

APPENDIX 3:

Report from the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise¹

Esteemed brothers,

The *Standing Committee for the Publication of the 'Book of Praise'* hereby submits the report on its activities in regard to the mandate given to the Committee by General Synod Abbotsford 1995.

1.0 *Printing and Distribution:*

The Committee authorized a new printing of the *Book of Praise* shortly after Synod Abbotsford 1995. In addition to the correction of a few typographical errors, this edition incorporates the changes adopted by Synod 1995, the inclusion of the provisionally adopted text of the *Nicene Creed* and the introduction to the *Church Order*.

In order to increase the lifespan of the books, a hardcover binding was introduced. It is considered to be a marked improvement over the previous softcover binding.

The Committee authorized the printing of just over 4,000 copies, of which 1,892 copies have been sold to churches, 551 copies to schools and 1,612 copies to bookstores. This means that the current stock has been depleted and another printing will have to be considered.

2.0 *Renewal of Contract:*

Since the current five-year contract with Premier Printing Ltd. runs until February 2000, no renewal of the contract was necessary.

¹ While appendices to reports received are not usually published with the reports, appendix 1 is added (as Addendum I below) because it contains the proposed text of the Nicene Creed. The original Report also included an appendix entitled: "Re: Request by br L. van Zandwyk [LvZ] for revision of Canons of Dort [CoD] II,3 and 4 (Acts 1995: Art.44 IV-G); it has not been included. Synod received an additional letter from this Standing Committee; it has been included below as Addendum II.

3.0 Corporate Status:

The committee has maintained its status as a corporation, and all necessary documents for this purpose have been kept up to date.

4.0 Publicity:

The Committee continues to respond to the various requests for information regarding the *Book of Praise*. Frequently, these requests originate from individuals outside of our Federation of Churches, who discovered a copy of the *Book of Praise* in a library, in a local bookstore or in a book catalogue. It is encouraging to note the interest in and respect for the rich heritage of the Reformed faith as it is expressed in the Psalms, the Hymns and the *Three Forms of Unity*.

The Committee deals with the requests for the use of materials from the *Book of Praise* on a per-request-basis, and responds in a manner which seeks to maintain the purpose and intent of the *Book of Praise*. Also in this respect, the Committee is encouraged by recent audio recordings and concert performances by choral groups featuring Psalms taken from the *Book of Praise*. The *Anglo-Genevan Psalter* continues to function actively in all aspects within our Federation of Churches.

The Committee received the request to make the *Three Forms of Unity* available in electronic format. We are pleased that br. D.Moedt of Taber has prepared an electronic version complete with a help file. In keeping with the copyright statement and to ensure proper use of the material found in the *Book of Praise*, a *Memorandum of Agreement* was extended to D.Moedt - Taber Secretarial & Computer Services Ltd. Currently, this file may be accessed under the internet Website of the *Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches*.

5.0 Mandate:

With respect to the mandate the Committee received from Synod Abbotsford 1995, we may report the following:

5.1 Introduction to the Church Order (Acts 1995: Art. 44 IV-D)

The *Introduction to the Church Order* was included in the 1996 edition of the *Book of Praise*.

5.2 Provisionally Adopted Text of the Nicene Creed (Acts 1995: Art. 44 IV-F)

In addition to placing the provisionally adopted text in the 1996 edition of the *Book of Praise*, the Committee distributed the text to the churches with the request for comments. Only four churches responded. Typographical errors in punctuation were corrected and the appearance of the text on the page was adjusted to facilitate the reading of the text at

the recommendation of one of the churches. The Committee presents its proposal of the final form of the text of the *Nicene Creed* in *Appendix I*.

5.3 Canons of Dort re. question raised by br. L.van Zandwyk (Acts 1995: Art. 44 IV-G)

The Committee reviewed the matters raised by br. L.van Zandwyk and recommends that Synod 1998 do not accede to the request of br. L.van Zandwyk.

The Committee presents its reasoning in *Appendix II*.

5.4 Investigation re. Repeating the Musical Notation Overleaf (Acts 1995: Art. 44 IV-L6)

Having considered the input received from the printer, the Committee is of the opinion that the overleaf repetition of the melody does not serve the churches well at this time.

Grounds:

- a. In an attempt to be consistent, all melodies will have to be repeated. This implies that the melody for psalms with many stanzas will have to be repeated several times.
- b. The repeated melodies will likely add approximately 100 pages to the *Book of Praise*, adding to the bulk of the book and changing its pagination significantly.
- c. The cost will likely increase by 30%, due to the labour involved in scanning the melodies, placing new text under the melodies and reconfiguring the entire psalm and hymn sections.

5.5 Alternate melodies for H.1A [Zwart; Strasbourg] (Acts 1995: Art. 44 IV-H-amended)

The Committee prepared the Strasbourg melody for distribution to the churches by adjusting the melody to fit the English text and by providing a harmonization which is in line with the historical time period of the melody. It is noted that the Strasbourg melody had to be adjusted to such an extent that the original melody became an adaptation at best.

The Zwart and Strasbourg melodies and their harmonizations were distributed to the churches for comment. Responses from sixteen churches were received.

The clear consensus found in the responses of the churches is to finalize this matter. All churches were in favour of maintaining Hymn 1A and Hymn 1B as currently found in the *Book of Praise* and not to consider the Zwart and/or Strasbourg melodies as alternate melodies. Furthermore, several churches requested that this matter be put to rest.

In view of the responses received from the churches, the Committee recommends that Synod Fergus 1998 puts this matter to rest.

6.0 Other Matters:

6.1 Implications of the use of the NIV for the prose sections of the *Book of Praise*

Although not part of its mandate as received from Synod Abbotsford 1995, the Committee has been proactive at the committee level in its decision to initiate an in-depth comparative review of the RSV/NIV prooftexts found in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort. The Committee has also initiated a review of the implications of using the NIV text in the prose of the Liturgical Forms. Furthermore, the Committee occupied itself with an update of the Prayers with respect to addressing the Lord as 'You'.

The Committee urges Synod Fergus 1998 to provide the Committee with a clear mandate with respect to the introduction of the NIV text in the prose section of the *Book of Praise*. For example, does the introduction of the NIV in the prose section replace the RSV prose section or is it the task of the Committee to ensure that both versions are available to the churches?

6.2 Future Revision

The implementation of the recommendation to the churches to adopt a new bible translation for use by the churches may imply a substantial modification to the rhyming of the Psalms to reflect the text of the NIV. It is the opinion of the Committee that such a substantial change in the future ought to be planned carefully in the present.

The Committee seeks direction from Synod in this matter.

6.3 Availability of the *Book of Praise* in electronic format

The requests we received for material taken from the *Book of Praise* in a format other than the paper format we currently have, leads us to suggest that Synod appoint a church to develop and maintain a formal web page of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

7.0 Further Recommendations:

Pursuant to the approach we propose above, we would make the following recommendations:

7.1 Committee Membership

That the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise* be continued and that the size of the Committee be kept to four members. Rev. G. Nederveen is due to retire from the Committee in 1998 (*Acts 1995*, p.86). Due to other commitments, br. L.Kingma has requested to be relieved from the Committee.

7.2 Committee Mandate

- i. To function according to the arrangements for publishing and distribution accepted by *General Synod Cloverdale 1983 (Acts 1983, pp.297-299)*.
- ii. To maintain its corporate status in order to be able to protect the interests of the Canadian Reformed Churches in all matters concerning the *Book of Praise*.
- iii. To foster an increased awareness of the existence of the *Book of Praise* among others and to promote the availability of a book of harmonizations facilitating the use of the *Book of Praise* in the English-speaking world.
- iv. To serve as the address to which any correspondence regarding the *Book of Praise* can be directed.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. B.J.Berends
Mr. L.Kingma
Rev. G.Nederveen (convener)
Mrs. C.van Halen-Faber (reporter)

ADDENDUM I:

Re: Proposed Final Form of the Text of the *Nicene Creed*

With respect to comments received from the churches, the Committee recommends that:

- a. Line 1: "We believe" be maintained in favour of "I believe" - since the Greek text uses the plural form (c.f., *Acts 1995, Art. 44 Considerations D.2*)
- b. Line 10: "men" be maintained in favour of changing the word or deleting the word altogether. The term translated as "for us men" is found in the original text. Further, the expression in line 10 is echoed in line 13 in "and was made man", against the teachings of the Docetists. Given the close link between the two expressions in lines 10 and 13, changing the one would also imply a change to the other.

In addition to correcting the typographical errors in punctuation which crept in the provisional text of the *Nicene Creed* printed in the 1996 edition of the *Book of Praise*, the Committee recommends to change the overall appearance of the text.

To facilitate the reading of the *Nicene Creed*, the Committee suggests the lay-out of the text on the page in the *Book of Praise* as follows:

Appendix 3: Book of Praise

[NB: the line numbering 1-27 does not belong in the text but serves only to clarify comments below]

1 We believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
2 Maker of heaven and earth,
3 of all things visible and invisible.
4 And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,
5 begotten of the Father before all ages;
6 God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God;
7 begotten, not made,
8 of one substance with the Father;
9 through whom all things were made.
10 Who, for us men and our salvation,
11 came down from heaven
12 and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
13 and was made man.
14 He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;
15 He suffered and was buried;
16 and the third day He arose, according to the Scriptures,
17 and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the
Father,
18 and He will come again with glory to judge the living and the
dead;
19 whose kingdom shall have no end.
20 And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life,
21 who proceeds from the Father and the Son;
22 who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified;
23 who spoke through the prophets.
24 And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic church.
25 We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins;
26 and we look forward to the resurrection of the dead,
27 and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Suggestion re Punctuation:

1. replace the ";" after made (line 7) by a "," since the "of one substance with the Father" clarifies the "not made" in the same way as the "not made" clarifies "begotten".
2. replace the ";" after Scriptures (16), Father (17) by a "," since these words are followed by the conjunction "and". The semicolon disrupts the thought and flow of the connective.

Indentation:

indent line 9 less to make it stand out that all things were made through Christ. Otherwise it seems to refer to the Father. It is easy to read: "one substance with the Father; through whom all things were made." The semicolon is easily skipped at this point. Specific indentation will make the distinction clearer.

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In order to keep the indentation uniform throughout, lines 2-3, 5-8, 11-13, 16-18 and 21-23 should be indented further than the others because

- lines 2-3 describe the work of the Father.
- lines 5-8 describe the unique nature of the Son.
- lines 11-13 describe Christ's humanity
- lines 16-18 describe what was required to make salvation possible
- lines 21-23 describe the work of the Holy Spirit

ADDENDUM II:

Esteemed brothers,

As a Standing Committee, we wish to provide you with one final update regarding the *Book of Praise*. After the text of our *Report to General Synod Fergus 1998* had been finalized, we received letters from several churches. Since these letters deal with the text of the *Nicene Creed* and the Committee seeks a clear mandate from *General Synod Fergus* to finalize the provisionally adopted text, we feel it is important to provide you with our comments in order to facilitate your discussion.

Letters were received from:

- Church at Hamilton (October 17, 1997) - Expressed the desire that the *Nicene Creed* be a faithful rendition of the original text and ought not to be a matter of polling opinions. In all discussions regarding language revisions, it ought to be kept in mind that the *Nicene Creed* is not the sole property of the Canadian Reformed Churches.
- Church at Surrey (October 7, 1997) - Expressed endorsement of the *Koat Report*.
- Church at Langley (October 22, 1997) - A copy of the report *Comments on the provisional adoption of the revised edition of the Nicene Creed*, researched and interpreted by R. Koat (August 16, 1997).
- Church at Houston (November 5, 1997) - Expressed endorsement of the *Koat Report*.
- Church at London (November 27, 1997) - Expressed endorsement of the *Koat Report*.
- Church at Lincoln (March 4, 1998) - Expressed concern regarding the word "in" [*and we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church*].

Since most letters deal with the *Koat Report*, the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise* makes the following observations:

Previous Synods mandated the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise* to update the language of the Creeds. Synod Abbotsford adopted provisionally the proposed version of the Committee. Only a few churches provided comments about the revised text and one church provided a proposal for the text lay-out on the page which might aid the reading of the text. [See *Report to General Synod Fergus 1998 - Appendix I*].

In fall of 1997, the Church at Langley sent a report to all the churches. This report was received by the Committee on October 22, 1997, well after the text of our report to *General Synod Fergus 1998* was finalized for distribution to the churches.

As noted above, we have received a few reactions from the churches in response to Langley's report. One of the churches stated that they were not in the position to analyze the work of br. Koat, but they nevertheless fully endorsed the report. This letter was received by your Committee before we received the actual report from Langley. The Committee is rather puzzled to receive an endorsement to a report that the brothers felt incompetent to analyze.

For the benefit of Synod 1998, your Committee felt the need to respond to some of the comments in the report submitted by the Church at Langley. It is our hope that this matter can be brought to a conclusion so that this section of the *Book of Praise* can be completed.

Our comments follow the format of the report from the Church at Langley which, we understand, was also submitted to Synod.

"of all things visible and invisible"

The report states that "*and of all things*" gives the impression that something is added to "*heaven and earth*." The Committee believes that it is indeed an *impression*, but not a fact. Synod's simple version is to be preferred.

"Of one substance with the Father"

The Committee is of the opinion that it is unnecessary to insert the verb "being" because we are dealing here with concise creedal statements about who the Lord Jesus Christ is. We confess the Son to be "God of God ... begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father." The accumulative description of who Christ is leaves no doubt that these concise statements reinforce the idea that the Son of God shares the same quality with the Father.

The examples Langley and br. Koat present in support for their argument are weak. The sentence about the happy couple is simply incomplete without the verb "being," and would therefore be incorrect English. The same holds for the reference to Philippians 2:2. That is not the case with our creedal statements. Therefore br. Koat's argument is not convincing.

“through whom all things were made”

The committee believes that “through” is the better translation because it refers to the Son.

We all acknowledge God the Father as the creator. We say: the world was created by God. But the church is making here a statement of faith about the Christ, not the Father. And Scripture indicates clearly that the Father created the world *through* the Son. This has nothing to do with listing examples of “through” as penetration. These examples miss the mark.

God the Father is the agent: the world was made by him. Christ the Son is the medium: the Father made the world through the Son. That is also how both the RSV and NIV translate Hebrews 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 8:6. For that reason the Committee urges that for clarity's sake Synod will maintain the version “*through whom all things were made.*”

“Who, for us men and our salvation...”

Synod's version is to be preferred. The Church at Langley and brother Koat feel that the repetition of “for” is more emphatic. The repetition is possible, but not necessary. The single use of “for” emphasizes precisely that Christ came into the world to save sinful mankind.

“and became incarnate...”

The Committee supports the adopted version of Synod 1995.

Langley and br. Koat assert that “was incarnate” is preferable because the incarnation took place only once, and therefore the change to “became incarnate” is not for the better. With reference to usages by Milton and others, br. Koat writes: “Quoted usages of the verb ‘become’ *lack* the immediacy and directness of the simple ‘was’ in this context.” The Committee wonders how useful this argument is since we are not dealing with the language of Milton, but with English for today!

The simple fact is that at one time Christ was not in the flesh. He became man. About the two natures of Christ we make the distinction that the Son of God, at his incarnation, remained what he was (and is), namely God, and *became* what he was not, namely man. The Committee is not convinced by br. Koat's argument, and would strongly suggest that the adopted version by Synod '95 is a marked improvement.

“He was crucified”

The version of Synod '95 is better. The suggestion to insert the word ‘also’ into the text even though it is not in the Greek is spurious and unnecessary.

“and the third day He arose”

The Bible uses both. In 1 Thess 4:14 we read, “We believe that Jesus died and rose again.” Still, the Committee would support Synod

Abbotsford's rendition because "He arose" is a very powerful statement that is not open to possible misinterpretation. It also diminishes the possibility of thinking that Christ has risen before.

Langley and br. Koat write, "We do not in the least subscribe to Gootjes' notion that it seems 'to imply that Jesus Christ has risen before this.'" And further: "Besides, it is difficult to comprehend that this idea would ever find foothold in orthodox Reformed theology." The Committee has understanding for the reasoning presented, but is not persuaded. The change from "He arose again" to "He arose" has nothing to do with a short coming on the part of someone whose first language is not English.

The current committee is of the opinion that Dr. N.H. Gootjes made a very good point in trying to prevent possible misconceptions regarding Christ's rising from the dead. This is prudent and should be lauded. It is always best to waylay misunderstanding right from the start and prevent it from creeping in. That is what the powerful statement "He arose" does far better than "He arose again."

"and sits at the right hand of the Father"

Once again the report gives plenty of examples of which not all prove the point. Once again, the Committee is convinced that Synod Abbotsford's version is the preferred one.

The Church at Langley and br. Koat do not prove that the expression "sit *at* the right hand" lacks the idea of authority. To just mention expressions like 'sit *on* the bench', or 'sit *on* the Senate', or 'sit *on* the throne', and then deduce that only the translation 'sit *on* the right hand' conveys authority is overstating one's case.

Acts 7:56 relates that Stephen saw the Son of Man standing *at* the right hand of God. Lord's Day 19 of the Heidelberg Catechism has more than once been explained with reference to Solomon honouring his mother above all the others in his presence by having her sit *at* his right (1 Kings 1:19). In the Apostle's Creed we say that Christ sits *at* the right hand of God. So in the Lord's Supper form: let us lift up our hearts to where Christ is, *at* the right hand of God. The revised version is a definite improvement.

"and He will come again..."

In modern usage the verb "will" is correct. Randolph Quirk and Sidney Greenbaum note regarding 'will' and 'shall':

Will for future can be used in all persons throughout the English-speaking world, whereas *shall* (for 1st person) is largely restricted in this usage to southern BrE [British English] (*A University Grammar of English*. London: Longman, 1973, p. 47),

On page 54 they write:

Shall is, on the whole and especially outside BrE, an infrequent auxiliary with restricted use compared to *should*, *will*, and *would*; *will* is generally preferred, except in 1st person questions: Shall I ...?

"with glory"

The original Greek does not have "with glory" between commas.

"who spoke through the prophets"

The NIV translates Hebrews 1:1 as "through the prophets."

"and we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church"

The Committee supports Langley's plea for the rendition "we believe *in* one holy catholic and apostolic church."

"We acknowledge one baptism..."

This is the way the 'old' version of the Nicene Creed reads in the 1984 and 1993 editions of the *Book of Praise*. Therefore the committee did not recommend any change.

Langley's report contains a quote from a semanticist pertaining the use of 'acknowledge' in modern English. The Committee feels that his view of 'acknowledge' is a rather restricted one, and doubts whether it has the overriding connotation of reluctance as he suggests. A quote by the same semanticist about the word 'confess' in today's usage would have been helpful.

Synod 1995 was correct in maintaining "we acknowledge one baptism."

Hopefully our comments will add to a constructive discussion. May our heavenly Father grant you wisdom and insight as you seek to serve the churches to the praise of His glory.

For the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise*,

C. van Halen-Faber, Secretary.

April 9, 1998