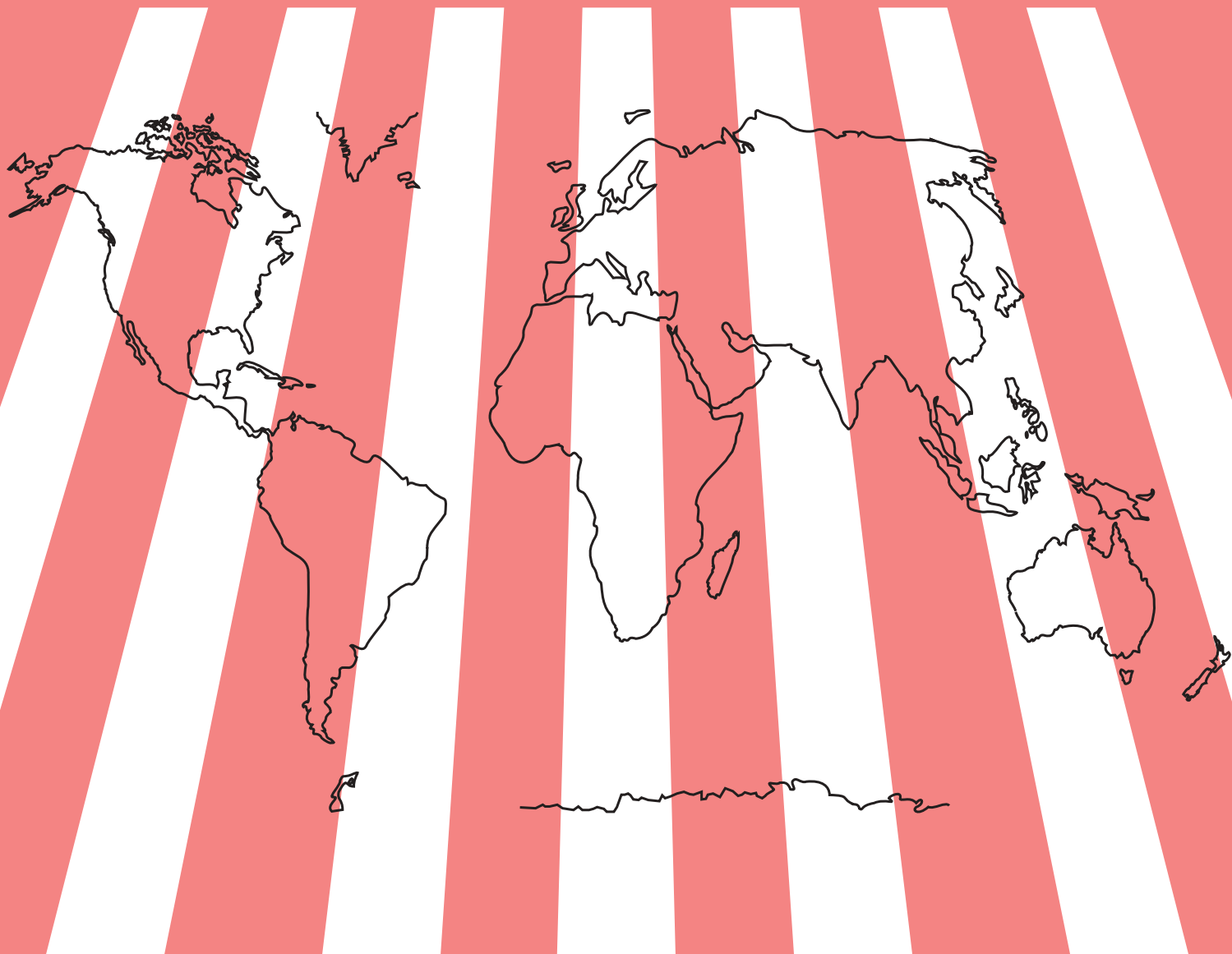


Lux Mundi

Volume 21 - No. 2
June 2002



Published quarterly by the
Committee on Relations with
Churches Abroad of
The Reformed Churches in
the Netherlands

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Subscription Rate in The Netherlands
per annum:
€ 5,45.

Contents

Editorial

by Rev. R. ter Beek, p. 27

Men, women and the Church

by Dr. E.A. de Boer, p. 29

Women in office in the Christelijke Gereformeerde Churches - A personal story about the official documents

by Dr. J.W. van Pelt, p. 31

The man called Growth

by rev. R. ter Beek, p. 37

Foreigners in Zuidhorn

p. 40

Creed Subscription: The Limits to Liberty and Change*

by Dr Rowland S. Ward, p. 42

Colourful DVN Day

p. 44

Church Project (GemeenteNproject): Young talent for the church

p. 45

Editorial

On the 17th and 18th May 2002 the general synod at Zuidhorn welcomed delegates from abroad. Many and various sister churches and church contacts came to visit. In this issue we show some pictures. Contacts with brethren over the whole world were forged or strengthened. A gust of the Spirit in a land that wants to forget God. The Spirit of God is no respecter of boundaries. The whole earth is His. In

...serving the Creator, He spreads His glory over the whole earth (Ps.57:5,11), in serving the exalted Christ, He fills the whole earth with His glory (Ps.72:19). Such encounters help us from our own small corner set our hearts on the 'things above', where Christ is seated at the Right hand of God (Col.3:1).



The General Synod of the Reformed Liberated Churches in the Netherlands gathered in Zuidhorn.

Legendary elections

It was also the week of the parliamentary election. The 'battle' in the Netherlands was exceptionally lively this year. The reason for this was Dr. W.S.P. (Pim) Fortuyn, fervent critic of the "purple" government, and leader of the Pim Fortuyn Party (LPF). Right in the middle of the election campaign, on Monday 6th May, just after 6 pm, he was shot dead in Hilversum by an environmentalist. From that moment on, the election campaign came to a virtual standstill. The day of the election itself drew nearer with ever increasing tension, 15th May 2002.

...The result was truly surprising. The old government coalition lost a lot of seats. The new LPF entered the arena with 26 seats. The Christian Democrats (CDA), under the leadership of Jan Peter Balkenende formed the largest party with 43 seats. One huge disappointment for the Reformed section of the Dutch population was the loss of a seat for the Political Reformed Party (SGP) and the Christian Union. The CDA seems to have pulled Christian voters away from them. The principal Christian voice has been weakened by this political storm. It is a shame that there is no stronger Christian voice in Parliament to balance up the left

opposition (Labour, Green Left, Socialist Party).

A government without ideals has been punished. The CDA will lead the next government. Although this will definitely not be a christian government, there will be more chance for norms and values, for respect for one another and for the weak. It means that christian school will be reasonably safe again. The uncertain element is the contribution of the LPF, which will also have a role to play in the new government. And will the losing party, the VVD, become the third party in the coalition?

Women in office

Female church officers - a subject which is being talked about even in the more conservative Dutch churches. They have been warned. Dr. Koen Kyungkeun Lim has written a thesis about the opening up of office for women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church (1922), the Dutch Reformed Church (1966) and the Reformed Churches (Synodal; 1969). He tells the story of reports and acts. His last sentences are these: "Biblical evidence about the difference between men and women in the church, about office and the difference between special and general office, have played only a marginal role in the discussion. This finding is most remarkable for churches which take up their standpoint in the Bible." (*Het spoor van de vrouw in het ambt. Een historische studie naar de openstelling van het ambt voor de vrouw...* [The trail of the woman in office. A historical study of the opening up of office to women...], Kampen: Kok, 2001, p. 288).

Prof. Dr. B. Kamphuis quotes these words as he explains why the Reformed weekly *De Reformatie* has deliberately chosen this subject. He pleads for an open and honest discussion of the subject and that we help each other explain theory and practice on the basis of the Bible.

In this issue we offer a first impression of what has been written: a summary of three introductory articles of Dr. E.A. de Boer about 'men, women and the Church' and a slightly abridged translation of two articles of Dr. J.W. van Pelt about the decision-making process in the Christelijke Gereformeerde Churches.

The Old Testament in Kampen

On the 30th April it was fifty years since Prof Benne Holwerda (born 22nd September 1909) died most unexpectedly, five weeks after the death of Prof. K. Schilder on the 23rd March 1952. Holwerda started in 1946 as the first Old Testament professor at the Theological University after the Liberation. Jan P. Lettinga (born 21st March 1921), a pupil from Leiden, came to assist him in languages and history (1951-1970 lecturer; 1970-1987 professor extraordinary). Their collaboration came to an end via Holwerda's sudden death, just as it was starting. From 1987-1993, Gert Kwakkel taught Semitical languages and history of culture in the Ancient Near East.

Holwerda's place was taken over by Herman J. Schilder (22nd Jan 1916 - 12th May 1984). He taught Old Testament from 1953 until 1981. Harry M. Ohmann (born 5th March 1928) took his place from 1981-1993.



Prof. Benne Holwerda (1909-1952)

In this edition we review the thesis of Dr. Wolter H. Rose, lecturer of Semitical languages and History of culture in the Ancient Near East. He is the second to follow Prof. Lettinga. In the last edition Dr. Gert Kwakkel's thesis was reviewed. Kwakkel (born 14th April 1959) has been Old Testament Professor since 1993. He is the seventh professor of Old Testament. Of the almost one hundred and fifty years of teaching Old Testament at Kampen, the three professors Maarten Noordtjiz, Jan Ridderbos and Herman J. Schilder have accounted for almost one hundred of those years!

Two intelligent young professors who have both been awarded doctorates now work at the Theological University in Kampen in the Old Testament department. This is a first. Good education in the Scriptures for the ministers is something to be thankful for. Reformed churches flourish only on the firm ground of both Old and New Testaments.

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Men, women and the Church*

Manhood and womanhood: two in one

In 2002, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have a place in society in which men and women are seen as completely equal to each other. The era of male discrimination upon women has passed by to make place for female emancipation. The question for our churches nowadays is, how to react to this context in which she finds herself. If we decide to act different from society, then we must be able to respond to that society in a free and convinced manner.

Numerable theological studies have been made on the subject whether or not women are to be ordained in church. The study *Vrouwen in de gemeente van Christus* (Apeldoorn: Novapres, 1996; up till now no English edition yet) by George and Dora Winston proclaims that women in office is a biblical and valid point of view. Other studies, also based on the absolute authority of the Bible, tell us the opposite. In this article, I would like to make an attempt to start a dialogue between these two different views.

To find out what the possibilities are of men and women in the church, I would like to start of with a coherent perspective on humanity as a whole. As a start of my study, I used the following anthropology as a way of organising the biblical material that I wanted to analyse:

The unity in duality¹ of male and female...

- as image of God
- in discipleship of Christ
- in sharing the blessings of the Holy Spirit receives its form in the differentiated services of accountability and helpfulness
- as well in the Holy Matrimony
- as in the Holy community.

Unity in duality

I started my search on manhood and womanhood in Genesis 1 and 2, which describes the creation of the human race. In Genesis 1:27 it says: *So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* Man is not created in a unified way: *male and female he created them.* This was because man was not finished yet without his female equivalent. *For it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper that is suitable for him* (2:18). The description of the woman as a helper makes it clear that she complements her man, that she is needed to fulfil the task God has given both of them. The male and female human being together, as image of God, may work in Gods creation. This is the starting point of Scripture, Scripture does not make here any differentiation in position or task between male and female. So to say, in Genesis 1 and 2 the unity of manhood and womanhood is emphasized, not the differentiation.

About the author:

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(*Alphen a/d Rijn) is minister of the Reformed Liberated Church in Zeist. He has written various books. In 1998 he gained a doctorate from the University of Geneva on Calvin's unpublished sermons on Ezekiel ch 36-48. Since 1999 he has been a member of the editorial board of the reformed weekly "De Reformatie" (The Reformation). He is currently fulfilling the task of examiner of the general synod in Zuidhorn.

This unity in duality is a fact given by the creation of man in the image of God. We find this image reflected in the redemption by Christ: *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Gal.3:28). The unity, the common position before God of men and women is now found in the redemption. This unity, this common position is also found in the sharing without distinction of the blessings, the charismata, of the Spirit by men and women (Acts 2:17).

Both men and women are called to follow Christ, and men become disciples, women become followers of Christ. Both are called to his community, to be renewed, together, in the image of Christ.

Unity and uniqueness

I have chosen for the notions 'accountability' and 'helpfulness' to describe the complementary calling and relationship of manhood and womanhood.

- Typical for manhood is his dedicated service of accountability.
- Characteristic for womanhood is her dedicated service of helpfulness.

I avoided the use of the word 'office' and used the word 'service' instead, because it gives us more room to think about the overall calling of man and woman, without jumping into discussions about the calling and positions of men and women in church. With the use of the word 'service' I have now described the *common* call; the *specific* callings of manhood and womanhood in church and in matrimony by using the words accountability and helpfulness.

Accountability

With the word accountability I have tried to describe all the biblical notions on what is said about manhood. We can see this in Genesis 3, where man, not woman is called by God to account for the act which the woman initiated. Paul refers to this vocation in 1 Timothy 2:14. The vocation of man in accountability is also shown in matrimony, where he is called the 'head'. This notion, which does not necessarily imply the meaning of authority, Paul describes the love a man should have for his wife, and the offer Christ has made for his church as an example of this love. In the notion

accountability is shown the primary accountability of man to God, not only in matrimony but also in church.

Helpfulness

With the word helpfulness I described the specific characteristic of the service of women. First of all, it tells us that a man needs a woman to become fully human, to become the image of God. The notion helpfulness tells us about the strength and independence, which a woman has in helping man. The notion of the being 'head' by man, demands an independent attitude of the woman standing opposite of him. In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul tells us more: the woman is the *Glory* of the man. It is the *Glory* of a woman, that she may be the image of the church, related to Christ, of a bride related to the groom. Her helpfulness, and her strength, is also shown in her motherhood; as a mother she brings forth manhood (1Cor.11:12).

The Fall

In a broken world, determined by disintegration through destructive forces, the unity of man and woman does not show easily. Because of the Fall, men have dictated women and men have been manipulated by women for centuries. Only if the church keeps calling society to return to God, and society responds positively to this call, the distorted relations between men and women can be reversed and healed.

In Church

Only together, men and women together, we can reflect the image of Christ in Church. In the differentiated calling of men and women the complementary reciprocity of both is shown in men's accountability and the needed helpfulness of women. With these notions, I am trying to give two *spiritual*



In the mission church in Curacao (Dutch Antilles) men and women partake in the liturgy.

categories, not concrete task fields. In church, both men and women are called, blessed by the Spirit, to all the tasks and services, but as man and as woman. In the church there are three task fields:

- A. Preaching and teaching;
- B. Pastoral care and admonition;
- C. Charity and care for the sick.

Complementary services

In the New Testament, we see that women do have a task in all three fields; in prophesising and praying (Luke 2:36; Acts 2:17-18; 2:9; 1Cor.11:5) in teaching (Acts 18:26) and serving (Acts 6:1; 1Tim.3:5). This means that there are concrete and practical possibilities for women to serve;

- A There is an opportunity for women to work in preaching and teaching, as in evangelism and catechesis. To groups or individuals. They can also take lead in the study of the Bible.
- B Women can take part in giving pastoral care, to groups or individuals.
- C In the field of charity women have for long been active, and can do so on forth.
- D In the government and management of the church women can also serve will their talents given by the Spirit.

Now we can see that what the task of man is in church; to act as the primary accountability taker in all of these fields. This means we cannot talk about the ordainment of men in church, without taking in account the service of women in church; the services and calling of men and women are *complementary*. Due to the lack of a coherent anthropology the church has not taken a clear account on the calling of women in church. The unity of men and women, as shown in my perspective of manhood and womanhood, demands from us a further investigation on *how the service of women in church can receive a structural rethinking*.

* This article is a summary of three articles that appeared in *De Reformatie. Weekblad tot ontwikkeling van het gereformeerde leven*, Vol. 77 (2001/2002) under the heading 'Man, vrouw en kerk' (Men, women and the church): 'De twee-eenheid van mannelijk en vrouwelijk' (188-191), 'De onderscheiden dienst van mannelijk en vrouwelijk' (211-213) and 'De twee-eenheid in huwelijk en gemeente' (234-237). Translation and summary by M.E. Harmsen. Dr. De Boer had these three introductory and exploratory articles followed by a series of exegetical studies on the relevant passages in the New Testament to evaluate and verify the fundamental approach as published here in summary.



A sister in the congregation of a mission church in south Ukraine, has long led the services and read sermons.

NOTE

- ¹⁾ This is an attempt to translate the Dutch 'twee-eenheid' (Two-unity). This concept takes a central place in these articles, but is not easy to translate.



Women in office in the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Churches* *

A personal story about the official documents

The General Synods of the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Churches* in the Netherland in 1998 and 2001 made up their minds about the role of women in the church. Here I give a personal account of what was written and decided. This topic did not suddenly spring up from nowhere in these churches. Therefore I start with a paragraph on the historical background of the decisions (I). I finish with a paragraph on some important grounds (II).

I. The historical background of the decision

The social position of women in Dutch society has changed radically in the course of the twentieth century. The emancipation movement and feminism, have certainly played a role in this. In society as a whole, a broad recognition of the equality and equal rights of men and women has emerged. The women's right to vote (1919) was an early fruit and nowadays attention is given to equal wages, equal rights and opportunities for paid work for men and women, and to childcare.



In the Netherlands women have had the right to vote since 1919.

This has created a climate in which the question of the position of the women in the church has become a matter of interest. Half way through the Sixties, both of the largest churches in our land, the Dutch Reformed Church and the Reformed Churches, chose to open the church offices to women.

This made extra clear: who wants to consider the position of women in the church in general, has also to make up his mind with regard to women and the offices in the church.

A short history of reflection

Reflection within the CGK started as early as 1950. Prof. J Hovius drew attention to the question of the position of women in Christ's church in a address he delivered in Apeldoorn. Hovius argued that according to Scripture, churches 'could never allow women into the positions of



In the Reformed Liberated Churches, the women have the right to vote for new church officers. The vote is regarded as an act of advice and not of government.

preacher, elder or deacon'. Nevertheless, Hovius did plead the case for women to be involved in church work, more so than up to that moment in time.

The question of the right of women to vote in the church was discussed in 1965 for the first time at a synod. The Synod of 1968/69 decided that women could take part in the choosing of officers but added that this should not be seen as a step towards women in office.

Prof. Dr. W. van't Spijker spoke about the position of women in 1982. His speech was published in *Ambtelijk contact*, the magazine for office-bearers. Between Hovius' speech and Van 't Spijker's paper 32 years passed. Nevertheless, Van 't Spijker basically maintained the same view as Hovius by rejecting women in office, but supporting the stimulation of women's work in the church.

In 1983 a completely new idea was heard within the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Churches*. A group of upcoming theologians (men and women) published a book with the title: *Vrouwen in de dienst* (Women in service). They strongly emphasised Galatians 3:38: in Christ there is no difference between men and women. Justice could not be done to the fullness of salvation in Christ if only men should be allowed to serve in the offices. In 1990 the national study group *Kerk en Vrouw* (Church and Women) was set up. They took a broad look at the position of men and women in all sections of the church. This study group openly argues in favour of the opening of church offices to women.

Going towards a church standpoint

The need for an official church standpoint grew.

Especially because developments in the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Churches*: in 1988 their National Meeting set up a committee to look into the possibility of allowing women into the office of deacon. This became reality in 1995.

The *Christelijke gereformeerde* General Synod of 1995 instructed study deputies to look into the questions surrounding women in office. They were especially required to research the question within the framework of the Reformed view of Scripture. These words indicate how important hermeneutics are: another way of reading Scripture leads to another way of defining the position of women in the church. In the report to the 1998 synod, the opinions of the majority and the minority differ exactly on this point. The synod endorsed the majority point of view and decided that the existing situation (no women in office) is scripturally accurate.

Deacons and church council

To understand this properly, it is necessary to refer back to a discussion within the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Churches* which begun in 1951. Professor J. Hovius had contended that the deacons belong to the church council. He pleaded that this should be laid down in the church order. This was discussed in the synods of 1953 and 1956. The Synod of 1956 stated that the triple office of Christ is the source of all church offices. The principal unity of the offices is drawn from this. Just as article 30 of the Belgic Confession the synod includes the deacons in the church council. The leadership of the church rests on the three offices together while everyone of those offices also gives certain responsibilities in the church.

If the office of deacon had not been part of the church council, then a female deacon would not need to be in a sort of situation where they appear to be ruling over men. Now that the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Churches* has chosen for the equal value of the offices in the church, the opening of the office of deacon to women could eventually lead to the opening of all offices. It is all or nothing.

The importance of hermeneutics

My participation in the deputyship and the discussions at the synod has learned me that the question of women and office has little to do with the qualities of women. Decisions are not made on the grounds of the suitability of women for office. Nor is the decisive point equality between men and women. Ultimately it appears to be about: how do you read Scripture? That is a good question; in Reformed churches the Holy Scriptures should be decisive.

I can illustrate this on at least two points:

1 In theory women do not need to feel under valued because they are not included in church office. Crucial in the discussion is not the appreciation or lack of appreciation of women's qualities but the understanding of the Bible. Nevertheless the question is whether justice is done to the place women hold as believers in the church. There must be more than an answer to the question of whether or not women in Reformed churches can or cannot serve in office. The deepest desire to understand the Scriptures should

not close our ears to the questions women are asking. There should be room and attention for these questions in the churches.

2 Because the understanding of Scripture is central, the whole question of women in office is raised to the highest level. It is not all about a question of administration about which people can agree to differ. The question of women in office brings us to the heart of the matter: how do we understand Scripture, how do we handle a message that was written down centuries ago, today?

There are also historical and confessional aspects to this question. The structure of office as we know them, is written down in the confession (artt. 30 and 31 Belgic Confession). Should that confessional framework remain in tact or should it be thrown over in the light of modern day questions? It is good reformed practice to say that very strong arguments should be given before we move from the confession. Don't forget that the face of the church will be dramatically changed when we come to any other understanding of the Scriptures than the preceding generations. A lot of other questions would be answered differently about numerous other subjects which affect the church directly or indirectly: for example the view of children at the Lord's table, homosexual relationships, how we deal with euthanasia.

II. The most prominent arguments

In 1998 the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Churches* took up an official standpoint in relation to women in church office. I will discuss now the most relevant arguments lying at the foundation of the synod's decision.

Historical form

The deputies report which lies at the heart of the 1998 synod's decision about women in office, opens with an introduction, a global picture of women and office in the Netherlands and abroad. Then a chapter about the offices in the Old and New Testament with a concluding discussion of the historical form of the offices as we know them now.

The offices as we know them in Reformed churches, can not be traced back directly to the Scriptures. Nonetheless, the report shows how they are based upon a careful consideration of the Biblical message.

In the course of the history of the western church until the Reformation the charismatic structure of the church and the serving nature of the offices in the New Testament have faded. A growing concentration on the offering of the priest in the eucharist can be traced in the historical development of the Roman Catholic Church up until the Middle Ages. The hierarchical episcopal view of office pushed the charismatic and diaconal structure out of the churches.

The historical circumstances in Straatsburg and Geneva at the time of the Reformation played a big role in the formation of the conviction that the church needed ministers, elders and deacons. It was not so much about a legalistic settlement of the offices but a spiritual profile of the functions of the office. In these functions the one pastoral task, the *ministerium verbi divini* unfolds (cp. Belgic



John Calvin

Confession, art 30; Dordt Church Order, art. 1 en 2).

The conclusion of the report:

“Listening to the New Testament, opposing Roman Catholic and Baptist ideas, and wrestling with the relationship to the government, the Reformation set up a structure of offices in which proclamation of the Word, pastoral care and diaconal work have found a place in the middle of and opposite the congregation. In this conception, expression is given to (1) both the *official* and the *charismatic* structure of the congregation; (2) the character of the office as ‘service’ (Greek: *diakonia*), which opposes every type of hierarchical or sacral interpretation. The structure of the offices as handed down in the historical line from the Reformation to us, has a recognisable Biblical character but is not canonical (in the sense that there are no changes possible).”

Finally, this section of the report points to the existence of deaconesses, known to John Calvin and Gisbertus Voetius. However, they were not actually considered officebearers. Their work was viewed as ‘permanent assistance’ in the congregation.

Culture and revelation

The chapter which follows about hermeneutics is where in the report the opinions begin to differ. The concluding chapter about the exegesis and conclusions and recommendations are equally diverse.

According to synod these differences concentrate essentially around (1) the relationship between culture and revelation; (2) the meaning of the creation order; (3) the explanation in Galatians 3:28; and (4) the meaning of the man as “head”(1Cor.11:3; Eph.5:23).

How should we deal with the great historical and cultural distance between the current industrialised culture and the chiefly agrarian society of the Ancient Near East in which context the Bible was written? Such questions are not easy to answer. Within the Scriptures themselves we can sometimes see developments. Think of polygamy in the Old Testament, while the New Testament states that each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband (1Cor.7:2). Slavery is another example. Slavery was not abolished until the nineteenth century. Before then it was fairly normal. Nevertheless, already in the Bible there are



Gisbertus Voetius

arguments which show, that from the Christian point of view slavery had become unacceptable; see the letter to Philemon and the equal status of slave and free in Christ (Gal.3:28).

The question is, should similar argumentation be considered valid for the position of women in the church? Our culture is no longer structured patriarchally. It is emancipated. The position of men and women is equal. Should this fact be taken account of when interpreting Scripture? In any case, the minority report pleads that some statements in the Bible belong so strictly to the time in which they were written, that they are not meant as eternal decrees but can have another meaning in another time or culture. In a patriarchal society women ruling over men is a form of rebellion. In an emancipated society, this is no longer valid.

The majority report agrees that cultural changes can influence the way we understand the Scriptures, but

“when reading the Bible one can be convinced that certain rules in the cultural context of the present time are no longer relevant. A similar conviction may absolutely not be based exclusively on the grounds of changed cultural circumstances. Scripture shows certain principles which should be taken into consideration:

- 1 First the progress of redemptive history in the fulfilment in Christ. Because of this there are many definitions and norms in the Old Testament which have another meaning for the church of today (for instance: the Temple worship with the ritual offers and priests, the spice laws and purification laws);
- 2 Further there are norms and patterns in the Scriptures which remain valid in every cultural context; for example the ten commandments which are valid throughout our lives, the commandment to love and the charge to lifelong sanctification;
- 3 Finally, the order of creation, mentioned in the Old Testament and which returns in the New Testament, as the lasting pattern as introduced by God (like, for example, the establishment of the day of rest and the relationship between man and woman).

It should not be underestimated, that God gave us His Word over a long period of time in changing historical and cultural



Deaconesses in the Iglesia Cristiana de Fe Reformada (ICFER) In Venezuela visit the sick and provide meals in a hospital in Barquisimeto. These sisters also have a role in the worship service. They read and lead the congregation in prayer.

circumstances which are different to those of today. It would not be true to say that the cultural and social factors of those times have become such an obstacle that what God really wanted to reveal, can only be understood in other cultural and social circumstances. (...) The Bible is not so rooted into the culture and social order of the time that its content is lost with the disappearance of those particular historical circumstances. For this reason it can be said that that the prophets and apostles took account of the generally accepted notions, values and morals of their time, but that their words were not so restricted by their time that they need to be replaced by modern insights before they become acceptable and relevant for the modern age. In this last case the prevailing age of culture and technology would become the standard against which parts of the Bible be measured as valid or not valid and useable for doctrine and life of faith. It is not possible to combine such a standpoint with the Reformed view of Scripture.”

Creation order

Theologically seen, the creation orders are strongly linked with God’s general goodness because of which He did not let the good order of creation completely disappear. In the historical progress of salvation after the fall of man, the creation order was not dissolved or destroyed but came to fruition. That is to say, the structures of creation which God ordered, come through grace to their original established aims.

One of these permanent patterns is the relationship

between man and woman. Sin has changed this relationship. The good and harmonious relationship which existed in Paradise, outside Paradise remains a relationship in which on the one hand love and faithfulness can be experienced but on the other hand no guarantee is offered against sin, vulnerability and abuse. Nevertheless, the relation between man and woman is an order established by God.

The apostle Paul bases the man-woman relationship as this should function in the congregation, on the manner in which God created man and woman, on the God given order for the relationship between man and woman (1Cor.11:8; cp. 11:1). The headship of man over woman is closely linked with this. Likewise says Paul in 1 Timothy 2:8-15 that a woman should let herself be taught, but he does not allow that a woman teaches or has authority over man. In 1 Timothy 2:13 the reason for this is given: the order of the creation of Adam and Eve is, for the apostle, a clear indication that different positions and responsibilities were meant for man and woman. Here, just as in 1 Corinthians 11:8, the apostle, working on the basis of Genesis 2, assumes that the order of creation brings different positions for both along with it. By referring to the creation Paul points to the God established order, which, for this reason should be respected. The woman not being able to have authority in the church is therefore not a result of sin or something which came after the fall. It has to do with the position which God gave man and woman in his good (not yet fallen) creation.

Galatians 3:27-29

In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female. On the basis of this text it may be asked if the unity of believers in Christ also automatically means that everyone can be called to the same functions within the church. Note well that the thread of Paul's argument in the context of Galatians 3:26-29 is not directed at the position of men and women in itself, but is about faith and grace. Thus: as far as sharing in the salvation of Christ is concerned, there is no difference between men and women. This is not the same as saying that men and women have an equal position in everything.

First of all, it should be noticed that the difference between slave and free, Jew and Greek emerged after the fall, while the difference between man and woman already existed in Paradise. This God given and desired position and order, is not contradicted by Paul nor made any less important. It is better to speak of a relationship made holy through Christ. Not every difference has been removed so that being a man or a woman needs no special attention in the church. Reference to male and female in Galatians 3:28 underlines that the identity of man and woman individually can only exist within the unity in Christ and through His Spirit given unity and on the basis of the God given creation order.

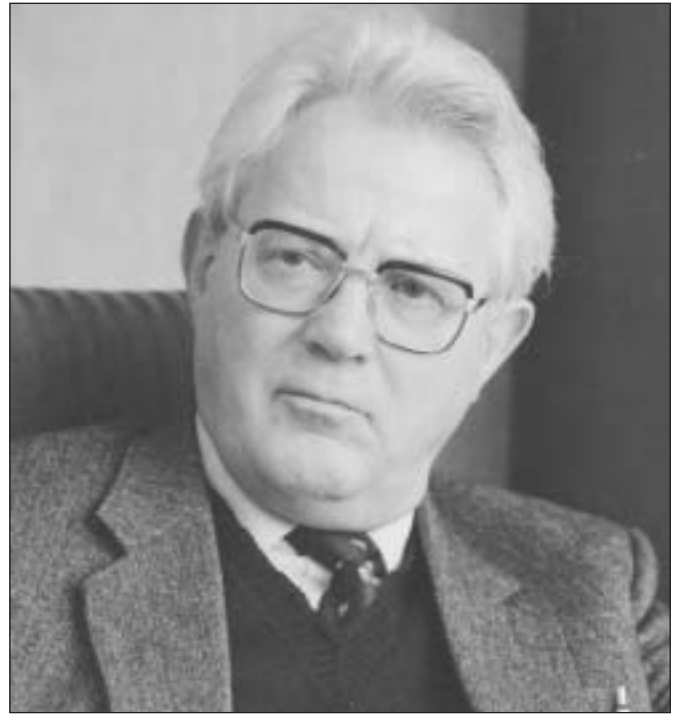
Man as head

Ephesians 5:23 indicates that the man is head of his wife as Christ is the head of his church. The word authority does not appear in this context, but because of the head-ship of man there is, according to the report of the majority, an element of authority here. This to reject the opinion that headship means nothing other than "source" or "origin". The meaning "source / origin" for the word "head" (Greek: *kefalè*) is not certain at all, and is, as far as we know of literature of the first centuries after Christ, almost exclusively used in contexts wherein respect and authority take up an important place.

Paul used the word "head" earlier in the letter to the Ephesians (1:22; 4:15) to indicate that Christ has authority and power over His church. In this connection it is good to remember what the apostle writes in 1 Corinthians 11. Here Paul calls the man the image and the glory of God and he calls the woman the glory of man (1Cor.11:7). The man is the head of the woman (1Cor.11:3). These words are very important but may not be used to encourage the thought that woman is inferior to man. The verses 11 and 12 of this chapter show that the opposite is true. Both man and woman bear the image of God and carry out their creation assignment. But in their relationship to one another, the structure of "head" and "glory" exists. This order remains even though they are both "in Christ".

Working towards a decision

The General Synod of 1998 wanted to reach a standpoint on the issue of women in office. But that was not straightforward. The minority concluded that no arguments could be found to stand in the way of women serving in office. The majority concluded:



Prof dr.W. van't Spijker, retired professor of the Christian Reformed Church Theological University in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands.

"on the basis of the understanding and the explanation of Scripture within the Reformed view of Scripture and office, we must conclude that church offices cannot be opened up for women. This standpoint does in no way alter the conviction that women in the church are to be viewed as full members of the body of Christ. The equality of men and women does not change the fact that the position of each is different on the grounds of the order God established between man and woman in creation and recreation".

The synod has not accepted either report literally. It is clear from the commission reports and the discussion that the synod has joined in with the majority. On the grounds of the presented material, synod pronounced that the position of women in office so as it was in the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Churches*, is well-founded in the Scriptures.

Short epilogue

After the closing of the synod, the impression has sometimes been given that both reports over women in office represent different Biblical visions and that the synod agreed to the most conservative standpoint. In fact the issue is more complicated. The decision of the synod (*Acta*, art. 230) states that the vision of the majority - *contrary to the minority view* - offers sound and convincing foundations of the position regarding woman and office which was maintained in the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Churches*. In this the synod took its distance from the minority report.

In the majority report, consistent with Calvin and Voetius, attention was drawn to the possibility of officially church recognised services which could function *next to* and *under the leadership* of the offices. Such services could be set up by men or women. The 1998 synod took this up and set

up deputies to look into this.

In short it comes to this: when a church decides that women cannot function as office-bearers, what can they do in the congregations? An ecclesiastical assembly should not only indicate what is not allowed, but also give something positive as to the place of women in the church of Christ. The results of this study were to have been discussed in the synod of 2001. Apart from the 2001 synod's decision, the direction which the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Churches* took in 1998 is clear: no female ministers, elders and deacons, but plenty of room for the service of women in the congregations.

References

- *Acta van de Generale Synode van de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland te Haarlem-Noord/Nunspeet 1998.*
- *Vrouw en ambt. Uitgave onder verantwoordelijkheid van de Generale Synode van de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland 1998, Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1999 (ISBN 90-6064-999-0).*
- *J.Hovius, De positie van de vrouw in Christus' kerk (Rede uitgesproken bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theologische School der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken te Apeldoorn op 19 september 1950), Sneek 1950*
- *W. van't Spijker, 'De positie van de vrouw in de kerk', in : Ambtelijk Contact 21 (1982) 120-132.*

The General Synod of Nunspeet 2001 took this decision:

The General synod has read the report of the Study deputies "Dienst van de vrouw" (Service of women)

and considers

- * in the light of the Scriptures that a woman with the gifts given to her by the Holy Spirit, has an own place in the church, just as a man;
- * that the service of women in the congregation is very important for the fulfilling of the pastoral, deaconal and missionary task of the congregation;
- * that in many places women serve in the congregation in a surprisingly varied way - be it publicly or silently;

and judges

- * that it will be a blessing for the churches when they make maximum use of the unofficial services which women can and may fulfil according to Scripture;
- * that it can be good for a congregation, to give an official, recognised place for special tasks and services;
- * that it is desirable to make official agreements, just as for official services, also in special circumstances for unofficial services, so that these services are well and carefully carried out;
- * that up to this moment in time, our churches have not made use of all the possibilities that the Scriptures offer with regard to the service of women in the congregation;

and therefore decides

- * to call the churches to give sisters of the congregation who have received the gifts to do so, more room than hereto to fill unofficial services;
- * to advise the churches to set up cautious guidelines for the appointing of members for unofficial services (in accordance with the conclusions and recommendations of point 10 in the report);
- * to draw the attention of the churches to aspects of the recommended "Form for the introduction to a special service" (see the appendix of the deputies' report) which can be used as instruction when a consistory appoints someone;
- * to instruct the churches to consider during church visitation whether or in what way unofficial services are arranged;
- * to offer the report "Dienst van de vrouw in de gemeente" (Service of woman in the congregation) together with the report of the synod-committee (excluding appendices 4 and 5) for consideration and as a guide for how to go about doing justice to the fact that the Holy Spirit has also given a variety of gifts and tasks to sisters in the congregation and as how to give this a real place in the life of the congregation;
- * to dissolve this particular study deputyship and to thank deputies sincerely for their work.

Dr. J.W. van Pelt is minister in the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk te Zwijndrecht.

* This is the slightly abridged English version of two articles originally published in Dutch in *De Refomatie* 77 (2001/2002) 192-194; 214-218. To avoid misunderstandings, I do not put forward the official standpoint of a given church, deputyship or whatever. Nor must wrong conclusions be drawn from the fact that I was the secretary of the deputies who reported about women in office. I am coming up with my own standpoint and not with anyone else's. Further, the deputies report about *Vrouw en ambt* (Woman and office) presented to the 1998 General Synod in Haarlem-Noord/Nunspeet consists of a largely common section followed by a majority and a minority report. Although I do not agree with the minority viewpoint, I will try to do justice to the arguments of others.

The man called Growth

I know a man whose Christian name is Green. I even know of one family in which the Christian name Greenfield is not uncommon. Nevertheless, when you hear a name like that, you cannot help thinking that a surname has been promoted to Christian name.

It happens in Dutch too - Groen and Groeneveld are also family names that have been used as Christian names.

It would be a name like this which would have to be used to represent the name Zemaḥ, a symbolic name given to the royal figure, whom, according to Jeremiah and Zechariah, the Lord will send to set things right. Up until now, he has been called 'Branch'. We are going to call him Growth, not Green.

Who is Growth?

Since 1995 Wolter Hendrik Rose has worked in the Theological University of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in Kampen (Broederweg) as lecturer in Semitic languages.

Having studied theology in Kampen and Semitic languages in Leiden, he completed his studies in Oxford with a DPhil thesis under the supervision of Professor H.G.M. Williamson. His thesis was about the royal figure known as 'the Branch' whom after the return of the exiles we come



Wolter H. Rose completed his studies in Oxford.



About the author:

Rutger (Ruud) ter Beek (*1952) is minister of the Word in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated), since 1993 in Capelle aan den IJssel-North. He completed his theological studies at the Kampen theological faculty in 1982 with a major in Old Testament. Afterwards he studied Semitic languages and cultures at the Catholic University in Nijmegen.

across in Zechariah 3:8-10 and 6:9-15. Rose uses 'Zemaḥ' as the equivalent of the Hebrew word translated with 'Branch'. His study entitled *Zemaḥ and Zerubbabel. Messianic Expectations in the Early Post-Exilic period* appeared in 2000 in the Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series.

In his thesis Rose researches who this Zemaḥ is. It has been fairly usual to view him as Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, who appears for some time after the exile in the Old Testament (cp. Hag. 1:1; 2:23; Ezra 3:2; 5:2; Neh. 12:1). This descendant of David (1 Chron. 3:17) was governor at Jerusalem somewhere between the years 538 and 520 BCE. Zechariah and Haggai would have seen the start of the recovery of the house of David in him. Rose shows how this assumption is wrong in almost every respect. He sees Zemaḥ as the symbolical name for a future royal figure.

The man called Growth according to Zechariah

The portrait which Zechariah gives of Zemaḥ in 3:8-10 is fairly schematic and little more than a silhouette. The sketch in 6:9-15 is more detailed. Put together, we can see the following ten characteristics:

1. It is Yhwh who calls Zemaḥ into existence (3)
2. Yhwh calls him 'my servant' (3)
3. There is some connection with the priests; both prophecies are directed to Joshua the High Priest (6: Joshua and those belonging to Him)
4. His coming will be in the future
5. He is given the symbolic name of Zemaḥ (3 and 6)
6. He cannot be identified with the ones addressed (6)
7. There is something special, something wonderful about his origins (6)
8. He will build Yhwh's temple (6)
9. He receives royal dignity (6)
10. A priest will serve him (6)

On the basis of the royal worthiness, Rose argues that the Zemaḥ texts are fully messianic.

Growth breaking new ground

One important aspect of the Zemaḥ prophecies is the interpretation of the word Zemaḥ. Rose proves that this

Hebrew word can have no relation to a part of a plant, a new branch or shoot. The word has to do with the whole growth process of the plant in total or of plants collective. He translates with growth, vegetation or greenery.

Partly because of this, Rose loosens the connection between the Zemah prophecies and the prophecy of Isaiah 11:1: A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a branch will bear fruit. Isaiah does not use the word 'zemah' there. In Isaiah 11:1 (a shoot from the stump of Jesse) something of the old David is present: the apparently dead trunk of Jesse suddenly comes to life again, his roots are still alive. In Isaiah's time David's house is still on the throne. The expectation of the future for the Royal House can be related to something which still exists.

But after the exile, in Zechariah's time, David's throne has vanished. If God follows this up, then He has to start again completely. The appearance of Zemah is even more surprising than the shoot from Jesse's stump. Even this has disappeared. Zemah appears to come from nowhere. Whatever God is going to do, it cannot grow out of what still exists.

The connection between Isaiah 11 and Zacharia is loosened but not untied because in between Isaiah and Zacharia are the prophecies of Jeremiah 23:5 and 33:15. These show a certain development. Jeremiah experiences the fall of Jerusalem. He sees that nothing more can be expected of David's house. The name Zemah directs us to the thought that for the sake of His work with Israel in the future, God is going to make a completely new start. This aspect of discontinuity alone, makes it seem unlikely that Zechariah had Zerubbabel in mind when he mentioned this man called Growth.

Monarchy or diarchy?

Rose clears the way for this exegesis by taking a fresh look at a number of issues. To begin with, he views the crowning of the high priest Joshua (Zach 6:9-14) not as a coronation which deals out royal attributes, but as a sort of guarantee alongside the promise Joshua receives regarding the man called Zemah.

Rose had already made clear that the authority of the High Priest in the Early Persian Period was all to do with temple and worship. Round about 520 BC, the High Priest had no secular, civil powers. The Persian ruler, or the governor, held these. That many Old Testament scholars talk of a 'diarchy' - rule by two, a king and priest - is, according to Rose, not only historically but also exegetically unlikely.

In the explanation of the vision of the candlestick with seven arms which burn directly out of two olive trees, (Zach.4), of these two trees is said: "these are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth". But also this is not about Zerubbabel and Joshua, the team of priest and king to be, says Rose. The translation "anointed" is there because of a misunderstanding about the "diarchy". Without working out the explanation in the finest details, he prefers to see the two providers of oil as heavenly figures rather than functionaries on earth.

There is no equality between priest and king. In the



Growth: a young fern uncurls her fronds.

Photo: Menno van Hulst

Zemah prophecies, the vague priest figure takes a position at the side of the king, as counsellor (Zach.6:13). Rose does not translate "he (= Zemah) will be a priest on his throne" (NIV) but: "a priest will be next to his (= Zemah's) throne". The new, but sober and poor temple, makes the priests very aware of their helplessness and dependency. The Yhwh service is not firmly embedded in political authority. Uncertain as they are about the future of their service for Yhwh, via the prophet they receive the comfort that in the future, Yhwh will give a royal figure who will extend the temple and will establish the service of Yhwh in his righteous dominion of the world.

Stick to the text

The explanation of the Zemah passages in Zechariah is strongly influenced by literary criticism. There are differences observed between visions and words of God, original and secondary material is distinguished, differentiation is made between successive revisions. To justify his interpretation, Rose works through the reasons and motives presented for these operations (ch. 5). He concludes, that there are not enough literary grounds to mistrust the text as it stands (although not everything is easy to explain). No attempt to reconstruct the original text has furthered the case. Rose agrees to the growing awareness of modern biblical scholars to be challenged by the text as it has been handed down and to be careful with literary criticism.

You could still ask yourself whether or not the prophet Haggai, in his prophecy, (2:20-23) creates great expectations about a royal position for the governor Zerubbabel. Rose dedicates a chapter to the question. He concludes that the idea of kingship or representation is not prominent in this prophecy. Yhwh promised Zerubbabel that he will be safe in the loving care of his God: the Lord has chosen him as his servant and that makes him so precious in his sight, that He will protect him and treat him like a precious signet ring (cp. Song.8:6).

A green field

All in all, Rose deals with only a few Bible texts. He follows one tiny thread from the Old Testament postexilic prophecy and both great and small topics hang from this thread. The more limited the selection, the more complicated the organization of this material. We keep sight of the complications, but many loose ends remain visible. In such circumstances you have to know how to arrange your book conveniently. Rose has done that, according to my taste, with a feeling for logic.

One difficulty is that he sometimes had to start right at the very beginning. In that this book may be considered a profound study. Rose chose the hard way, he did not accept anything without checking it personally. The text of the Old Testament is his last and only authority. He shows his respect for established names in Old Testament scholarship by verifying their results consciously. Someone even wrote that in his treatment of Haggai 2 : 23, Rose 'disagrees with

virtually all previous scholarship' (Paul Redditt in *Old Testament Abstracts*, Vol. 23). This characterizes Rose both as an expert and as a reformed Old Testament scholar. Without neglecting the scholarly discussions, in the last resort he accounts for his conclusions to the Bible text itself. He is not afraid to choose his own way in grammar, semantics and literary-critical considerations.

I consider it a happy choice that he has made a start in the field of prophecy on the borderline of Old and New Testament. In Dutch reformed exegesis this field of study has been quite quiet for a very long time. It is promising to hear that the theological faculties at Kampen and Apeldoorn have plans to study the Old Testament prophecy in a thematic way. In studying the words and works of the prophets a close look at the intersecting curve of revelation and history is taken. This must be of great interest for reformed Bible interpretation, in which the historical character of God's word is heavily stressed.

This excellent completion of his academic studies shows Rose entitled to teach at Kampen University. With H.G.L. Peels in Apeldoorn and G. Kwakkel and W.H. Rose in Kampen as leading characters I have great expectations of the developments in the field of Reformed Old Testament study. Every white field was once a green field.

Reviewed: Wolter H. Rose, Zema and Zerubbabel. Messianic Expectations in the Early Postexilic Period, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press [2000]; 288 pp.: hardback; ISBN 1 84127 074 1 (ISOT Supplement Series, 304); price £ 53,50 / \$ 84,00.

The Presbyterian Church in America

At the 2001 meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches Rev. Dr. D. C. Davis introduced the PCA to the Conference.

Let me begin by reading Colossians 1:3-6.

The PCA has some 320,000 members, some 1200 churches and 200 mission churches, and 600 missionaries. It is a member of NAPARC and of the National Association of Evangelicals. Membership of the ICRC is not a prospect for the near future.

The PCA faces the challenge to become increasingly

reformed. A discussion of subscription to the Westminster Confession is available on the church's website. The priesthood of all believers is also a question: what place should be given to the ministry of the people as distinct from the ordained ministry?

The PCA has experienced 1% growth. We feel ourselves to be ineffective in presenting the Gospel. Mission to the World is now active in Eastern Europe.

Source: Proceedings of the ICRC June 20-27, 2001 Philadelphia, U.S.A.

Foreigners in Zuidhorn

17th and 18th of May were the 'foreign days' of the General Synod of the Reformed Liberated Church in the Netherlands. A large number of representatives from churches abroad were represented. A photographic impression:



All foreign guests with deputies for relationships with churches abroad.

From right to left: in the front: ds. R. van Wijnen, ds. A. de Jager; ds. R. ter Beek, d. de Vos, dr. J.A. Boersema; behind frtl: ds. Th. Havinga, B. Bolt, br. Laertes Ballin Vaz (IRB), rev. W. Huizinga (FRCA), mev. G.A. Enter-Hindriks, ds. J. M. Batteau, rev. R. Holst (EPCEW), ds. D. Griffioen, rev. Won-Ho Jeon (PCK), br. H. Dekker (FRCA), ds. J.J. Schreuder, rev. D.K. Kithongo (AEPC), ds. P. Nel (VGKSA), rev. Y.G. Dethan (GGRM), rev. W.J. MacKay (FCS), rev. F. Gomez (IRE), prof. W.D.J. McKay (RPCI), rev. J. Keddie (FCS-cont.), prof. dr. A. le Roux du Plooi (GKSA), ds. T. de Boer, rev. C.L. VanderVelde (CanRC), dr. C.J. Smit (GKSA), rev. D.M. Kimanthi (AEPC), H. Huberts, rev. J. Huijgen (CanRC). ds. H. ten Brinke, ds. J.T. Oldenhuis, rev. J.J. Murray (FCS-cont.), H. Olde.



Rev G.Zomer member of the synod talking to Rev J.Huijgen (from behind) of the Canadian Reormed Churches, synod member Rev van Zuijlekom, Rev. R. Visser of the VGKSA (South Africa) and Rev. C.L. Vander Velde of the Canadian Reformed Churches talking to Rev J.M.Batteau (BBK).



Rev J.T.Oldenhuis talking to brother Laertes Ballin Vaz of the Brazilian Reformed Churches (IRB)



Prof dr. A. le Roux dy Plooy and dr. C.J.Smit, both of the GKSA (South Africa) talking to synod chairman Rev P.Groenenberg.



Rev R.C.Janssen shows the accommodation of the members of the synod on the map to Rev Y.G. Dethan (GGRM, Indonesia)



From left to right: Rev J. Keddie, FCS (cont.); Rev. R. Holst, EPCEW; Rev. J.J. Murray, FCS (cont.), Prof. W.D.J. McKay, RPCI



Rev D.K. Kithongo of the AEPC in Kenya speaking to Rev H. ten Brinke (BBK)



United in song:

Row 1: Rev. D.K. Kithongo and Rev. D.M. Kimanthi, AEPC Kenya, Rev. Y.G. Dethan, GGRM Indonesië, br. Leenders, RCNZ New Zealand

Row 2: Rev. J. Keddie and Rev. J.J. Murray, FCS(cont.) Scotland; Rev. R. Holst, EPCEW England and Wales; Rev. J.J. Schreuder BBK, Rev. F. Gomez, IRE Spain; Rev. W.M. MacKay, FCS Scotland, br. Laertes Ballin Vaz, IRB Brazil en Rev. J.T. Oldenhuis, BBK

Row 2: Rev. C.L. Vander Velde en Rev. J. Huijgen, CanRC Canada, Prof. W.D.J. McKay, RPCI Ireland.

Synod decision sister church relationships

The General Synod of the Reformed Liberated Churches in the Netherlands gathered in Zuidhorn, decided to enter sister church relationships with :

- Gereja Gereja Reformasi Musyafir (GGRM) in Indonesië;
- Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Kenya (AEPC);
- Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ);
- Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil (IRB).

Creed Subscription: The Limits to Liberty and Change*



We have considered Subscription to a Creed and the Authority of Holy Scripture. Now the question of changing a Confession, and the issues of liberty of opinion and taking exceptions are addressed more specifically.

While the Church can never pronounce on everything in Scripture, she can never consent to add to or contradict Scripture through her Confession. If she discovers that such has occurred she is bound to change, as the framers of the Scots Confession of 1560 (replaced by Westminster in 1647) pointedly stated, and as was reaffirmed in 1847 by the Free Church of Scotland Assembly when it approved the Constitutional Catechism.

Revision, restatement or correction of the Confession will not involve significant change in its Catholic, Protestant and Calvinistic character. On the issues involved in these matters Scripture is clear, although we may find better words to express them as language changes or a better grasp of particular biblical passages is achieved.

Scruples

It is on other issues, usually of secondary importance, where scruples may arise. In the event of some scruple arising as to anything in the Confession a subscriber must keep in mind that the Confession is not his only but also that of the Church. The Confession is the consensus of the Church not to silence dissent but to prevent tyranny over the whole body by dissenting individuals and factious parties. We are all prone at times to be over-scrupulous and/or undisciplined, hence the Church in proper Assembly is the proper forum for resolutions of difficulties.

Some scruples arise from misunderstanding. In the PCEA subscription is to "the whole doctrine" of the Confession, that is to all its teaching both major and minor. However, that does not mean that I declare that the statements of doctrine in the Confession are necessarily formulated in the best manner, that they are exhaustive statements of the doctrines expressed, that every teaching of Scripture is dealt with or every error condemned, or that mere allusions or incidental remarks are binding.

Here and there the changed historical circumstances of a church with a long history like ours may mean misunderstanding.

- (2) Long-standing, godly elders are not always aware that WCF 23:3, about the role of the civil magistrate in calling Synods, was limited by the Church of Scotland when it adopted the Confession in 1647, and is therefore limited by us, and rightly.
- (3) I've heard some of our people express the opinion that the questions used at ordinations and inductions need to

About the author:

Dr Rowland Ward is minister of Knox Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, Melbourne. He holds BA and Hons BTh degrees from the University of South Africa, the Diploma of the Free Church of Scotland College (1975), and a Doctorate in Australian Church History from the Australian College of Theology (1994).

He is the author of more than a dozen books, including a Modern English Psalter, Modern English texts of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and a Commentary on Genesis 1-11. He is the President of the Association for Christian Higher Education in Australia Inc. and edits *The Presbyterian Banner* from which this article is taken.

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be recast a little to relate them more to our Australian situation than to the Disruption in Scotland in 1843. I think there's merit in this.

- (4) Others may not realise that the term 'psalms' in WCF 21:5 was not intended by our Mother church in 1647 to be necessarily equated to the Psalter, or to decide the limits of Biblically permissible songs in God's worship.
- (5) Still others may misunderstand the reference to the papacy in WCF 25:6, or even the reference to creation in the space of six days, 4:1.

The antidote in such matters is a bit of historical study and maybe some clarifying updating of the text.

Liberty and its limits

There remains the question of liberty of opinion. The framers of the Confession never intended their work to decide every issue. It was, after all, a consensus, and dealt with all the major doctrines. So there will be areas where different opinions on subsidiary/ undefined issues will be held by those who are intelligent and genuine strict subscribers. But what about areas the Confession does speak to? Can there be disagreement there? Yes and No, I would say.

Yes, because even the Confession itself distinguishes between errors censurable in their own nature (eg. the grounds of divorce), and other errors which are censurable because of the manner in which they are maintained and propagated (WCF 20:4). It therefore seems to be open for the church to accept as an office-bearer someone otherwise qualified who has certain exceptions [being 'errors not censurable in their own nature'], which are not maintained and propagated in an objectionable manner.

No, given that no distinction is made between major and minor doctrines when accepting 'the whole doctrine'. In the PCEA any exceptions would have to be dealt with at Synod level, and we have not had occasion to do so hitherto.

Most churches, including the PCEA, have allowed good sense to rule in those few minor points where well recognised differences exist. For example, a number of the best ministers in our tradition [eg. Murray M'Cheyne of Dundee, John Sinclair of Geelong] were of pre-millennial persuasion (although not dispensational). This is hardly fully consistent with the Confession but has not given rise to censure.

Sometimes it is argued in less strict bodies that one has a 'liberty of opinion' to believe but not to teach a different viewpoint on some secondary issue dealt with in the Confession. I do not believe this is tenable. It leads to a new papalism where the authority of the church binds the conscience improperly. A promise not to teach something one regards as the teaching of the Word of God is rightly forbidden by WCF 22:7. It follows that if a Church accepts an office-bearer otherwise qualified who had certain exceptions, those exceptions should be in relatively small matters ('not censurable in their own nature') and could be publicly expressed by that person, so long as there was respect for the consensus Confession of the Church. In other words, the manner of maintaining them would have to be appropriate, not fomenting schism, etc.

The liberty of opinion clauses that became common in larger Presbyterian bodies around 1900 were framed in a context where there was dissatisfaction with major doctrines like the atonement and God's decrees, even Scripture itself. To grant an undefined liberty of opinion (and logically therefore liberty of expression also) in matters not essential, without defining the essentials unambiguously, is to invite a broadening of teaching beyond the limits of Scripture. Is it being loyal to Christ the only Head of the Church? Yet in rightly strongly objecting to such a procedure as replacing a definite creed with a fluctuating one we must be careful not to advance a confessionalism which undercuts the supremacy of Scripture and thus denies our Confession!

Yes, we need a strict subscription, yet always the recognition that if anything is found apparently repugnant to the Word of God we will give satisfaction from that Word or amend the confession to make it conform to Scripture.¹ Of course the future orthodoxy of a Church will not be secured simply by fine trust deeds or formulas of subscription, but by godly men who know, live and teach the Word of God.

Also, while checks against hasty or ill-considered action are good, the Christian Church must always be free to obey her Lord in entering into a wider expression of visible unity in agreement with the Word of God, where that possibility presents itself.²

So how would one summarise a proper subscription?

Here follows my draft of the substance of what I believe is involved in my own subscription as a PCEA minister. It is couched in rather different words than the questions and formula I signed in 1976 in order to illustrate what I have been saying, and to further understanding of the proper place of the Confession.

1. I wholeheartedly and willingly acknowledge before God without mental reservation, that the Holy Scriptures, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, are the Word of

God and the only rule of faith and conduct.

2. I further wholeheartedly and willingly acknowledge before God that I believe all the doctrines contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith as received by the Church of Scotland in the year 1647, and interpreted in the Disruption documents by those who formed the Free Church of Scotland in the year 1843, to be a faithful setting forth of the teaching of the Word of God. To all those doctrines, both major and minor, I subscribe without reservation and confess to be my own understanding of the teaching of the Word of God, which I will assert, maintain and defend.
3. In making this subscription I understand that the Westminster Confession is not on a level with the Word of God. Thus, I do not declare that the statements of doctrine in it are necessarily formulated in the best manner, or that they are exhaustive statements of the doctrines expressed, or that every teaching of Scripture is dealt with or every error condemned, or that mere allusions or incidental remarks are binding. Nevertheless, I subscribe as previously stated to all the teachings intentionally conveyed by the Confession because I believe them to be derived from the Holy Scriptures and in agreement with them.
4. I pledge myself faithfully to adhere to all the teachings of the Westminster Confession and to reject all doctrines or opinions whatever that are contrary to or inconsistent with them. Should at any time a question arise as to my understanding of any of the teachings of the Word of God that may seem to conflict with my subscription to the teaching of the Confession, I solemnly undertake not to act or teach independently but to bring such a matter before the relevant church assembly for clarification or resolution, including by final appeal to the Word of God.
5. I further acknowledge that the principles of Presbyterian government by elders duly met in congregational, regional and broader assemblies, as also the simplicity and spirituality of worship as practised by this Church, are soundly based on the Word of God. I acknowledge the authority of the Church to administer the teaching of the Word of God in subjection to that Word, and I promise to observe the Practice and Procedure of the Church in an orderly manner and to uphold its worship, government and discipline. Should I have cause in conscience to disagree with a decision of the church, I recognise that I may clear my conscience by a formal dissent, but that I remain obligated to submit to my brothers in Church assembly and to promote the unity of the Church.

* *From The Presbyterian Banner, April 2001.*

1 *This provision was expressly stated by the framers of the Scots Confession in 1560.*

2 *A strict subscription to the WCF, as I have defined it, would not appear inconsistent with a similar strict subscription to the Three Forms of Unity also, except perhaps in regard to the theoretical underpinning of the fourth commandment where the early Reformation position reflected in the TFCU has been supplanted in the WCF by the binding moral obligation of a weekly day of rest, cf. Richard Gaffin, Calvin and the*

Sabbath (Christian Focus/Mentor 1998); Z. Ursinus, Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism (English translation 1852) on Q 103; G.I. Williamson, The Heidelberg Catechism - Study Guide (P & R 1993) on Q 103. Note the two views well stated in Acts of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, 1972, pp. 146-166. In practical terms there appears no great difference in Sabbath observance among the strict subscription churches at the present time, if one allows for cultural variations.

In the last edition of Lux Mundi, the wrong photo was placed next to Dr. Rowland S. Ward's article. Our excuses for this.

The editors.

photo: Rufus

Colourful DVN Day

Every two years De Verre Naasten in the Netherlands holds a so called DVN day. This day is used to offer information to a broad public about missionary, help and training work. Programmes, including song, music, dance and speakers, were offered on four stages, which all contributed to the theme for the day - "Heart for the World". Ten land pavilions represented the work in different ways. This year, the manifestation which attracted 8000 visitors,

took place in the open air Bible museum in Nijmegen on 25th May.

The IRTT course also took place in May and June. The twenty plus participating students treated spectators to a colourful presentation.



Church Project (GemeenteNproject): Young talent for the church

Origins

29th Dec 1996. E&R (evangelism & recreation) hears that they are no longer welcome on the campsite in Vierhouten. Irritation evident, that people come to faith.

Why?

The team wants to improve the problem of camping work, specifically getting people over the threshold into the church. The flow of new believers into the church proves difficult. Development of young people in the church for that particular problem can solve this. A test group of 30 people offers to be trained for 3 years.

Re-start

November 2000. The pilot phase seems to be a success. The new concept GemeenteNproject (Church Project) begins with a national manifestation, a new two year teaching project and an international study journey to rediscover the characters behind the Reformation.

Dream

Our dream is, that through the continual development of young people for the church, a sort of new channel is opened so that traditional churches keep developing.

For whom?

We aim at the ambitious young adult (20-35), who is prepared to sacrifice a piece of free time for God and own church.

Content

In a learn-and-work period the participants learn to be followers of Jesus Christ: a training in discipleship thus. The participants gain more insight into God's intentions for the church, their own place in the church, the gifts which God gave and how those gifts can be put into practice.

Results

At the National Manifestation in 2000, 250 young people decided to start the project in their church. One first group has started in the learn-and-work period. The one is a quiet worker in the church, the other is a church officer, another, a



Rev D.K. Kithongo, moderator of the APEC in Kenya, will make an appearance at a Willingness Congress on 13th and 14th September in Dalfsen.

missionary, involved in evangelism or youth work. Surprisingly versatile. One result is the same for everyone - the development of a different attitude towards Christ and His church, a better equipment.

Method

Four things belong together: Willingness congress, learn-and-work period, International study journey and website. From the Willingness congress, new participants emerge. The Learn-and-work period is a personal development section. The international study journey gives the depth by comparing our roots with the time in which we know live. The website ensures that it all remains one whole.

Method: Learn-and-work period

Every half-year a new 2 year scheme starts up with 30-40 participants. The third started 23/24th February. The weekends are in Inn "Elst" near Veenendaal. The total scheme includes 9 weekends/Saterdays. Every learn-and-work scheme has groups of 5-7 people. Each group leader has a part in the learn-and-work scheme. The leaders are trained specially for this in order to become good leaders. The way is set out as heart-gifts-commitment. All other details and the



invitations of teachers are arranged by the pupils themselves.

Method: Willingness congress

Every two years a Willingness Congress takes place. This year it will take place on the 13th & 14th September. We expect 500-600 young people and 20 church officers in De Bron in Dalfsen. Theme: Here I am.... to serve you Lord. We think it is important that church councils support their young talent. For this reason we want to confront them with a group of wildly enthusiastic young people; young people who want to 'mean something'.

Method: Website

The website is to keep each other informed. We are still looking for a means of personal coaching via the website.

Responsibilities

Church Project is a workgroup of Deputies for the

Equipment of Evangelising Churches within the Reformed Churches (lib.). The Directors are: chairman Klaas Koelewijn, manager Baan Invensys, secretary Mirjam Kreling, director's assistant Baan Invensys, financial secretary Gerard Markerink, independent marketing advisor, webmaster Henk-Willem Laan, tax inspector with Van Duyn Accountants and Tax Advisors.

Participants

The criterion for participation is: do you want to be available for God and your own church? We ask for a letter of recommendation from the church council of the participant. In this way you achieve that the church leaders support the participants.

Information

www.GemeenteNproject.nl
or Gerard Markerink 0031-43-36 30 120

Quote:

Maartje Gorissen, Wezep:

When the Church Project started I began to think about what it means to be part of a church. If I look back I see that two things have changed in my own thinking:

- I think more deeply about the church
- I desire to do something for my church

I see myself as part of the church. I have learned to discover that I, myself can be just as I am. Our minister Lidewij Nap, asked another Church Project participant from my area and myself to come around. He wants to make a series of sermons about the way we behave towards one another. That is the theme of the year in our church; he wants us to be involved in the preparation. The church council supports us. It is good to realise this. Now and again we have contact with the elders and we can tell them what we have learned. I am pleased with the Church Project. I see things differently church now.

The Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tiv

At the 2001 meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches Rev. Dr. I. Achineku introduced the NKST to the Conference.

We bring to you the greetings of the entire NKST community. The NKST wishes to assure you that she is, by God's grace, completely committed to the historic reformed faith, entirely rooted in the Bible, God's infallible Word.

God has granted the NKST a steady growth since the mid 1960's. Our membership is approaching 150,000 with 241 fully organized congregations, 371 ordained pastors, 2,731 preaching centers, 752 local evangelists, and 14 mission stations in Nigeria, among the Fulanis and in the Chad Republic.

The NKST has evolved a number of evangelistic Christ-Centered ministries to reach people with the Gospel. Our government has taken over our primary schools, though we are trying to regain control over them. We also have some 150 health clinics, 31 secondary schools, 9 hospitals and a

number of other medical ministries. Many thousands have been touched by these ministries.

Nigeria, with a population of 120 million, is at the center of Africa, having attracted the attention of Islam and other religions. Our young people tend to be confused. We have established an educational center to train teachers. This university needs some 2 million dollars to be established. Due to its ministries and the economic depression in Nigeria, the NKST has problems meeting this need.

We request the churches to pray that the march of Islam may be halted. In Nigeria many of the northern states have already adopted the Sharia law. Christians, including ourselves, have suffered great losses because of this. We also request prayer for our President, a Christian who has constantly been the target of Moslems. Prayer is also requested for the financial problems of the Reformed Theological College of Nigeria, whose workers have not been paid the last five months.

The Reformed Church in Japan

At the 2001 meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches Rev. Y. Ichikawa introduced the RCJ to the Conference.

There are two live issues in our churches today. First the issue of women in office. We have had women deacons from the start but now the question has arisen whether women should hold teaching and ruling office. The second issue is membership of the Reformed Ecumenical Council. At the last General Assembly a proposal for the RCJ to suspend its own membership failed by a narrow margin.

In 2006 we hope to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the church's founding. To mark the occasion we hope to publish a 60th anniversary declaration of faith on the subject of eschatology.

We have held the Westminster Confession of Faith from the beginning but have a vision to produce a confession in our own language. We are conscious that the Westminster Standards are a 17th century English confession, which needs to be made relevant for today. So far we have made declarations of faith on: predestination; Scripture; the relationship of church and state; the Holy Spirit; and Gospel proclamation.

We request you to pray for us for God's guidance and wisdom and to give us advice and admonition to keep us in the Reformed path.

Source: Proceedings of the ICRC June 20-27, 2001 Philadelphia, U.S.A.

The Presbyterian Church of Uganda

At the 2001 meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches Rev. E. Kasajja introduced the PCU to the Conference.

The PCU was invited to attend the ICRC by the OPC. Our aim is to make friends with you, seeking brothers in the Lord, reformed in doctrine and some presbyterian in government. There is opportunity for doing ministry in Uganda. I invite you to join us.

In Uganda 'retirement' means going to be with the Lord. Retired brothers here can continue to work in Uganda. Coca Cola is everywhere in Uganda: the Gospel is not.

Our roots are in the Westminster Theological Seminary. Our founder was a WTS graduate. Allow me to share a wonderful story with you. One of the WTS professors once visited Uganda. He saw all the garbage on the streets of Kampala, bought a shovel and hired a truck, and began cleaning up the streets. This drew a crowd. Having sent off the lorry, he began to preach the Gospel. I asked him what he called that kind of evangelism. He said "Garbage evangelism!" This was a practical demonstration of the power of the Gospel. The garbage is now eliminated from the streets of Kampala.

Uganda is open to you, please respond.

Source: Proceedings of the ICRC June 20-27, 2001 Philadelphia, U.S.A.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales

At the 2001 meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches Rev. C. R. H. Holst introduced the EPCEW to the

Conference.

The EPCEW is based on the Westminster Standards.

The rise of independency and the restoration of the monarchy in the mid 17th century put an end to Presbyterianism in England for 200 years. In the mid 19th century an attempt was made to revive Presbyterianism. But the resulting Presbyterian Church of England fell under the influence of rationalism and liberalism. In 1972 the Presbyterian Church of England united with the Congregational Union of Great Britain, adopting the misleading title of the United Reformed Church. This marked an end to the attempt to revive Presbyterianism in England. In Wales the Presbyterian Church remains, as a product of the Great Awakening of the years 1735 and following, but is almost entirely liberal and in an advanced state of decline. In the late 1960's a significant number of Reformed and Evangelical congregations seceded from the Presbyterian Church of Wales, but only one retained Presbyterian polity and the confession.

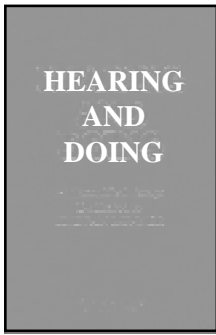
Individuals concerned to revive the reformed Presbyterian cause convened a meeting in London in the 1970's, but the first concerted efforts to reestablish Presbyterianism came in the form of the London Presbyterian Conference in 1987. This resulted in the formation of the Presbyterian Association of England, which met at regular intervals until, in 1991, an interim presbytery consisting of 5 churches was established. All the congregations were very small and unable to maintain themselves at the beginning. They received support from the EPC and the GKN(v). In late 2000 two congregations from Cardiff united with the English congregations.

I wish to record our thanks for the support and encouragement of the EPC and GKN(v) and lately the OPC.

Source: Proceedings of the ICRC June 20-27, 2001 Philadelphia, U.S.A.



Rev. Holst.



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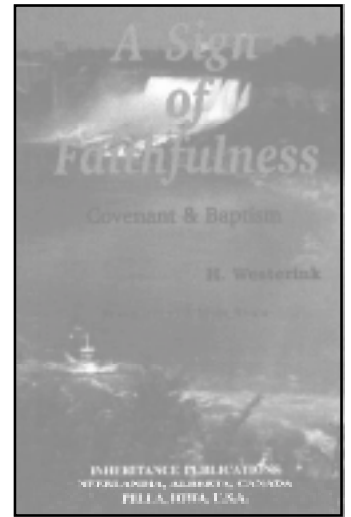
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**Colour brings out in full relief
– by means of slanting beams –
the map of all the world.
Increasingly far-reaching is the Light!
Over the quarters It will claim
an ever larger territory;
each corner of the earth
must yield to it ultimately.**

**The hands of the clock in God's hand
mark the Light's feats of conquest on earth
until in the fulness of time
every one of the four winds of heaven
shall be filled with the glory of the Lamb.**

Lux Mundi: Light shining upon this world.

*This cover was made according to the design
of J.P. Gootjes from Zwolle.*