand new perspectives on inherited positions. So fruitful and demanding were the results of the initial exploration of this theme that it was mandated as the theme for the subsequent official

conversations which began in Rome in April of 1970. The subtopics of the series were: "Christ's Relationship to the Church" (Rome, Spring, 1970), "The Teaching Authority of the Church" (Cartigny, Switzerland, Spring, 1971), "The Presence of Christ in the World" (Bièvres, France, Winter, 1972), "The Eucharist" (Woudschoten-Zeist, the Netherlands, Winter, 1974) and "The Ministry" (Rome, March, 1975). (For details of themes, subthemes, authors and participants see Appendix).

7. Each delegation to these meetings was comprised of five permanent members, a staff person from each sponsoring office, and one consultant from each communion, appointed for his special expertise in the subject under consideration at a given session. The names of the regular teams, the special consultants and the staff persons involved are listed at the end of this report.

8. Each meeting lasted five days and followed a regular pattern. Four position papers, two from each team, circulated in advance. Each of these papers was discussed in plenary, and subcommittees were appointed to bring to the plenary a report which summarized the initial discussion of these position papers. The whole consultation then went through these reports, discussed again the issues which were raised by them, and then came to a common statement which summarized the findings of that particular session.

9. The initial step in the conversations was a matter, on many issues, of listening carefully to one another in order to discern what lies behind the different terminologies to which we have grown accustomed. It was not the purpose of these sessions consciously to work toward specific recommendations on the topics assigned them. Rather, the task was to locate the present convergences, continuing tensions, and open questions which emerged from the process just described. The several reports on each session were therefore more descriptive than prescriptive. The discussions were based on position papers which deliberately sought to break new ground on the topic under consideration; while the discussions were notably marked by theological perspectives which transcended predictable confessional alignments, it was understood that whatever concrete recommendation might arise from the final report would simply be the result of this process of critical inquiry and discussion.

10. After each meeting, a press release, the wording of which was agreed to by both delegations, was issued, but it was decided that it was best to wait until the final report, covering the whole series, was ready before publishing in any detail the results on the several discussions. At the conclusion of the fifth session, a committee was appointed to prepare a draft of the final report which was referred again to the permanent members of the conversations, who met in Rome, 21-26 March 1977, and agreed the final report, which with recommendations went to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

11. The final report, presented here, deliberately refrained from any attempt at a synthesis and offers instead the agreed revision of the five separate reports with which each session was invariably concluded. The official report in its final form represents the common mind of those engaged in the various steps of its formulation and acceptance. It cannot, however, reproduce all the diversity of styles, plurality of theological method, heat of conviction and novelty of insight which went into the position papers and their discussion.

12. It will be seen that during its working sessions the Commission's method was determined, among other things, by the desire in the case of each separate theme to produce a survey of the degree of agreement, disagreement and unresolved issues. But as we see it, the value of these discussions does not lie only in their necessarily provisional 'results'. What the authors of the report hope, rather, is that the readers may let themselves be drawn into the inner dynamic of the movement which gripped us from our very first meetings and never ceased to do so. The way was long and difficult and sometimes it seemed to be leading nowhere. Even though the following pages occasionally may still reveal certain inconsistencies, obstacles, reactions and surprises, we felt it impossible to eliminate these realistic features completely. But the intercessions of many, our prayers together in the name of Jesus, deepening trust, brotherly patience, scholarly seriousness, will to persist, to continue to listen to each other, not infrequently also a touch of hilarity—these things were all part and parcel of the experience which was given us with our discoveries and which can be only imperfectly reflected in the record of our discussions.

*Response to Christ's unifying action*

13. The starting point of these discussions was the recognition that, in Jesus Christ, God has made joint cause with sinful humanity and aims at the renewal of the world. Therefore all those who are connected with the name of Jesus Christ have the joint task of bearing witness to this Gospel.

*The Riches of Christ and the Wealth of Witnesses*

14. Since in Christ "the complete being of the Godhead dwells embodied" (*Col 2, 9*), there is necessarily a wealth of witnesses—which is what we actually find in the New Testament—in order that something at least of "the unfathomable riches of Christ" (*Eph 3, 8*) may be passed on. Thus the mission and task of Jesus, which are authoritative for the Church of every age and culture, including our own today, are reflected in a witness which has been characterised by choice and variety since the apostolic beginnings.

*Some of the norms of the Church, according to the New Testament:*

15. Norms for the belief and practice of the Church are not simply to be found in isolated proof-texts or in clearly discernible primitive patterns, but in the New Testament considered as a whole and as testimony to the divine purpose and mission for Israel, for the Church and for all humanity. In this respect, New Testament theology reckons with the content of the promise contained in the history of God's covenantal dealings with his people in the Old Testament.

16. There was complete agreement in presenting ecclesiology from a clear christological and pneumatological perspective in which the Church is the object of declared faith and cannot be completely embraced by a historical and sociological description.

There was also agreement in presenting the Church as the "body of Christ" (*cf. 1 Cor 12, 12 f. 27; Eph 5, 30*). The Apostle Paul's description of the Church as the body of Christ presupposes knowledge of the death, resurrection and exaltation of the Lord. The Church exists therefore as the body of Christ essentially by the Holy Spirit, just as does the exalted Lord. Stress was laid, however, on the complementary character of other images, particularly that of the bride (*cf. Eph 5, 15-32*), which warn us against any absolute identification.

17. Theological language is largely metaphorical because the metaphor is an indispensable way by which to understand and speak about realities which otherwise cannot be understood and expressed. A caveat was entered against any suggestion that theological language is to be understood exclusively as metaphorical language. The illegitimacy of any absolute

identification is shown by other passages which interpret the body of Christ as a picture for the Church united in Christ's name (*Rom 12, 5*). It came as a surprise to us to observe that the decisions we are faced with today did not always correspond to our confessional boundaries.

*The constantly differing form:*

18. Apart from the essential characteristics just presented which are *de rigueur* for every period and culture, the Church assumes different forms depending on the historical heritage it carries with it and the social and cultural situation in which it is set and in which it grows. Traces of a certain development are already discernible in the New Testament. It was fully agreed that the essential characteristics of the one Church assume concrete form in a variety of patterns already in the New Testament. It is correct to consult the Bible for theologies of the nature of the Church which will serve as starting points for inferring the broad outlines of a Church constitution and for examining whether the present ecclesiastical structures correspond to it. This applies, for example, to the meaning of "local church". In New Testament times a local district was a quite restricted geographical area, while in a highly technological society what is meant by local is considerably broader. But both Roman Catholic and Reformed agreed that the Church Catholic is really represented and exists in the local Church.

19. When it comes to the correct use of the New Testament in material for contemporary doctrines of the Church and ministry, it was further recognized that difficulties are not to be easily overcome by taking only some parts of the New Testament as normative while relegating other parts to a secondary position. Christ discloses himself under the conditions of historical relativity. Theology must undertake the difficult task of seeking the normative within the relative, and of applying what is thereby found to the concrete realization of the Church in different historical situations.

20. Theology, whether Reformed or Roman Catholic, cannot rest content with a gap between exegetical research and Church doctrine. No long-range progress in any ecumenical dialogue can be expected which does not deal with that gap. With respect, however, to such a question as that of the relation between, on the one hand, the results of historical criticism on the direct role of Jesus Christ in the origin of the Church and, on the other hand, the acceptance of such a role by believers, it was not agreed by all that the problem is only one of a gap between exegetical research and Church doctrine. Some maintained that, in this case, we have to do rather with a distinction between using the New Testament as historical source and accepting the New Testament as witness.

This does not mean that for the faithful the quest for the historical Jesus is made superfluous by a preoccupation with a supposedly different Christ of faith; it means only that the New Testament witness itself comprises a plurality of witnesses and various interpretations of the one Christ event.

*In the service of Christ for the world:*

21. In the community of Christians all the members are personally bound to Christ and therefore under obligation to serve Him. Office-bearers (see chapter on "Ministry" below) are also members of the body who at one and the same time serve the Lord and the community in order to fulfil their mission in the world.

## THE TEACHING AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

24. We are agreed that the Church has its authority to the extent that it listens to the Word Christ speaks to it ever afresh.

In the history of the Church, the difference between Catholics and Reformed has always focussed on the alternative: "Scripture and Tradition" and "Scripture only". Catholics stressed the need for and the authority of the Church's teaching office in the interpretation of Scripture, whereas the Reformed declared that Scripture interprets itself and, as God's Word, must be strictly distinguished from all human tradition, desiring in this way to do justice not only to the doctrine of justification but also to the total witness of the Old and New Testaments.

*Holy Scripture:*

25. Both on the Catholic and on the Reformed side today, the problem is no longer presented in terms of the battle lines of post-Tridentine polemic.

Historical researches have shown not only how the New Testament writings are themselves already the outcome of and witness to traditions, but also how the canonisation of the New Testament was part of the development of tradition.

Since the Second Vatican Council, Catholic teaching has stressed the very close connection between Scripture and Tradition: "springing from the same divine source, both so to speak coalesce and press towards the same goal" (*Dei Verbum*, 9). Scripture and Tradition thus constitute "the one holy treasure of the Word of God bequeathed to the Church" (*Dei Verbum*, 10) with a special dignity attaching to the Scriptures because in them apostolic preaching has been given especially clear expression (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 8).

In the light of these facts, the customary distinction between Scripture and Tradition as two different

22. The Church does not keep aloof from the world. On the contrary, it is part of the world. As such it attests the efficacy of its Lord's word and work. At the same time it is an anticipatory announcement of what Jesus has destined for all men. In this sense the Church exists wholly for the world and even in its weakness is the salt of the earth (cf. *Mt* 5, 13).

23. We were all agreed that the ethical decisions which necessarily follow from the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the believing acceptance of this Gospel extend also to the realm of politics. In both confessions there were those who inclined to place greater emphasis on the need for a certain caution and those who stressed the need to derive concrete political decisions from the New Testament message and the possibility of doing so.

sources which operate as norms either alternatively or in parallel has become impossible.

26. We are agreed that as *creatura Verbi* the Church together with its Tradition stands under the living Word of God and that the preacher and teacher of the Word is to be viewed as servant of the Word (cf. *Lk* 1, 2) and must teach only what the Holy Spirit permits him to hear in the Scriptures. This hearing and teaching takes place in a living combination with the faith, life and, above all, the worship of the community of Christ.

We are agreed that the development of doctrine and the production of confessions of faith is a dynamic process. In this process the Word of God proves its own creative, critical and judging power. Through the Word, therefore, the Holy Spirit guides the Church to reflection, conversion and reform.

27. Since we approach our dealings with the Scriptures from our own particular tradition, in each case, we tend to hear God's Word in different ways: we understand even central affirmations from different standpoints and emphasise them in different ways.

Since Scripture is clothed in the language and concepts of the ancient world and is related only indirectly to our modern problems, all churches must perforce go beyond the immediate letter of Scripture.

In addition there is the internal diversity of Holy Scripture with which we are more closely familiar today.

For all these reasons the Church is compelled and obliged constantly to reinterpret the biblical message.

28. In this area of interpretation different forms of tradition have been developed, the legitimation of one's own particular practice occasionally providing one of the motivating elements. On the whole the Reformed sought a direct support for their doctrine

in the apostolic witness of Scripture, whereas the Roman Catholic Church perceived the apostolic witness more strongly in the life of faith of the whole Church, in the measure that it constantly strove in the course of the centuries to apprehend the fulness of the divine truth (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 8).

This difference in attitude may rest on a difference in pneumatology: Catholic thought is primarily sustained by confidence in the *continuing* presence of the Holy Spirit, whereas the Reformed Church experiences the presence of the Spirit as a *constantly renewed* gift of the ascended Lord.

29. In the Reformed Churches, the so-called "Scripture principle", i.e. the confidence that the Word of God constantly creates the understanding of itself afresh, postulates in the life of the Church a carefully maintained relationship between the theologically trained servant of the Word and the theologically informed, responsible total community.

30. The Catholic Church stresses within the community the special service of those who with the aid of the Holy Spirit accept pastoral responsibility and must also make provision, therefore, for the right interpretation and proclamation of the Word of God.

#### Canon

31. The conviction of the Church is that it hears the voice of the living Lord which also speaks today out of the writings of the apostles and prophets. Since it is the same Holy Spirit who inspired the authors of the sacred books and who enlightens the Church's readers today, the Church has the promise of hearing God's Word from the Bible even today and tomorrow.

32. The Scriptures were accepted by the ancient Church because these writings attested the living tradition of the Gospel (summed up in the so-called *regula fidei*) because they were written by the apostles as eyewitnesses or by their disciples, handed down by the Church which itself has an apostolic origin. In accordance with both the Catholic and the Reformed tradition, the Church played its part in the process whereby the canon was formed, even if we cannot define this part more precisely.

In the light of this common understanding, the traditional controversy as to whether canonisation was the decision of a "possessing" Church or the receiving recognition of an "obeying" Church is out of date.

33. The ancient Church took the view that the different voices speaking in the Canon can and should come to expression side by side in the Church, since despite their differences, they all point to the same centre, namely to salvation in Jesus Christ.

The apostolic witness has primary significance therefore. It remains a continuing task of both Churches to explicate and to ensure respect for the not merely historical but also theological precedence of the apostolic period.

#### Confessions:

34. Raising the question whether the establishment of the confession of faith is for the Church a creative activity or an advance in its perception of the fulness already given, we noted once again that the dialogue was made more difficult by questions of terminology, since the term "confession of faith" occupies a different position in our two traditions and we recognised the importance of remembering the different functions which confessions of faith can have in the Church and in society.

35. We tried, nevertheless, to bring out certain points of convergence and to identify, too, the different and opposing positions.

For its witness in the world, the Church must always express its faith by confessions in which it interprets the Word of God in the language of today, a task which is never completed. Such a confession of faith is always the expression of an experience of salvation as lived in the Church at a given moment of its history.

36. The history of Christian doctrine presents us with a process of constant interpretative efforts with discontinuous stages of restructuring, each of which represents the Church's effort to reformulate its faith in a particular age and cultural environment. But this discontinuity of structuring is not opposed to a homogeneity of meaning: the transcendence of this meaning is thus emphasised in relation to these formulations. In consequence none of the proposed formulations is definitive in the sense that there will never be any need for a new interpretation in a new social and cultural situation. The more so since the inexhaustible riches of the revelation deposited in Scripture constantly compel us to return to the foundation event to discover again and again in its new aspects unsuspected by previous generations.

37. For the Catholics, the affirmations of the past are normative as guides for subsequent reformulations. For the Reformed, they have a real positive value which is nevertheless subordinate to the authority of Scripture.

So far as instruction is concerned, for the Reformed it is the community as a whole which is responsible and which delegates qualified people; whereas for the Catholics there is a distinctive responsibility of the pastoral ministry: the latter is rooted in the believing community but does not derive its authority from an act of delegation on the part of the latter.

38. Practice, however, often differs somewhat from theoretical affirmations, either because these are illegitimately hardened or because in fact compensatory elements play a part. Among the Reformed there are people, whether or not invested with official authority, who in fact play a considerable role. Among the Catholics stress is laid on the importance of the "sense of the faith", common to the whole of the believers, by which they discern the Word of God and adhere to

it (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 12), and which finds concrete expression in, among other things, the actual "reception", constantly renewed, of councils and the decisions of the teaching authority.

### *Infallibility*

39. Whereas the Reformed note that the expression "the infallibility of the Church" is almost never used in their tradition, Catholics note for their part that this word is relatively a recent one in theological terminology and seems hardly a happy term because of the maximising interpretations to which it often gives rise. As for the theology of infallibility, apart from the fact that too often there has been a tendency to reduce the question of the infallibility of the Church to the particular problem of the infallibility of the Pope, and even to a certain manner of exercising this latter, it should be stated that it has been developed into a onesidedly juridical problem which makes it all the more irreconcilable with Reformed thinking. We are nevertheless able to formulate a certain viewpoint in common.

40. The promise made by God to the Church is this: God remains faithful to his covenant and, despite the weaknesses and errors of Christians, he makes his Word heard in the Church.

41. Catholics hold that God's faithfulness to his Church necessarily means that when the People of God unanimously declares that a doctrine has been revealed by God and therefore demands the assent of faith, it cannot fall into error. And in particular that those who have been specially charged with the teaching mission are protected by a special charisma when it is a matter of presenting the revealed message. "The bishops taken in isolation do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility; yet, even though dispersed throughout the world and conserving the bond and communion between them and with the successor of Peter, when in their authentic teaching concerning questions of faith and morals they declare with full

agreement that it is necessary to support unhesitatingly such and such a point of doctrine, they then announce infallibly the teaching of Christ. This is all the more evident when, assembled in an ecumenical council, they teach and decide on questions of faith and morals for the whole Church; and their definitions must be adhered to in the obedience of faith" (*Lumen Gentium*, 25).

This is equally the case when the bishop of Rome, in the rare cases specified by Vatican I, expresses himself *ex cathedra*. Nevertheless, what has just been said does not imply that all the expressions chosen are necessarily the best available nor again that the ecclesial authorities enjoy this charisma in a permanent manner or that they cannot be mistaken in a certain number of affirmations on which they do not commit themselves fundamentally.

42. The Reformed rejection of any infallibility which is accorded to men derives from a repugnance to bind God and the Church in this way, in view of the sovereignty of Christ over the Church and of the liberty of the Spirit, a repugnance strengthened by the experience of frequent errors and resistances to the Word on the part of the Church. In addition there is a fear lest confidence in the infallibility of a formulation should distort the personal character of faith in the living Christ; further, the fact that many Reformed take the resistance of man to the Spirit of God so seriously today that any assertion of the infallibility of the Church becomes impossible. Apart from that, for Reformed sensibility, any claim to infallibility in the modern world represents an obstacle to the credibility of the proclamation.

The misgivings concerning the idea of ecclesiastical infallibility do not detract from the decisive though subordinate weight given in the Reformed tradition to the ancient Ecumenical Councils in the transmission and interpretation of the Gospel. For the Reformed, however, what alone is infallible, properly speaking, is God's fidelity to his covenant, whereby he corrects and preserves his Church by the Spirit until the consummation of his reign.

## THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE WORLD

### *Creation and Redemption:*

43. God is present in the world as its Creator, Sustainer, Lord of history who rules all things as Loving Father. Frequently in the history of Christian thought and today the point of departure for speaking of Christ's presence in the world is ecclesiological: Christ is present in the Church and through his Lordship over the Church he exercises his Lordship over the world. This position leads to the conclusions that Christ's presence is limited to the presence the Church mediates, that he acts only in the Church, that his lordship over the world operates

only through the Church's mission, and that when the world and the Church are in conflict, Christ is always on the side of the Church. Of course the Church is the beloved Bride of Christ for whom he gave himself (cf. *Eph.* 52, 5 ff.) Nevertheless, and for this reason above all, judgment begins at the house of God (cf. 1 *Pet.* 4, 17).

44. Though it is true that there is a presence of Christ in the Church which places her in special relationship to the world, an "ecclesiological monopoly" on the presence of Christ and the conclusions



which follow from it are exegetically untenable. The presence of Christ in the world is a consequence of the continuity of God's action in creation and redemption. This continuity of God's acting in creation and redemption is found in the covenant he made in the Old Testament with Israel and renewed and transformed in the New Testament with all humanity. The continuity laid emphasis on the political and social implications of the saving work of Christ as well as on faith as a personal engagement. In the New Testament "the new creation" (cf. *2 Cor* 5, 17) is seen as the restoration and completion of the purposes of the Creator. Christ is the redeemer of the whole world, in Him God has reconciled the world to himself (*2 Cor* 5, 19). The universal dimensions of the Lordship of the one Christ (cf. *Eph* 1, 21 f.), to which Holy Scripture witnesses, speak pointedly today to a world deeply fragmented and in search of its unity.

45. It is through the Spirit that Christ is at work in creation and redemption. As the presence in the world of the risen Lord, the Spirit affirms and manifests the resurrection and effects the new creation. Christ who is Lord of all and active in creation points to God the Father who, in the Spirit, leads and guides history where there is no unplanned development.

46. The Father is the absolutely primary principle for he is "source, guide and goal of all that is" (*Rom* 11, 36; cf. *1 Cor* 8, 6). The reason why we have been elected and predestinated in Christ is to "cause his glory to be praised" (*Eph* 1, 12, 6). The purpose of the mystery of Christ himself is to make known to the rulers and authorities the infinite wisdom of God (*Eph* 3, 10). After the Fall, mankind became more and more alienated from the one God. One of the fruits of the messianic era will be that every knee shall bow to God (*Isa* 45, 23), that all the peoples will worship him (*Psa* 22, 30). This is what the Gospel of John means when it says: "This is my Father's glory, that you may bear fruit in plenty and so be my disciples" (*Jn* 15, 7).

47. In response to the revelation of this triune God, Christians affirm that the purposefulness of history is the framework in which the diverse realities of all human activities are to be understood. On this ground we can also recognize that the process of secularisation, with its rejection of every clerical and theological qualification, has given all aspects of life an autonomy whose validity theology has come to recognize and this has stimulated us to seek for new ways of expressing Christ's involvement in the world. This remains true even if we do not agree with the rejection of transcendence which has often accompanied this process and even if we detect here the secularism which results from it as well as the adherence to various religions or pseudo-religions.

48. We are agreed that there is a presence of the Spirit of Christ in the world. How and where can we recognize this effective presence? This problem presents us with a series of questions which arise today

for all churches. These questions may be formulated as follows:

We look for his presence in the plan or purpose which God is realizing through all the complexities of history.

We look for his presence as Lord of history in those movements of the human spirit which, with or without the assistance of the Church, are achieving the ends of his Kingdom.

We look for his presence in those values and standards which owe their origin to the Gospel, but now have become embedded in public conscience and institutions.

49. But in these questions we keep before us the following convictions:

— In the Cross Christ identifies himself with men in their sin (cf. *Is* 53, 4 f. 11 f.; *Jn* 1, 29; *2 Cor* 5, 21) and need in order that they might be identified with him in the new victorious life of his resurrection (cf. *Rom* 6, 4 f.; *Col* 3, 1-4). The first identification remains true and effective even where it is not recognized. Christ is present in the poor and helpless who cry for liberation.

— The challenge of the world to the Church and its appeal for help may be at the same time a challenge and appeal from Christ, who in this way judges his Church, demands obedience and calls it to reformation.

— The Christian who looks back on his own life will say that Christ was active in it, leading him to repentance, conversion, and faith, even before he was aware or made any conscious response. We are therefore bound to claim that Christ is similarly active in the lives of others for whom faith lies still in the future.

50. The Christian who recognizes the presence and activity of Christ in these forms will rejoice in them and be willing to cooperate with them. This is not to say that either the salvation of the individual or the transformation of society is complete unless the work of Christ is brought to conscious recognition through the power of the Spirit to interpret and convince. People can be liberated from the demonic dangers of absolute autonomy only by a firm recognition of the creatureliness and transience of the world they are trying to transform. To bring this world under the rule of God does not mean that in it we are to have our abiding city (cf. *Hebr* 13, 14). There is no dichotomy between the Christians' personal response to the Christ they find in the Church and their corporate response along with others, Christian and non-Christian alike, to the Christ who confronts them with the world. To participate in the divine life by grace is to participate in God's love for the world which he has created and which, with the help of responsible and responsive people, he is re-creating.

#### *Church and World:*

51. The Creator of the world does not want mankind to destroy itself through lack of liberty, peace and justice (cf. *Ezek* 18, 32). Rather, through the



revelation of his will, he leads mankind onto the road of salvation and in Jesus Christ offers it the gift of final redemption from all ungodly ties and participation in His divine life and thus in His freedom.

This movement towards freedom already begins with the election of the old people of the covenant, a people that he continually calls back to serve him freely.

52. In Jesus Christ there takes place the final reconciliation and with it also the call to the whole of the world (cf. *2 Cor.* 5, 18-21). The Church that Christ has sent into the world has to carry this message of liberation (cf. *Lk* 4, 18 f.; 8, 31-36; *Rom* 6, 18-22) among the peoples of the world, and with it also the call to that freedom which is God's gift to people in grace, all with a view to the perfection in which God will ultimately construct peace and liberty (cf. *Rom* 8, 19-21). This statement already makes it clear that the fundamental relationship between the Church and the world lies in Jesus Christ who at one and the same time is the Head of the Church and the Lord of the world (cf. *Hebr* 1, 2 f.; *Revel* 17, 14; 19, 15 f.).

53. The Church professes that Christ himself is the carrier of the message of the rule of God and the liberation of mankind. If the Church goes out into the world, if it brings the Gospel to men and endeavours to realize more justice, more conciliation and more peace, then in doing so it is only following its Lord into domains that, unbeknown to men, already belong to him and where he is already anonymously at work.

54. The Church was founded by Christ to share in the life which comes from the Father and it is sent to lead the world to Jesus Christ, to its full maturity for the glory and praise of the Father. It is therefore called to be the visible witness and sign of the liberating will of God, of the redemption granted in Jesus Christ, and of the kingdom of peace that is to come. The Church carries out this task by what it does and what it says, but also simply by being what it is, since it belongs to the nature of the Church to proclaim the word of judgement and grace, and to serve Christ in the poor, the oppressed and the desperate (*Mt* 25, 31-40). More particularly, however, it comes together for the purpose of adoration and prayer, to receive ever new instruction and consolation and to celebrate the presence of Christ in the sacrament; around this centre, and with the multiplicity of the gifts granted by the Spirit (cf. *1 Cor* 12, 4-11, 28-30; *Rom* 12, 6-8; *Eph* 4, 11) it lives as a *koinonia* of those who need and help each other. We consequently believe in a special presence of Christ in the Church by which it is placed in a quite special position in relation to the world and we believe that the Church stands under the special aid of the Holy Spirit, above all in its ministry of preaching and sacraments (cf. *Jn* 14, 16, 25 f.; 15, 26; 16, 7-14).

55. The Church can therefore correspond to its calling if its structure and its life are fashioned by love and freedom. Accordingly the Church does not seek to win human beings for a secular programme of salvation by propagandistic methods but to convert

them to Christ and in this way to serve them. In its proclamation of the Gospel there is at the same time a powerful creative cultural dynamic.

56. As a *communio* structured in this way the Church contradicts the structures of the various sectors of the life of modern secular society: opposing exploitation, oppression, manipulation, intellectual and political pressures of all kinds. The renewal of Christian congregations as authentic life forms will also influence the wider social and political context.

57. In addition, the Christian commitment of alert and responsible Christians has often been organized in political parties, professional associations, trade unions and suchlike, with or without guidance from the official church authorities.

There is today a certain crisis in these activities. The solution of specific problems facing them today requires much expertise. In addition it sometimes happens that the claim of certain parties and interest groups to represent a Christian position is an obstacle to the Christian witness to all human beings. The decision on this question in each case may differ according to country and circumstance; but for us there is no specific confessional difference here.

58. The official church authorities, who are often regarded as representatives of their communities, have to pay careful attention to whether and in what respects they are obliged by their Lord to speak a prophetic and pastoral word to the general public. Such an obligation will arise especially when no one else speaks up against certain injustices or abuses.

59. Along the road which the Church at any given time takes through the world in the solidarity with human beings commanded by Christ, it must not tie itself down to a programme of its own but always remain open for ever new directives of the Holy Spirit promised to it. The Holy Spirit strengthens it in spite of all imperfectness and provisionality of social, even Christian, fashioning of life in fidelity to its redeemer and in obedience to the creator and upholder of the world. The Spirit is himself the pledge (cf. *Eph* 1, 14; *2 Cor* 1, 22) that its hope in the consummation of the recreation of the world will not be disappointed (cf. *Rom* 8, 11, 19-21; *2 Petr* 3, 13).

#### *The Church as the Effective Sign of Christ's Presence in the World*

60. The Church exposes its fundamental orientations and controlling loyalties by the way it lives, no matter what it says to the contrary. When the Church turns inward on itself and clings to outdated structures, it gives the impression that Christ is its exclusive possession rather than its Lord who goes before and leads. When the Church is truly a pilgrim people on the way through the world (cf. *Hebr* 13, 14; *Phil* 3, 20; *Gal* 4, 26; *1 Petr* 2, 11), it bears witness that Christ is the Lord over the world as well as the Church. Turning the Church outward to bear witness to his presence in the world is a function of Christ's converting presence with his Church. The Church

is a worshipping community whose prayers are inseparable from its prophetic and diaconal service. In worship and witness the Church celebrates the central fact of Christ's unity with his people. Being united to Christ in his death and resurrection, the Church is empowered with the Spirit to walk in newness of life and so to be a converted and converting presence in Christ's world. By living as a new people persuaded of God's acceptance in Christ, the Church is a persuasive sign of God's love for all his creation and of his liberating purpose for all men.

61. In a world undergoing a profound transformation, the Church cannot become set in immobility on the plea that it is immutable, but must above all be listening to the Word of God in which it will discern, beyond all "conservatism" and all "progressivism", the transformations required of it precisely in virtue of its fidelity to this Word.

62. First, the localness and the catholicity of the Church are to be kept in perspective. It is only by participating in the local community that we share in the life of the universal Church, but the local community without universality (in particular the small basic communities but likewise the local Churches at regional level) runs the risk of becoming a ghetto or of being arbitrarily dominated by individuals.

63. Second, practical changes must take account of the great variety of situations confronting the Churches and these changes presuppose both a decentralization of the Church and a larger participation on all levels, quite especially on what is commonly (and perhaps misleadingly) called the laity.

Participation is essential because it springs from the very nature of the Christian vocation and also because a great many fields are quite inaccessible to the Church except through its lay members who live and work in them. Moreover this participation is

important because the Church's effective witness depends in very large measure on expertise of the laity in diverse fields, expertise which the clergy do not have, have not had, but too often have presumed to have. However their participation in the life of the church is not merely to be seen in terms of their professional expertise. They also have the specific spiritual ministry, which they exercise through all activities including their technical competence. The church in all its members is ministerial.

64. Third, the Church must take great care not to act too prematurely today, as it too often did in the past, to suppress disturbingly novel expressions of spiritual life and spontaneous forms of community, on the ground that they are merely expressions of the human spirit and not also expressions of the Holy Spirit.

65. Fourth, the Church's faithful mutation is to be seen as consistent with the Church's historical character. This means that apostolic continuity, perhaps quite diversely defined, is integral to the Church's identity through change. It also means that when the Church has been obediently changeable, it has always taken into account the diverse socio-political and cultural contexts in which Christ's presence was known and confessed. Here arises the question of what belongs to the "establishment" of the Church and of what emerges from the structures which Christ intended for His Church.

66. In incorporating these and other characteristics of change we discussed how they will bear upon the new manifestation of the unity of the Church which is now emerging. The slogan "unity in necessary things" has been accepted but we have not yet specified what is necessary. An "ecumenism of convergence" with its focus on what is necessary will not demand uniformity nor the death of pluralism.

## THE EUCHARIST

### *The Biblical Basis:*

67. Reflection on the celebration of the Eucharist must start from the biblical sources, i.e.:

- from the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the primitive Church,
- from the celebration of the Last Supper of Jesus,
- from the Old Testament background, particularly the Jewish Passover.

68. When the Christian community assembled with glad and generous hearts (Acts 2, 46) it celebrated the memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus, experienced his presence as the exalted Lord in his Spirit and looked forward longingly to his return in glory. It thus regarded itself as the pilgrim People of God.

69. The traditional words of Jesus at the Last Supper, despite the differences in their transmission, recall that his acceptance of death "for many" inaugurates the new covenant of God with his People. The cancellation of the old covenant does not mean the rejection of Israel (cf. *Rom* 11, 1 f. 28 f.) but on the contrary the continuation of God's promises which are operative in the new gift of salvation in virtue of the reconciling fruits of the death of Jesus.

70. If this background is taken seriously, new possibilities of mitigating the traditional confessional quarrels emerge from the understanding of the New Testament accounts of the institution: for example,

— In the words of institution the emphasis is on the fact of the personal presence of the living Lord in the event of the memorial and fellowship meal, not on the question as to how this real presence (the

word "is") comes about and is to be explained. The eating and drinking and the memorial character of the passover meal, with which the New Testament links Jesus' last meal, proclaim the beginning of the new covenant.

— When Christ gives the apostles the commission 'Do this in remembrance of me!' the word "remembrance" means more than merely a mental act of "recalling".

— The term "body" means the whole person of Jesus, the saving presence of which is experienced in the meal.

71. Reflection on the biblical sources along these lines can also help to relativise certain traditional alternatives (influenced by a dualistic anthropology and cosmology) which encumber the dialogue between the confessions (as for example, realism/symbolism, sacramentalism/inwardness, substance/form, subject/object). In relation to an objectification which tends to rigidity, the original biblical way of thinking helps us to a more profound understanding of the character of the Eucharist as an event.

72. The glorified body of the Lord with which the New Testament community had fellowship in the Supper is to be understood in accordance with the description of the risen Jesus Christ as the second Adam, who is both a body determined by the Spirit (σῶμα πνευματικόν 1 Cor 15, 44) and a life creating Spirit (πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν 1 Cor 15, 45).

73. The concept of *koinonia* stresses not only fellowship with the exalted Lord Jesus Christ, but beyond this and precisely because of this also the fellowship of all who partake of the meal and are called together into the community of the Lord (1 Cor 10, 17).

74. Reflection on the Supper of the primitive Christian community must not contemplate the past in retrospect and seek to restore it; on the contrary, it must liberate us for a new priestly ministry (1 Pet 2, 9), which the Church has to perform in relation to the world of today.

#### *The Paschal Mystery of Christ and the Eucharist:*

75. Christ sends us into the world with the message of a new life and a new common life in fellowship with him. In our speaking and acting he bears witness to himself. His Gospel gathers, protects and maintains the *koinonia* of his disciples as a sign and beginning of his kingdom. He himself constantly calls this community to the memorial of his death; he himself comes into its midst as the living One through his word and causes this word to take shape in the celebration of the Supper in which he deepens and seals (cf. Jn 15, 4 f.; 6, 56 f.; 1 Cor 10, 16) his fellowship with us and in which the new life of fellowship of Christendom is represented to the world (1 Jn 1, 3). The presidency of the commissioned church office-bearer at the celebration of the Meal effectively represents this unique role of Christ as the Lord and Host. The commissioned office-bearer is there to show the

assembled community that it does not have disposal itself over the Eucharist but simply carries out obediently what Christ has commissioned the Church to do.

76. The fellowship and witness of the Church depend on it being filled by God with his Spirit. (cf. Lk 24, 49; Acts 1, 8; Tit 3, 6).

The way of the disciples through the world since his return to the Father has been characterised by, his hiddenness (cf. 1 Jn 3, 1 f.; 1 Cor 4, 9-13; Jn 15 18-21). They await his return (cf. Phil 3, 20 f.; Col 3, 4; 1 Jn 2, 28) and remain dependent on his promise never to leave them or forsake them (cf. Jn 14, 18 f.; 18 f.; Mt 28, 20). In the eucharistic meal they again and again experience his keeping of his promise.

This free, gracious presence of the Lord takes place in the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 2, 10-13; Jn 14, 16-20; 16, 13-15), i.e. He himself lays the foundation for it, creates in itself and in us the possibility of knowing him and receiving him and sanctifies the means by which he imprints his presence in us, pours out on us his gifts and equips us to serve him.

So the Lord himself comes to us in his Spirit (cf. Rom 8, 9; Jn 7, 38 f.) through his word, attests himself in the holy signs and, giving his Church spiritual food and drink, accompanies it towards the future of the Kingdom in which the counsel of God finds its fulfilment.

77. The whole saving work of God has its basis, centre and goal in the person of the glorified Christ.

Christ himself did not seek his own glory but the glory of him who sent him (cf. Jn 8, 50; 7, 18). Similarly he said: "It is meat and drink for me to do the will of him who sent me until I have finished his work" (Jn 4, 34).

78. The One who is exalted to God's right hand lived among us and died among us. He shared our spatial and temporal existence; despite our sin he was our fellow human being. In his exaltation, he remains what he was: the obedient son (cf. Hebr 5, 8 f.; Phil 2, 8) and our brother. In solidarity with the glorified One we live in the reality which he opened up to us by his life and death.

79. This is experienced, confessed and portrayed by the Christian community in its celebration of the Supper with him. United with Christ by the Holy Spirit, incorporated in him by baptism (cf. 1 Cor 12, 12 f.), it constantly receives anew his humanity in which he lived, died and was glorified for us, as the real bond with God himself (cf. Jn 6, 57).

80. In his person, his life, his death and his resurrection, Christ has established the new covenant.

In him person and work cannot be separated. What he did, derives its saving power from what he is. He is our salvation because of what he did.

Christ the mediator (cf. 1 Tim 2, 5; Hebr 8, 6; 9, 15) is no hybrid. He is himself personally the mediation. In him and through him God's self-offering to us as human beings is accomplished; in him and through him humanity's surrender to God.

The sacrifice brought by Jesus Christ is his obedient life and death (cf. *Hebr* 10, 5-10; *Phil* 2, 8). His once-for-all self-offering under Pontius Pilate is continued by him for ever in the presence of the Father in virtue of his resurrection. In this way he is our sole advocate in heaven (cf. *Hebr* 9, 11 f. 24; 10, 13 f. 19-21; 7, 24 f.; *1 Jn* 2, 1; *Rom* 8, 34). He sends us his Spirit so that we weak human beings, too, may call upon the Father and can also make intercession for the world (cf. *Gal* 4, 5; *Rom* 8, 15 f. 26).

81. In its joyful prayer of thanksgiving, "in the Eucharist", when the Church of Christ remembers his reconciling death for our sins and for the sins of the whole world, Christ himself is present, who "gave himself up on our behalf as an offering and sacrifice whose fragrance is pleasing to God" (*Eph* 5, 2). Sanctified by his Spirit, the Church, through, with and in God's son, Jesus Christ, offers itself to the Father. It thereby becomes a living sacrifice of thanksgiving, through which God is publicly praised (cf. *Rom* 12, 1; *1 Petr* 2, 5).

The validity, strength and effect of the Supper are rooted in the cross of the Lord and in his living presence in the Holy Spirit. Far from bypassing us, they are fulfilled in our faith, love and service.

The witness, celebration and fruits of the Eucharist are crystallisations of the Church's proclamation and fellowship. They are therefore sustained by every movement in which the eternal Father for Christ's sake and through him, accepts and recreates the lost world in the Holy Spirit.

#### *The Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper*

82. As often as we come together in the Church to obey our Lord's command to "do this in *anamnesis* of me", he is in our midst. This is the presence of the Son of God who for us men and for our salvation became man and was made flesh. Through the offering of his body we have been sanctified and are made partakers of God. This is the great mystery (*Sacramentum*) of Christ, in which he has incorporated himself into our humanity, and in partaking of which the Church is built up as the Body of Christ. This is the same mystery dispensed to us in the eucharistic celebration, for when we bless the cup it is the communion of the blood of Christ, and when we break the bread it is the communion of the body of Christ (*1 Cor* 10, 16). The realization of this presence of Christ to us and of our union and incorporation with him is the proper work of the Holy Spirit, which takes place in the eucharistic celebration as the Church calls upon the Father to send down his Holy Spirit to sanctify both the worshipping people and the bread and wine. How Christ is present in the Eucharist, we may apprehend to a certain extent by looking at the work of the same Holy Spirit, e.g. in the birth of Jesus of the Virgin Mary and in his resurrection in body from the grave — although as acts of God they are explicable only from the side of God and not from the side of man.

83. It is in this light that we may understand something of the specific presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, which is at once sacramental and per-

sonal. He comes to us clothed in his Gospel and saving passion, so that our partaking of him is communion in his body and blood (*John* 6, 47-56; *1 Cor* 10, 17). This presence is sacramental in that it is the concrete form which the mystery of Christ takes in the eucharistic communion of his body and blood. It is also personal presence because Jesus Christ in his own person is immediately present, giving himself in his reality both as true God and true Man. In the Eucharist he communicates himself to us in the whole reality of his divinity and humanity — body, mind and will, and at the same time he remains the Son who is in the Father as the Father is in him.

84. The Reformed and Roman Catholics are convinced of the centrality of this common christological confession. The specific mode of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist is thus to be interpreted as the presence of the Son who is both consubstantial with us in our human and bodily existence while being eternally consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead (*Jn* 17, 21-23). It is important to see that Calvin's Christology was mainly inspired by the theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria and of St. Athanasius. It would be easy to be misled by the term "extra Calvinisticum" which arose out of early 17th century polemics among Protestants; and even the Calvinist teaching then was that after the incarnation the eternal Word, fully joined to the humanity in the hypostatic union, was nevertheless not restricted to, or contained within the flesh, but existed "*etiam extra carnem*". This doctrine, that the *logos* is at the same time incarnate and present in the whole world, is not a Calvinist speciality, but is common to the Christology of pre-Chalcedonian as well as post-Chalcedonian orthodoxy, East and West. What clearly matters is the fully trinitarian context which is guarded by this doctrine and the Christological presuppositions on which there are no fundamental disagreements between Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions.

85. We celebrate the Eucharist with confidence because in Jesus Christ we have the new and living way which he has opened for us through his flesh (*Heb* 10, 19-20). He is both Apostle from God and our High Priest (cf. *Hebr* 3, 1) who has consecrated us together with him into one, so that in his self-offering to the Father through the eternal Spirit (cf. *Hebr* 9, 14), he offers us also in himself and so through our union with him we share in that self-offering made on our behalf. It is the same Spirit who cries "Abba, Father" (cf. *Mk* 14, 36) in him who cries "Abba, Father" in us, as we in the Eucharist take the Lord's Prayer into our own mouth (*Rom* 8, 15 f., 26 f.).

86. In this union of the Church on earth with the risen and ascended Christ, which he continues to sustain through its eucharistic communion with him, the Church is enabled by grace to participate in his reconciling mission to the world. Christ and his Church share in this in different ways. Christ vicariously as Mediator and Redeemer, the Church as the community of the redeemed to whom he has entrusted the ministry of reconciliation (cf. *2 Cor*

5, 18) and stewardship of the mysteries (cf. *1 Cor* 4, 1). "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes" (*1 Cor* 11, 26). Thus precisely because the mission of the Church is grounded in, and sustained through eucharistic communion with Christ, it is sent out by Christ into all nations and all ages in the service of the Gospel, in reliance upon his promise that he will be present to it always unto the end of the world (cf. *Mt* 28, 18-20).

#### *The Eucharist and the Church: Christ, the Church and the Eucharist:*

87. "This one accepts sinners and eats with them" (*Lk* 15, 2), is characteristic of Christ's work. The power and effect of his death and resurrection confront and confound the power of death and sin. The institution of the Eucharist constitutes the Church as the community of love where the power of his death and resurrection is mediated by the One intercessor between God and the sinner. For the time between his first and second coming, our Lord instituted the Eucharist as a sacrificial meal. Sinful men and women, rich and poor, religious and secular people, united at the Lord's table, are the first-fruits of that communion, peace and joy, which are promised to all who hunger and thirst for righteousness (cf. *Mt* 5, 6).

#### *The Eucharist and the Renewal of the Church*

88. The Eucharist is a source and criterion for the renewal of the Church. The Church's renewed understanding of the Eucharist may lead to a renewed way of celebrating the Eucharist, revealing the Church more clearly as essentially "the Eucharistic community".

The renewal of the Church through the Eucharist includes a continuous summons to church unity. The division of the churches at the precise point where the Church should reveal its true nature as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church calls urgently for ecumenical agreement on the meaning of the Eucharist and its relation to the Church.

At the same time the Eucharist requires and inspires the Church's sense of her vocation to bring the Gospel to the whole world in proclaiming the good news of God's salvation and exercising the work of reconciliation in its deeds. Since the Eucharist means "thanksgiving" the members of the Church will show forth a life that is inspired and sustained by this sense of gratitude. Renewal, unity and mission are inseparable characteristics of the Church as it receives in faith the gift of the Eucharist.

#### *Eucharist, Liturgy and Dogma*

89. The Eucharist is an expression of the Church's faith. That faith is expressed in part in its liturgical life, according to the principle "lex orandi, lex credendi". It is an essential function of liturgy to hand on the Gospel in the formulations of its prayer, and also in the forms of ritual practice.

In the course of history certain formulae have been taken up in dogmatic and liturgical usage, primarily

as protective devices to safeguard the faith against misinterpretation. These formulae have been usually developed from a context of controversy, from which the passage of time has tended to detach them. Such formulations need to be re-examined in order to see whether they are still adequate as safeguards against misunderstanding, or have themselves become sources of misunderstanding, especially in the ecumenical situation.

There is therefore a pastoral responsibility on the churches to see that such formulae contribute to the genuine communication of the Gospel to the contemporary world.

#### *The Eucharist and Church Organization*

90. In the visible aspects of the Church, the Eucharist should reveal to the world the authentic reality of the Church. Similarly, the Eucharist should continually empower the Church to recall itself to the vision of that reality. The Eucharist thus enables the Church both to reveal its true nature to the world, and to shape itself in conformity to that same reality.

As a community of men and women living in the world, the Church organizes itself in varying ways in the course of history. This organization of the Church's way of life should not obscure the true face of the Church, but allow it to be seen in its true being. It is the Eucharist which is the source of continuing scrutiny of the organization and life of the Church.

In particular, the law of the Church should reflect Christ's law of love and freedom. The Church's law is not an absolute, but always serves a pilgrim people. One of the functions of that law is to promote the constant renewal of the Church in its preaching of the Gospel and in its service to mankind. The law of the Church must be in harmony with the law of the Kingdom, revealed in the Eucharist.

#### *General Comment*

91. While we are aware of the serious discrepancy between our claims to common theological understanding and our actual practices, we gratefully acknowledge the way our investigations and discussions have resulted in a greater appreciation of the richness in our respective eucharistic doctrines and practices. We believe we have reached a common understanding of the meaning and purpose and basic doctrine of the Eucharist, which is in agreement with the Word of God and the universal tradition of the Church. We also believe that the way is clearly opening out before us on which remaining misunderstandings and disagreements about the Lord's Supper can be cleared up. The terminology which arose in an earlier polemical context is not adequate for taking account of the extent of common theological understanding which exists in our respective churches. Thus we gratefully acknowledge that both traditions, Reformed and Roman Catholic, hold to the belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist; and both hold at least that the Eucharist is, among other things:

(1) a memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord;

(2) a source of loving communion with him in the power of the Spirit (hence the epiclesis in the Liturgy), and

(3) a source of the eschatological hope for his coming again.

#### *Lines of Investigation*

92. Our dialogue has convinced us of the urgent need to pursue the following questions:

— the constitutive elements of a eucharistic service, especially in view of its relation to certain forms of Christian fellowship, called in some countries “agape-celebrations”;

— the use of the Eucharist today which grows out of a faithful reflection on the tradition and on the vast changes which typify life today;

— the urgent contemporary pastoral questions of mutual eucharistic hospitality.

Study of these questions should take into account:

— the rich connotations of memorial (anamnesis);

— the biblical and patristic “non-dualist” categories;

— the false antinomies which can be corrected by a study of such themes as “body, person, presence, spiritual”;

— the question of the proper role of the ordained ministry in the celebration of the Eucharist.

### ON MINISTRY

93. The Church bases its life on the sending of Christ into the world and the sending of the Holy Spirit that men and women may be joined to Christ in his service; its authority is inseparable from its service in the world which is the object of God’s creative and reconciling love. As servants of their servant Lord, ministers of the Church must serve the world with wisdom and patience. Without lively personal discipleship, there can be no credible exercise of office. At the same time, those who bear office in the Church must adhere to the promise that the Lord determines to build up his community even through imperfect servants. Our common effort at a deeper common understanding of the nature of ministry in the Church has also to be motivated by concern for the service of the Church in the world.

#### *Apostolicity*

94. The whole Church is apostolic. To be an apostle means to be sent, to have a particular mission. The notion of mission is essential for understanding the ministry of the Church. As Christ is sent by the Father, so the Church is sent by Christ. But this mission of the Church has not simply a Christological reference. The sending of Christ and the equipment of the Church in his service are also works of the Holy Spirit. The mission of the Holy Spirit belongs to the constitution of the Church and her ministry, not merely to their effective functioning. Too often, imbalances in theologies of the ministry are the result and sign of an insufficiently trinitarian theology. It is by the power of the Spirit that the Lord sustains his people in their apostolic vocation. This power manifests itself in a variety of ways which are *charismata* — gracious gifts of the one Spirit (cf. *1 Cor* 12, 4 ff.). Guided by and instrumental to the work of God in this world, the Church has a charismatic character.

95. The Church is apostolic because it lives the faith of the original apostles, continues the mission given by Christ to them, and remains in the service and way of life testified to by those apostles. The canonical scriptures are the normative expression of this apostolicity. It is within the normative expression

of this apostolicity contained in the New Testament that a witness is given to the special ministry given by Christ to the Twelve, and to Peter within that circle of Twelve.

96. The extension of Christ’s ministry, including his priestly office, belongs to all members of his body (cf. *1 Petr* 2, 5-9). Each member contributes to that total ministry in a different fashion; there is a distribution of diverse gifts (cf. *1 Cor* 12, 4-11), and every baptized believer exercises his or her share in the total priesthood differently. This calling to the priesthood of all those who share in the body of Christ by baptism does not mean that there are no particular functions which are proper to the special ministry within the body of Christ.

#### *Special Ministry*

97. Within apostolicity in general there is a special ministry to which the administration of Word and Sacrament is entrusted. That special ministry is one of the *charismata* for the exercise of particular services within the whole body. Ordination, or setting apart for the exercise of these special services, takes place within the context of the believing community. Hence consultation with that community, profession of faith before that community, and liturgical participation by that community belong to the process of ordination. This is important to underline because we need to go beyond an understanding of ordination which suggests that those consecrated to the special ministry are given a *potestas* and derive a dignity from Christ without reference to the believing community.

98. The liturgical validation at the time of the act of ordination includes the invocation of the Holy Spirit (“epiclesis”) with the laying on of hands by other ordained ministers. The invocation of the Holy Spirit is a reminder of the essential role which the doctrine of the Trinity must fulfil in any balanced understanding of the ministry. It gives proper weight both to Jesus Christ’s historical and present action and to the continual operation of the Holy Spirit. The laying on of hands is an efficacious sign which initiates and confirms the believer in the ministry

conferred. It is not the community which produces and authorizes the office but the living Christ who bestows it on the community and incorporates this office into its life.

99. The continuity of this special ministry of Word and Sacrament is integral to that dimension of Christ's sovereign and gracious presence which is mediated through the Church. The forgiveness of sins and call to repentance are the exercise of the power of the keys in the upbuilding of the Church. This power Christ entrusted to the apostles with the assurance of his continued presence to the end of the age. The apostolic continuity depends not only on Christ's original commission but also on his continual call and action.

#### *Apostolic Succession*

100. There are several senses of "apostolic succession"; but when it is taken in its usual meaning to refer to the continuity of the special ministry, clearly it occurs within the apostolicity which belongs to the whole church. Reformed and Roman Catholic both believe that there is an apostolic succession essential to the life of the Church, though we locate that succession differently (see below). We agree that no one assumes a special ministry solely on personal initiative, but enters into the continuous special ministry of Word and Sacrament through the calling of the community and the act of ordination by other ministers.

101. Apostolic succession consists at least in continuity of apostolic doctrine; but this is not in opposition to succession through continuity of ordained ministry. The continuity of right doctrine is guarded by the application of Holy Scripture and transmitted by the continuity of the teaching function of the special ministry. As with all aspects of the Church's ministry, so with the particular case of apostolic succession: it requires at once a historical continuity with the original apostles and a contemporary and graciously renewed action of the Holy Spirit. The Church lives by the continuity of the free gift of the Spirit according to Christ's promises, and this excludes a ritualistic conception of succession, the conception of mechanical continuity, a succession divorced from the historical community.

#### *Episkopé and Collegiality*

102. We agree that the basic structure of the Church and its ministry is collegial. When one is consecrated to the special ministry, one accepts the discipline of being introduced into a collegial function which includes being subject to others in the Lord and drawing on the comfort and admonition of fellow ministers.

This "collegiality" is expressed on the Reformed side by the synodical polity, and, on the Roman Catholic side, by the episcopal college, the understanding of which is in process of further development. In the Reformed polity, the synod functions as a corporate episcopacy, exercising oversight of pastors and congregations. We consider it would be worth while to

investigate in what ways the diverse functions of the Reformed office of elder could be further developed in a modern form and made fruitful in the life of the Church.

We agree that the collegial structure must be expressed in different ways in different times and we have to be sensitive to the pluriformity of charismata. This principle of collegiality is not to be limited to the level of the synods, and in the Roman Catholic Church not to the episcopal college, neither to clergy only, but to be realized at all levels of church life. The vision of "Sobornost" may be a help here.

#### *Different Emphases within both Traditions*

103. There are theological positions on the ministry which cut across confessional loyalties; different emphases are present in both traditions and are not as sharply to be sorted out along denominational lines as has been commonly thought. Some emphasize the "over-againstness" of the Spirit and structure; some emphasize the Spirit's work to shape and animate structure. One position more or less deplores the restriction of apostolic succession, for example, to institutionalization by means of what it takes to be mere continuity of laying on of hands. Another position more or less rejoices in that institutionalization as another instance of Christ's mediating his gracious presence through earthen vessels. Some locate apostolic continuity almost entirely in the succession of apostolic proclamation, while others locate it in an unbroken continuity which also indispensably includes the laying on of hands.

104. Some Reformed see God's fidelity as known mainly through his overcoming the Church's infidelity, and in this case tradition is seen as much as betrayal as transmission. Others, including Reformed and Roman Catholic, take a more confident view of the way the Church is able, by God's fidelity, to sustain a faithful deliverance of that which was once received. Some see in an application of the analogy of the incarnation to ecclesiology a de-emphasis on the work of the Spirit and the Lordship of Christ over the Church. Others see incarnational analogies appropriately applied to the Church when set in a trinitarian context which provides for the dynamic of Christ's work through the Holy Spirit. This may mean that one point of convergence is that no one wishes to speak of the Church as "extension of Incarnation" but that real divergence accords among us in the way we use incarnational language about the Church.

#### *Different Emphases between the two Traditions*

105. The divergences which do exist between Roman Catholic and Reformed doctrines of the ministry often arise less from conceptions which are objectively different than from differences of mentality which lead them to accentuate differently elements which are part of a common tradition. In any event, there are differences of doctrine which lie behind the varied ways ministerial office is dealt with in the Reformed and the Roman Catholic perspectives. We are not to minimize the way the doctrinal differences have been



shaped in part by particular cultural, sociological, economic factors as well as different nuances of spirituality.

106. Both Roman Catholic and Reformed theology are particularly aware of the importance of the structure of the Church for the fulfilment of its commission. The Roman Catholic Church, in this regard, has derived a predominantly hierarchical ordering from the Lordship of Christ, whereas, from the same Lordship of Christ, the Reformed Church has decided for a predominantly presbyteral-synodal organization. Today both sides are taking a fresh look at the sense of the Church as it appears in images of the early Church.

107. There is a difference in the way each tradition approaches the question of how far and in what way the existence of the community of believers and its union with Christ and especially the celebration of the Eucharist necessitates an ordained officebearer in the Church. In how far does the institutional connection with the office of Peter and the office of bishop belong to the regularly appointed ministry in the Church? For Roman Catholics, connection with the Bishop of Rome plays a decisive role in the experience of Catholicity. For the Reformed, catholicity is most immediately experienced through membership in the individual community. When it comes to the relations between ministry and sacrament, the Roman Catholics find that the Reformed minimize the extent to which God, in his plan for salvation, has bound himself to the Church, the ministry and the sacraments. The Reformed find that too often Roman Catholic theology minimizes the way the Church, the ministry and the sacraments remain bound to the freedom and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

#### Open questions

108. As with our dialogue about the Eucharist so with our dialogue about Ministry we have come to recognize some continuing questions which we face in common. These questions confront both traditions and we need each other in the future to come to an even fuller understanding of Ministry.

How essential are the distinctions of rank within the ministry? What theological significance is to be assigned to the distinction between bishop, priest and deacon? Can it be said that in many cases the ordained pastor exercises the episcopal office?

What closer definition can we give to the tension between office and charisma?

How are we to define more closely the relation between office and priesthood which has traditionally been very differently understood in the different churches?

Does the distinctive feature of the office consist in the role of president, understanding this presidency not as a title of honour but rather as a ministry for the upbuilding of the Church: as leadership, proclamation, administration of the sacraments?

On the other hand, how do we view the tendency to make the task of leadership and administration

independent of the actual exercise of preaching and administering the sacraments?

What place is there for a real theological understanding of the ministry between the Western emphasis on legal organization and the Eastern emphasis on the relationship to liturgy?

How are we to understand the principle of corporate leadership of the congregation as developed in the Reformed tradition, and how is the relation between pastors and elders to be ordered?

109. What is the meaning of the laying on of hands: mission, transfer of a *potestas*, or incorporation into an *ordo*?

To what extent can the laying on of hands with an invocation of the Holy Spirit be described as a "sacrament"?

What conditions (in substance and in form) are to be envisaged for a mutual recognition of ministries?

What meaning is to be given to the term *defectus*? Can a ministry be called in question or be nullified as such by a formal *defectus*—or can the latter be compensated by reference to the faith of the Church?

To what extent can abuses in the Church's ministries be dealt with by institutional measures? Examples of abuses: false doctrine of the leader or the majority, triumphalism, mechanical conception of ordination, church personality cults, dominance of the structure. — Possibilities of correction in the direction of the collegiality principle (reference of the one to the other—combination of the hierarchical with the synodal pattern).

110. A particularly urgent question, it seems to us, is the extent to which our reflections concerning the ministry are determined by distinctive Western thought patterns and historical experiences. To what extent is our concern with the past a hindrance rather than a stimulation to the development of a new shape of ministry? How can we be faithful at the same time to insights of the Christian tradition and to new experiments of the people of God?

These questions aim at further clarifying the nature of the total ministry which belongs to the whole people of God, and of the special ministry within it. Such further clarification is necessary for the continual reform and edification of the Church as a fit instrument of Christ's service in the world.

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111. Having thus reached the end of our conversation, we attach importance to the following statement:

Our discussions have opened up to us unexpected perspectives of common insights and tasks which have been buried under conflicts which lasted for many centuries. They have been carried on with a sense of repentance for the divisions among Christians which belie the Church's message of reconciliation in a torn world. A note of joy and thanksgiving continues to dominate in view of the fact that Christ, the Lord of the world and the Church, permits us to share in making manifest the unity which he in fact effects by his Word and Spirit.

## APPENDIX

### LIST OF MEETINGS:

1970 Rome (Italy) April 6-10.

*Theme: "Christ's Relationships to the Church".*

*Papers:* 1. Prof. Dr. Josef Ernst (Catholic): "Die Bedeutung der Person Jesu"; 2. Prof. G. B. Caird (Reformed): "The Relationship between Christ and His Church in the New Testament"; 3. Prof. Dr. Aelred Cody, O.S.B. (Catholic): "The Foundation of the Church"; 4. Prof. Jacques de Senarclens (Reformed): "Les relations entre Jésus-Christ et son Eglise".

1971 Cartigny (Geneva) (Switzerland) March 22-27.

*Theme: "The Teaching Authority of the Church".*

*Papers:* 1. a) Prof. Dr. W. C. van Unnik (Reformed): "The Understanding and Usage of Scripture in the Reformed Family"; b) Prof. Dr. J. F. Lescrauwaet, m.s.c. (Catholic): "The Understanding and Use of Holy Scripture in Roman Catholic Tradition"; 2. Prof. Dr. Eduard Schweizer (Reformed): "Zur Frage des Kanons"; 3. Prof. Dr. Jean Pierre Jossua, O.P. (Catholic): "Propositions sur les confessions de foi et leur développements"; 4. a) Prof. Dr. Amadeo Molnar (Reformed): "Infaillibilité et indéfectibilité de l'Eglise — Perspectives réformées du problème"; b) Prof. Dr. Roger Aubert (Catholic): "Indéfectibilité et infaillibilité de l'Eglise".

1972 Bièvres (Paris) (France) January 31-February 5.

*Theme: "The Presence of Christ in the World".*

*Papers:* 1. Prof. Dr. Josef Ernst (Catholic): "Die Gegenwart Christi in der Welt"; 2. Prof. J. Ellul (Reformed): "Sécularisation et Christ incognito"; 3. Prof. René Coste (Catholic): "L'Eglise et le défi du monde"; 4. Prof. Dr. David Willis (Reformed): "The Situation and Responsibility of the Church in the World".

1974 Woudschoten-Zeist (Netherlands) February 18-23

*Theme: "The Eucharist".*

*Papers:* 1. Prof. Dr. George B. Caird (Reformed): "The Eucharist in the New Testament"; 2. Rev. James Quinn, S.J. (Catholic): "The Eucharist (Sacrifice and Presence) in the Catholic Perspective"; 3. Prof. Thomas F. Torrance (Reformed): "The Paschal Mystery of Christ and the Eucharist"; 4. Prof. J. F. Lescrauwaet, m.s.c. (Catholic): "Eucharist and Church".

1975 Rome (Italy) March 3-8.

*Theme: "The Ministry".*

*Papers:* 1. Dr. Josef Hoffmann (Catholic): "Le ministère ordonné dans la communauté chrétienne"; 2. Prof. Dr. David Willis (Reformed): "Ministry and Eucharist"; 3. Prof. Dr. Martin Anton Schmidt (Reformed): "Amt und Kollegialität"; 4. Fr. Yves-M. Congar, O.P. (Catholic): "La succession apostolique".

1977 Rome (Italy) March 21-26.

*Preparation of Final Report.*

### PARTICIPANTS:

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\* \* \*

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\* \* \*

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