

APPENDIX III A I

BOOK OF PRAISE – REPORT 1 (CREED)

To the General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches
to be held in Winnipeg 1989.

From: Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*

Hamilton, June 10, 1988

Esteemed Brothers:

INTRODUCTION

Synod Cloverdale 1983 decided "to adopt provisionally the revised Canons of Dort as amended by Synod . . . and to have the entire text subjected to linguistic scrutinization before publication in the *Book of Praise*" (Art. 171 D).

Because no good mechanism was put in place for the linguistic scrutinization and in order to have this revised edition available as soon as possible, the correction was at that time kept to a minimum.

The Preface of the 1984 edition of the *Book of Praise* stated: "Except for the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed, our Creeds and Confessions are now presented in the more modern English versions *provisionally* adopted by General Synod 1983" (emphasis ours).

Synod Burlington 1986 charged the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* among other things with the mandate

- g. to see to the linguistic revision of the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed and to present a draft of this revision to the churches no later than 1 year before the next general synod and to include this revision in the report to the next general synod for the final edition of the *Book of Praise*.

Synod 1986 also decided "to set the General Synod of 1989 as target date for the final edition of the *Book of Praise*" (Art. 118 D).

In the light of the above the Standing Committee took the 1984 edition of the Confessions and Creeds as a provisional edition and established a sub-committee, consisting of Rev. J. De Jong, Dr. J. Faber (convener), Dr. W. Helder and Dr. C. Van Dam to prepare the prose contents of the *Book of Praise* for its final edition.

Because this sub-committee was aware of problems remaining with the translation of the Canons of Dort, it decided to concentrate on the correction and scrutiny of the Canons and on the retranslation of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. It also dealt with a communication of the Deputies Church Book appointed by Synod 1985 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, sent to the Standing Committee of the *Book of Praise*, and with a decision of Synod 1987 of these sister churches.

With respect to the other prose parts of the *Book of Praise*, e.g. the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Liturgical Forms and Prayers, the Committee deemed it sufficient to evaluate the remarks and proposals sent in by users of the provisional edition.

In this Report we deal with the following Creeds and Confessions:

- I. THE CANONS OF DORT
- II. THE APOSTLES' CREED
- III. THE NICENE CREED
- IV. THE ATHANASIAN CREED
- V. THE BELGIC CONFESSION
- VI. THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

I. THE CANONS OF DORT

The sub-committee scrutinized the provisional version of the Canons of Dort and compared it with the original and authentic Latin and Dutch texts and with the two following new translations:

- a. the Dutch version, authorized by Synod Heemse (1984/85) of *De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* and published in *Gereformeerd Kerkboek* (1986);
- b. the English version in *Acts of Synod 1986 of The Christian Reformed Church of North America*.

The perusal of *Gereformeerd Kerkboek* made the Committee aware of the fact that our Dutch sister churches added many Scripture references at the end of each article of the Belgic Confession, in the margin of the Canons of Dort and of the Liturgical Forms. Although the Preface rightly mentions that these references are not part of the Confession, they certainly enrich this edition and enhance its usefulness.

The Standing Committee proposes to follow the same course for the final edition of the *Book of Praise* of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

By way of example the Committee includes in the margin of the text of the Canons, which accompanies this Report, the Scripture references we added.

If the churches so desire and Synod 1989 thus decides, the Standing Committee could be authorized to add Scripture references in a similar manner to the Belgic Confession and the Liturgical Forms and to make it clear in the Preface of the final edition that the added Scripture references do not form an integral part of the Confessions.

Another point of interest for the final text of our *Book of Praise* is the fact that the introductions to our Creeds and Confessions have never been updated. They contain obsolete material. Our Committee took the liberty to propose to the churches an updated text for the preface to the Canons of Dort. We are of the opinion that also the prefaces of the other Confessions and of the Creeds should be updated and hope that consistories of Canadian Reformed Churches will forward a proposal to General synod 1989 to have a Committee scrutinize these prefaces for the final edition of our *Book of Praise*.

The results of the work with respect to the Canons of Dort are enclosed herewith.

II. THE APOSTLES' CREED

The Deputies Church Book appointed by Synod 1985 of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia sent us a copy of the Report to their Synod 1987. Their mandate had been

- a. 1. to invite comment and collect material on
 - a the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity, and
 - b the Liturgical Forms which were provisionally adopted;
2. to evaluate these and report to next Synod.
- b. to examine the matter of the word "Christian" in the Apostles' Creed further, and to make a suitable recommendation to next Synod.

Synod 1987 (*Acts*, Art. 100) decided

1. to adopt the text of the Three Forms of Unity and of those Liturgical Forms which were provisionally adopted by the 1985 Synod;
2. to adopt the text of the Ecumenical Creeds with the exception of the word "Christian" in Art. IX of the Apostles' Creed, in Lord's Day 7 of the Heidelberg Catechism, and wherever the text of the Creed is quoted in the Liturgical Forms and Prayers;
3. to reinsert the words "only-begotten Son" in the places mentioned by the 1986 Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Although the mandate of our Committee does not speak about the linguistic revi-

sion of the Apostles' Creed, the Committee was of the opinion that it should not bypass the Report of the deputies, sent to our Committee, and the decision of Synod 1987 of our Australian sister churches with respect to the word "Christian" in Art. IX.

Synod 1987 summarized the conclusions of deputies as follows:

- a. The received text (textus receptus) of the Apostles' Creed does not contain the equivalent of the word "Christian."
- b. The words 'a catholic Christian church' are a translation from the Dutch text, which was based on Martin Luther's double translation of the word 'catholicam,' which in the late Middle Ages sometimes would be translated by 'christliche' ('Christian').
- c. Neither the English translation – over a thousand years old – nor the French (John Calvin and others) have a double translation of the word 'catholicam.'
- d. Correctly the Apostles' Creed is, in the new *Book of Praise*, printed under the heading 'The Ecumenical Creeds.' Therefore its text should stand in the ecumenical tradition, the community with believers of all ages.
- e. The word 'Christian' as used by Luther appears to express 'of the christian' rather than 'of Christ,' and in this sense provides a duplication of the term 'communion of saints' in the next line of the creed.
- f. Scripture speaks of 'the church(es) of God,' not of 'the Christian Church.' The creeds should follow the language of Scripture consistently.

Synod 1987 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia added these considerations:

3. Following a tradition that originates from the European continent, the *Book of Praise* has inserted the word 'Christian' in the article on the church. This is a rather old tradition. However, the tradition of maintaining the received text is much older.
4. The text of the creeds is usually printed under the heading 'Ecumenical Creeds' – as is done in the *Book of Praise* (1984). This 'ecumene' is not only a matter of 'all places' but also of 'all ages.'
5. In the text which is recommended by the Committee on Ecumenical Creeds, appointed by the ICRC held at Edinburgh, Scotland in 1985, to the member churches, the word 'Christian' will be absent.

Our Committee is of the opinion that the position, taken by our Australian sister churches, is right.

General Synod 1986 of the Canadian Reformed Churches mistakenly spoke in its Considerations (Art. 101) about 'the addition of the word 'Christian' in the age of the reformation.' It was nothing but a late medieval Germanic rendering of the word 'catholic,' as has been proven by J.N. Bakhuizen van den Brink in his essay "*Credo Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam*" in his *Ecclesia II* ('s Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), pp. 262-295.

Our General Synod 1986, therefore, mistakenly stated that the expression was "purposely used in the time of the great Reformation." Synod did not give any evidence for this statement. A fact is that also Roman Catholics in sixteenth century Germany used the same expression as they had done since the late Middle Ages. There is no Reformed or even Lutheran confession of the sixteenth century that makes the replacement of the word 'catholic' by 'Christian' or the addition of this adjective a confessional matter.

It should not be construed as "a part of the catholic and apostolic faith," as our Synod 1986 did.

The Latin 1563 text of our Heidelberg Catechism shows that our forefathers were not even sure about the meaning of the word "Christian." They translate the expression "Christian faith" in Lord's Day 7 with the words *omnium Christianorum fides*, the faith of all Christians. In Lord's Day 21 they replaced the expression "Christian church" by *Christi ecclesia*, the church of Christ. In Lord's Day 27, however, they chose the expression *ecclesia Dei*, church of God. This variety of translations shows the vagueness of the adjective "Christian," as rightly indicated by our Australian sister churches.

Moreover, the authentic Dutch translation of the Heidelberg Catechism did not have the word "Christian" in the text of the Apostles' Creed in Lord's Day 7 and 21 (see J.N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, *De Nederlandse Belijdenisgeschriften*, second edition, Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1976).

The best Dutch edition of Richard Schilders in Middelburg 1611 – present at and used by the Synod of Dort – does not have this superfluous adjective. The publisher Mattheus de Vries in Dordrecht put it between brackets in his edition of 1725.

We do not have the right to change the received text of the Apostles' Creed or to add to it. Therefore, our Committee is of the opinion that the Canadian Reformed Churches should rescind their addition of the word "Christian" to Article IX of the Apostles' Creed. It is not found in the Latin received text or in the ages-old English and French translations of this ecumenical creed.

Our Committee, therefore, having studied the Report and the considerations of our Australian sister churches agrees with their decision to delete "the word 'Christian' in Art. IX of the Apostles' Creed, in Lord's Day 7 of the Heidelberg Catechism, and wherever the text of the Creed is quoted in the Liturgical Forms and Prayers" in the *Book of Praise*.

We propose to rescind the decision of Synod 1983, Art. 70 II, and of Synod 1986, Art. 101 and to delete the word 'Christian' as indicated.

Since our Committee would like to prevent a debate about the question whether the Committee's proposal to rescind the decision of 1986 and to delete this word from the text of the Apostles' Creed is admissible, we would like to see consistories of the Canadian Reformed Churches place this item on the agenda of the General Synod 1989.

III. THE NICENE CREED

In discussing our mandate with respect to the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds our Committee became aware of the work done by ICET (the International Consultation on English Texts).

The English text of the Nicene Creed, proposed by ICET, has found widespread acceptance in Christianity, not only by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, etc., but also by Reformed Christians.

By way of example we refer to the publication *Worship the Lord of The Reformed Church in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987). In the liturgy for the congregational services the Reformed Church in America gives the choice between the old translations of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed (as used in our *Book of Praise* before 1984) and the ICET texts.

The question arose in our Committee: Should the Canadian Reformed Churches not first of all decide whether this new English text of the Nicene Creed is acceptable or should be adhered to at least as closely as possible?

Moreover, the Committee became aware of the fact that the ICRC (the International Council of Reformed Churches), to be hosted by the Canadian Reformed Churches in 1989, will discuss the same question. A draft proposal for an English text of the Nicene Creed was sent to the Canadian Reformed Churches and to the other members of the ICRC.

Again the question arose: Would it not be wise to wait for the results of this conference?

At least, the Committee, to be appointed by General Synod 1989, should receive guidelines from this Synod that show in which direction the Canadian Reformed Churches want to proceed.

Since consistency of translation policies is desirable, General Synod 1989 might also consider guidelines for a new English translation of the Apostles' Creed in the light of the ICET text and the forthcoming proposal of the ICRC.

In order to facilitate the discussion we present to the churches the ICET texts.

The Apostles' Creed (ICET)

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicene Creed (ICET)

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

IV. THE ATHANASIAN CREED

With respect to the Athanasian Creed, there is no ICET translation. There is a new English text by J.N.D. Kelly, *The Athanasian Creed* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1964), another by R. Beckwith, *Confessing the Faith in the Church of England Today* (Oxford: Latimer Studies 9, 1981), and there may be a proposal of the ICRC.

Our Committee adopted the Kelly translation, although we changed it in a few instances. We propose the following English text:

The Athanasian Creed

(1) Whoever desires to be saved must above all things hold to the catholic faith.
(2) Unless a man keeps it in its entirety inviolate, he will assuredly perish eternally.

(3) Now this is the catholic faith, that we worship one God in trinity and trinity in unity, (4) without either confusing the persons, or dividing the substance. (5) For the Father's person is one, the Son's another, the Holy Spirit's another; (6) but the God-head of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is one, their glory is equal, their majesty co-eternal.

(7) Such as the Father is, such is the Son, such also the Holy Spirit. (8) The Father is increate, the Son increate, the Holy Spirit increate. (9) The Father is infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite. (10) The Father is eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal. (11) Yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal; (12) just as there are not three increates or three infinities, but one increate and one infinite. (13) In the same way the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, the Holy Spirit almighty; (14) yet there are not three almighties, but one almighty.

(15) Thus the Father is God, the Son God, the Holy Spirit God; (16) and yet there are not three Gods, but there is one God. (17) Thus the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, the Holy Spirit Lord; (18) and yet there are not three Lords, but there is one Lord. (19) Because just as we are obliged by Christian truth to acknowledge each person separately to be both God and Lord, (20) so we are forbidden by the catholic religion to speak of three Gods or Lords.

(21) The Father is from none, not made nor created nor begotten. (22) The Son is from the Father alone, not made nor created but begotten. (23) The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, not made nor created nor begotten but proceeding. (24) So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. (25) And in this trinity there is nothing before or after, nothing greater or less, (26) but all three persons are co-eternal with each other and co-equal. (27) Thus in all things, as has been stated above, both trinity in unity and unity in trinity must be worshipped. (28) So he who desires to be saved should think thus of the trinity. (29) It is necessary, however, to eternal salvation that he should also faithfully believe in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. (30) Now the right faith is that we should believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is equally both God and man.

(31) He is God from the Father's substance, begotten before time; and He is man

from His mother's substance, born in time. (32) Perfect God, perfect man composed of a human soul and human flesh, (33) equal to the Father in respect of His divinity, less than the Father in respect of His humanity.

(34) Who, although He is God and man, is nevertheless not two but one Christ. (35) He is one, however, not by the transformation of His divinity into flesh, but by the taking up of His humanity into God; (36) one certainly not by confusion of substance, but by oneness of person. (37) For just as soul and flesh are one man, so God and man are one Christ.

(38) Who suffered for our salvation, descended to hell, rose from the dead (39) ascended to heaven, sat down at the Father's right hand, from where He will come to judge the living and the dead: (40) at whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies, and will render an account of their deeds; (41) and those who have done good will go to eternal life, those who have done evil to eternal fire.

(42) This is the catholic faith. Unless a man believes it faithfully and steadfastly, he cannot be saved.

V. BELGIC CONFESSION

Apart from typographical errors we propose to change the following:

Art. 2: *invisible qualities* becomes *invisible things* again.

Reason: *qualities* is further removed from the Greek text of Rom 1:20.

Art. 24: Title becomes: Our Sanctification and Good Works.

Reason: This is consistent with the headings of Art. 22 and Art. 23.

Art. 28, line 5: "state or quality" becomes "status or standing."

Reason: "state or quality" is obsolete and open to misunderstanding.

Art. 33, line 2: "infirmity" becomes "weakness."

Reason: "infirmity" has a restricted meaning in modern English.

VI. HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

Apart from the correction of minor typographical errors we propose the following:

Lord's Day 4, Question and Answer 9:

"But does not God do man an injustice . . ."

Reason: It is closer to the original.

Lord's Day 5, Question and Answer 12:

"God demands that His justice be satisfied. Therefore we must make full payment, either by ourselves or through another.

Reason: The original indicates that *we* must make payment.

Lord's Day 10, Question and Answer 27:

Last three lines: "indeed, all things, come to us not by chance but by His fatherly hand."

Reason: "to us" is in the original.

Lord's Day 11, Question and Answer 30:

"Do those who seek their salvation and well-being in saints, in themselves, or anywhere else, also believe in the only Saviour Jesus?"

Reason: This sentence structure makes memorization easier.

Lord's Day 28, Question and Answer 77:

Add in the quotation of 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 the words "*This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this . . .*"

Reason: The first sentence was inadvertently left out.

Lord's Day 36, Question and Answer 99:

Last sentence: Rather, we must use the holy name of God only with fear and reverence, . . ."

Reason: The sentence, beginning with "In short . . .", is longer than the preceding one.

Lord's Day 44, Question and Answer 113:

Last sentence: "Rather, with all our heart we should always hate all sin and delight in all righteousness."

Reason: "with all our heart" should determine the entire sentence.

Lord's Day 44, Question and Answer 115:

"First, so that . . .

Second, so that, while praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, we may never stop striving to be renewed more and more after God's image, until after this life we reach the goal of perfection."

Reason: "So that" reacts to the question "why?" The idea "that we may be zealous for good deeds" brings into the text more than the original expresses.

CONCLUSION

We would like to request that a member of the sub-committee be given the privilege of the floor at Synod, in order to answer any questions and partake in the discussions of this report.

Yours in Christ's service,
Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*

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