

Committee for the Translation of
the Heidelberg Catechism
Appointed by General Synod 1980

(5 pages)

To the General Synod of the
Canadian/American Reformed Churches
To be held at Cloverdale, B.C.,
November, 1983

Esteemed brothers,

The Committee for the Translation of the Heidelberg Catechism
received the following mandate:

1. Gratefully to acknowledge the work done by the Committee for the Translation of the Heidelberg Catechism, appointed by Synod 1977.
2. To continue the Committee with the following mandate:
 - a) To complete the "Draft Translation, 1979", considering the comments received from Rev. S. DeBruin, the Church at London, Ontario, the Church at Barrhead, Alberta, and to use the following guidelines:
 - i) to make use of the first and second draft translation and the present English text, taking as basis the German and Latin texts of 1563 and the Dutch text of 1611;
 - ii) to replace difficult and archaic words and expressions, if proper equivalents are available in today's English;
 - iii) to re-structure, with discrimination, sentences which are too complicated, into positive and separate sentences which directly answer the question.
 - b) To submit its final draft translation to a panel of three English language experts before submitting it to the Churches, with the understanding that this panel is to be appointed by the Committee and must include one of its members.
 - c) To submit to the Churches the (revised and completed) "Draft Translation 1979" together with reference notes where needed and invite comments to be submitted to the Committee before November 1, 1982.
 - d) To submit their report with recommendations to Synod 1983.
 - e) To establish what the original proof texts are and to see whether the selection can be improved by replacing, deleting and/or adding and to include them in the "Draft Translation, 1979".
 - f) To provide an index to cross-reference the Three Forms of Unity.

The committee has been able to complete its mandate, although it has not been able to keep to the time-schedule set out by the mandate. Since our committee-members had obligations in other synodical committees and since the work required many weekly meetings, the committee had to present this report somewhat late.

In reporting we follow the sections of the mandate in alphabetical order.

Re: 2

One of the committee, Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff, asked to be relieved of her duties on this committee. The other members, who had served on the previous committee, served again.

Re: 2a

The final draft translation of the committee is herewith presented to the churches and to the General Synod 1983. We have followed the guidelines of the mandate, as far as original texts and other translating procedures are concerned (cf. 2a, i - iii).

Re: 2b

The committee appointed Mr. G. Alkema, Dr. W. Helder, and Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff to scrutinize the draft translation from a linguistic and grammatical viewpoint.

Re: 2c

Owing to a late start and to the amount of time required to complete the mandate, the committee could not keep to the time-schedule mentioned in this point of the mandate. Therefore the committee was not able to invite comments and to evaluate them before making a final report. However, the numerous comments previously given to the past three committees which have all worked on this project have been taken into consideration. Also, the comments mentioned in the mandate were all evaluated. The churches must therefore forward any comments to the General Synod itself. Footnotes have been kept to a minimum. In order to facilitate printing these have been placed in a separate section of the report.

Re: 2d

The committee herewith submits its report. The committee has completed its mandate and is now in a position to recommend that the full text of the catechism, along with the prooftexts (as aids), the revised preface, and the Cross-References to the Three Forms of Unity (as an aid) be adopted by Synod for use by the churches.

Re: 2e

The matter of prooftexts, about which a report is made for the first time, requires some explanation.

As far as the "original prooftexts" are concerned, it is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain which are the original ones. Indeed, no ecclesiastical assembly ever gave approval to such prooftexts. As a result, we only have certain editions of the Heidelberg Catechism which included prooftexts.

The sister-churches in the Netherlands have also studied this same matter (see ACTA, Generale Synode van Arnhem 1981, pp. 116-117,

357-362). They used the (combined) lists of prooftexts as found in the following editions:

H. A. Niemeyer, COLLECTIO CONFESSIIONUM (their primary source),
 M. E. Vinke, LIBRI SYMBOLICI,
 M. A. Gooszen, DE HEIDELBERGSCHE CATECHISMUS,
 E. F. K. Müller, BEKENNTNISSCHRIFTEN UND KIRCHENORDNUNGEN,
 J. N. Bakhuizen van den Brink: DE NEDERLANDSCHE BELIJDENIS-
 GESCHRIFTEN,

as well as in the editions of A. Kuyper and F. W. Grosheide. Where necessary, the Dutch deputies made a choice. One major problem encountered was that in the first editions the references are only made to the Bible chapters and not the specific verse(s). This necessitated some guesswork. Moreover, these deputies pointed out that the list of prooftexts was not meant "als handboei bij de Schriftuitleg, maar also handreiking bij het gebruiken van de confessie" ("not as handcuffs for the explanation of Scripture but as helps in the use of the confession").

The deputies of our sister-churches had to evaluate this comprehensive list critically and to give a revised list for their next General Synod. Our committee was not able to benefit from such a final product and therefore could only make thankful use of the list of all the prooftexts, as they were printed in the ACTA of Gen. Synod of Arnhem 1981. Our convener, Dr. J. Faber, painstakingly went through them all (also using present editions, especially the new edition of the Heidelberg Catechism of the Christian Reformed Church), critically evaluating them. We now submit the prooftexts as they are printed below the Questions and Answers. The references are all numbered so that one readily knows which prooftext(s) belong with which part of the Question/Answer. Also, if a list of texts is given, they are arranged in the order of the Books of the Bible.

We recommend that this list be approved by General Synod for use by the churches as an aid in the understanding and usage of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Re: 2f

An index to cross-reference the Three Forms of Unity has also been included, as requested.

The committee critically evaluated the Harmony of the Three Forms of Unity as given in the new translation of the Heidelberg Catechism by the Christian Reformed Church.

The committee recommends that these proposed cross-references be adopted and included in the new Church Book as an aid in the usage of the confessions.

Re: Printing

In order to prevent duplication of work in the typing and printing of the text of the Heidelberg Catechism the committee sent its draft translation directly to Premier Printing. This may give the report the appearance of a final product; however, this should not prevent the churches and the General Synod from suggesting and making alterations. The printer can incorporate such changes.

Since this is the fourth committee that has worked on this project and offered a draft translation, the present committee feels that this draft translation should be the last one and should be adopted by the General Synod, and, preferably, be included in the new Church Book.

Acknowledgements:

The committee gratefully mentions sr. H. Nobel and sr. L. Lush for their willingness to do much typing work for the committee.

Humbly submitted,

Dr. J. Faber - Convener

Dr. W. Helder

Rev. W. Huizinga - Secretary

J. Faber.
C. Helder
W. Huizinga

FOOTNOTESRe: Ans. 21

For theological reasons the last statement is placed at the end and is thus made to cover both aspects of the one faith. Otherwise misgivings might arise in that it is thought that the Holy Spirit only produces the firm confidence but not the sure knowledge.

Re.: Ans. 23

The text of the Apostles' Creed as adopted by General Synod 1980 is incorporated into the text of the catechism.

Re: Ans. 32

For didactic reasons the additions "as prophet . . . as priest . . . as king . . ." are made, in conformity with the new text of our Dutch sister-churches.

Re: Ans. 76

The committee received comments suggesting the elimination of "sacred body" and "we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones". Though "sacred body" presents no heresy and points to the union with the Holy One, it has a R.C. ring to it, it was said. "We are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones" was based on a text in Eph. 5:31 but it is now regarded as a later addition and modern translations do not include it.

The committee feels that the General Synod should decide on these matters.

Re: Ans. 103

"The feast day" is according to the German ("am feiertag") and the Latin ("festis diebus") texts. We kept to the singular (German text) instead of the plural (Latin text) in order to prevent misunderstandings (cf. art. 67, C.O. about "the feast days").

Re: Ans. 110

Since the magistrate/government today punishes "unjust weights, ells . . ." as well as theft and robbery it was decided to eliminate "as are punished by the magistrate" in order to bring this answer up to date. The present Ans. 110 was certainly anachronistic, and no longer fully applied.

Re: Ans. 119

In contradistinction to the R.S.V., the committee has translated "the evil one" as in the present text. The doxology was maintained as in the present text as well.