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The Committee on the Translation  
of the Heidelberg Catechism,  
appointed by General Synod of Toronto, 1974.

To the Consistories of  
The Canadian/American Reformed Churches.

Esteemed brothers!

The General Synod of Toronto 1974 appointed the deputies of the Committee on the Translation of the Heidelberg Catechism to carry out the following mandate:

- 2. continue the Committee with the mandate,
  - a. to prepare a second draft, with the use of comments etc. which were received by this Synod;
  - b. to further solicit comments etc. which must be submitted to the Committee within the time-limit of six months after this decision has become public;
  - c. to make this second draft available to the Churches one year after this Synod has come to an end, in order to give the Churches ample time to examine it.

Point 2a. has now been completed and is herewith submitted to you.  
Point 2b. has been covered by our previous correspondence with the Churches (letter of May 26, 1976).

Certain circumstances made the deadline in point 2c. an impossibility. The Canadian mailstrike, the distances between deputies and especially the time-consuming nature of this work of making a second draft translation proved too much of a barrier for us to honour the deadline set by Synod. We keenly felt the weight of our responsibility, for what the deputies do in a comparatively short period may be memorized for years. Therefore careful and cautious labour necessitated more time. However, the Churches now have a full year to study and to analyze this second draft translation which we humbly submit to the Churches.

GUIDELINES FOR TRANSLATION

In preparing this second draft translation we followed these few synodical guidelines:

- 1. Prepare a second draft translation (see the mandate quoted above).
- 2. Replace difficult and anachronistic (out of date) words and expressions, as far as proper equivalents can be derived from today's English (Recommendations 1a. of ACTS 1971, Article 83).
- 3. Recast sentences which are too complicated into positive and independent sentences which form a direct answer to the question (Recommendations 1b. of ACTS 1971, Article 83).
- 4. Adhere closely to the original German text (Recommendations 1b. of ACTS 1971, Article 83).

This guideline of Synod brought along some problems. The third edition of 1563 is taken as the accepted text. However, Dathenus translated the Heidelberg Catechism into Dutch in 1563 for the first time though his 1566 edition became the standard Dutch translation. This 1566 Dutch text forms the basis for our present translation (in Dutch and English). But as J.F. Munneke in his book, HET HISTORISCH FUNDAMENT, remarks:

*It is too bad that he did not translate too precisely. Here and there he took the liberty to give a free rendering, sometimes introducing a small change or*

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*adding something. In general he used the German Catechism of 1563 (third edition) from which to translate, but a few times he also used the Latin edition.*

(Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, Goes, 1972, page 85, our translation).

Since we have followed the mandate to adhere closely to the original German, minor changes have been necessary not in order to introduce changes but in order to carry out our mandate.

Wherever substantial changes take place, a footnote makes the reader aware of this. A translation of the Latin or Dutch is often supplied in the footnote in such cases.

These additional guidelines were followed:

1. The question is not repeated in the answer as the first draft translation did in many cases.

The reasons are as follows:

- we have no mandate from Synod for this.
- it would ruin the fresh and lively character of the Catechism. Direct speech is more alive than indirect speech, which would result if the question was repeated. Also, direct speech is easier to learn.
- to repeat the question would mean straying from the original German text. Subjective opinions as what to repeat would necessarily become involved.
- it requires a long or partial repetition in many cases.
- a partial repetition can cause confusion.
- students should learn the question as well as the answer since the question often contains important material. Students should know what they are answering!

2. All quotations are from the KJV since all the Churches agree on this translation

3. All pronouns for God are kept as "Thee", "Thou", etc. Personal pronouns for divinity are capitalized but possessive and relative pronouns are not according to common usage.

4. In order to facilitate reading and memorization the questions and answers have been printed in versified form.

#### REFERENCE MATERIALS

In preparing this second draft translation the following reference material was used:

I. The original German, Latin, and Dutch texts of the Heidelberg Catechism in the following books:

- A. Bakhuizen van den Brink, J.N., *DE NEDERLANDSCHE BELIJDENISGESCHRIFTEN: Vergelijkende Teksten*, Amsterdam, Uitgeversmaatschappij Holland, 1940;
- B. Schaff, Philip, *THE CREEDS OF CHRISTENDOM*, Vols. I & III, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1969;

C. Niesel, Wilhelm, BEKENNTNISSCHRIFTEN UND KIRCHENORDNUNGEN, Evangelischer Verlag, Zürich, 1938.

II. The following translations were consulted and compared:

- A. Our present translations in Dutch and in English.
- B. The First Draft Translation presented to General Synod 1974.
- C. DE HEIDELBERGSE CATECHISMUS EN DE LITURGISCHE FORMULIEREN IN HEDENDAAGS NEDERLANDS, zoals vastgesteld door de Generale Synod van De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland te Hattem, 1972, Groningen, De Vuurbaak.
- D. THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM, A NEW PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION, prepared by a Committee of The Christian Reformed Church, Board of Publications of The Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, 1973.
- E. THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM, 400th ANNIVERSARY EDITION, translated by Allen O. Miller and M. Eugene Osterhaven, United Church Press, Philadelphia, 1962.
- F. THE SCHOOL OF FAITH : THE CATECHISMS OF THE REFORMED CHURCH, translated and edited by Thomas F. Torrance, James Clarke, London, 1959.
- G. Cochrane, A., THE REFORMED CONFESSIONS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1966.
- H. Vis, Jean A., NEW PROOF TEXTS FOR THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM, Douma Publications, Grand Rapids, n.d.

III. The following persons or churches submitted remarks or comments:

- A. Br. and sr. A.H. Oosterhoff -to former deputies at their request.
- B. The church of Barrhead.
- C. The church of Brampton.
- D. The church of Smithers.
- E. Br. Rienk Koat.
- F. The church of Smithville.
- G. Br. A. Zuidhof.

ABBREVIATIONS USED

- G. for the original German text.
- D. for the original Dutch text.
- L. for the original Latin text.
- p.t. for our present translation.
- d.t. for the first draft translation.

Respectfully submitted,

W. HUIZINGA

A. H. OOSTERHOFF

G. VAN RONGEN, Convener.

September, 1976.