Lukas Vischer:
The Reformed Tradition and its Multiple Facets

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2. Historical Context

During some consultations about the unity of the Reformed family, organized in the 1990s by the John Knox Center in Geneva, the conviction grew that a survey of all streams of Reformed churches worldwide would be useful. As a result, more than 750 articles about individual churches and much additional information about Reformed institutions have been collected in this volume.

3. Summary

Nature and message of Reformed churches cannot be defined by referring exclusively to the Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries. Reformed churches have developed since then, often with ensuing conflicts and divisions. Their complicated history finds expression in a considerable variety of names. - Calvin (Geneva) and others, on the other hand, were particularly concerned with the unification "in Christ" of the Reformed churches. They felt the need to give a coherent common account of Reformed faith. Soon Reformed Orthodoxy began to rise, contested by the Enlightenment and the call for a more personal piety. - Persecutions, expeditions, commerce and the Missionary movement spread Reformed Christianity in all continents. In the course of the 18th century, Reformed churches began to advocate religious freedom and human rights. Since the 19th century, the Evangelical Alliance, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the International Congregational Council attempted to bring together Reformed churches of the various countries. In North America Fundamentalism unconditionally rejected the Roman Catholic Church, the ecumenical movement and communism. The Evangelical movement rejected liberal views and the churches' political and social activities. Pentecostalism emphasized the personal experience of the Holy Spirit. After World War II the ecumenical movement led into the foundation of the World Council of Churches (1948). The World Alliance of Reformed Churches explicitly encouraged its members to participate in the ecumenical movement. Many countries and churches in Asia and Africa gained independence. Younger churches, particularly in East Asia, vastly outnumber the historical "white" churches today. After a long struggle of women's organizations for equal rights, many Reformed churches have admitted women to the exercise of all ministries in the church. In the last decades, faced with challenges from all sides, the churches have increasingly felt the need to rethink their heritage and to express it in modern terms and language.

Even if it is difficult to make out elements common to all of the diverse and dynamic Reformed family today, there are some common theological emphases: Christus solus, God to be glorified in all things, trinity, covenant, the authority of the Bible, confessions of faith, the church as Christ's body, prayer and worship, discipleship and discipline, ministries and church order, local and national church, a strong commitment to missionary calling, the dilemma of faithfulness to the Gospel and ecumenical commitment to the oneness of Christ's body, autonomy of the church from state authorities, the witness of the church in society, and the church as a wandering people.

Jean-Jacques Bauswein
and
Lukas Vischer
Editors

The Reformed Family Worldwide

A Survey

of Reformed Churches,
Theological Schools,
and
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THE REFORMED FAMILY WORLDWIDE

A Survey of Reformed Churches, Theological Schools, and International Organizations

Compiled and edited by

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A project of the
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PREFACE

What we present here is a survey of Reformed churches around the world. The conviction of the usefulness of such a book grew during several consultations about the unity of the Reformed family organized in the early '90s in Geneva by the John Knox Center. Today Reformed churches can be found in almost all countries of the world, but they tend to divide into many groups. In most countries there is more than one Reformed church. Even at the international level, various federations or associations of Reformed churches have been formed, sometimes in opposition to each other. The situation has become so complex that mutual full knowledge about Reformed churches is often impossible even within a single country.

We have tried to establish as complete as possible a list of the churches which currently claim for themselves the heritage of the Reformation, and to provide basic information concerning each. We use the term *Reformed* in a wide sense. All streams of the Reformed tradition (Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregational, Evangelical, and United) have been included in this survey.

The purpose of this handbook is twofold: on the one hand, to allow Reformed churches to become more fully aware of the present situation of their family—its multiplicity, its richness, its potential, but also its weaknesses; and, on the other hand, to serve as an instrument which will facilitate communication within that family.

How did we proceed to gather accurate information on the churches? Having established a preliminary list of Reformed churches on the basis of numerous existing sources, a detailed questionnaire was sent out. Cross-checking of the answers received and information gathered from the churches, from mission and interchurch aid agencies, and from national and regional councils of churches, all helped to establish a list of over 750 different communities. With the help of knowledgeable persons, articles on each country were drafted. The texts were sent to all churches for verification. In the light of their responses, the articles were finalized. It is our hope that the churches will recognize themselves in the present version. We realize that errors may have survived the successive stages of drafting

and verification, especially as some churches did not respond to any of our mailings. We apologize in advance for any misrepresentation which may have occurred. We are also aware that, as churches are living entities, facts about them might have changed slightly by the time this book is published.

In addition to an introduction and the survey of the individual churches, the volume also contains a list of various international bodies in which Reformed churches hold membership, as well as an overview of unions and official dialogues in which Reformed churches participate. A special section has been reserved for a list of over 500 Reformed theological schools. We have tried to simplify the use of this volume as much as possible. The section on the churches is organized alphabetically according to the (English) names of countries. To give a clearer idea of the historical developments which have caused the divisions, the churches *within* each country are normally arranged in chronological order.

The authors want to thank the dozens of people in all parts of the world who have contributed to the realization of this volume. We are indebted to all those who provided us with information, especially to those who prepared articles on the churches in the various countries. Their names are listed in chapter 6. We owe a special debt of gratitude to those who made major contributions to the book by serving on the editorial board and by providing detailed information on large countries or continents: John Garret, Hircio de Oliveira Guimarães, Jan A. B. Jongeneel, Seong-Won Park, Paraic Réamonn, Sidney Rooy, Thomas van den End, and Richard Van Houten. We also want to thank churches and foundations which have helped to finance the project. Last, not least, our gratitude goes to Frauke von Essen and Birgit Müller-Marero, who helped in the fact-gathering process, as well as to Rev. Dr. Donald J. Wilson, who helped to harmonize stylistically the texts of this handbook.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations for Church Statistics

Advent	Seventh-Day Adventist(s)
Angl	Anglican
Assy	Assembly
Bapt	Baptist
Believer	Believer's baptism
BM	Number of baptized members
Catech	Catechist
Ch, ch	Church, churches
ChInst	Church Institutions
ChurchOrg	Organizational structure
CM	Number of communicant members
Congr	Congregation(s)
Congreg	Congregationalist
Counc	Council
Deac	Deacons
Disciples	Churches of Christ (Disciples of Christ)
Distr	District
DoctrB	Doctrinal basis
Eld	Number of elders
EvgHome	Number of evangelists active at home
GenAssy	General Assembly
GenSecr	General Secretary
GenSyn	General Synod
InfantB	Infant baptism
IntlRel	International relationships

1. THE REFORMED TRADITION AND ITS MULTIPLE FACETS

Lukas Vischer

1.0. PREFACE

The nature and message of the Reformed churches cannot be defined by referring exclusively to the Reformation, to relevant texts of John Calvin, and to the confessions of faith formulated in the 16th and 17th centuries. Reformed churches have developed since the Reformation. The original impulse has been enriched by new experiences and new movements. New horizons have appeared and new insights been gained.

Such developments have often led to divisions. The multiplicity of churches points both to the dynamism of the Reformed churches and to their inability to maintain communion in face of new challenges to interpret the Gospel. In many cases, divided churches are monuments to the controversies and struggles of the past.

From the beginning, the Reformed tradition has been characterized by two competing movements — on the one hand an effort to maintain bonds of unity and on the other a trend toward fragmentation. It was not the intention of the Reformers to set up a new church. The Reformation was meant to be a movement to renew the whole church according to God's Word, but separate Reformed churches came into existence because the program of reform was rejected by the Roman church. The need to form separate Reformed churches occurred against the will and hope of the Reformers. For a long time, they hoped that the dividing line would not become permanent. Calvin especially expended many efforts to achieve at least the unity of the Reformed camp; following his example, there have been efforts throughout history to bridge divisions through dialogue, consensus-building and processes of healing. Nevertheless, again and again, almost irre-

sistibly, the centrifugal forces were stronger and new schisms were produced. How shall we interpret these two sides of Reformed tradition? How are the insights gained in history to be valued? What can we learn from historical experience for the life of the church today? What guidance can we derive from earlier attempts to manifest more fully God's gift of communion?

1.1. THE GREAT VARIETY OF NAMES

The complicated history of the Reformed churches finds expression in the variety of names by which Reformed churches designate themselves. The term *Reformed* does not appear in the names of all Reformed churches, although it is the most widely used term to refer to the group of churches presented in this volume. In contrast to other terms, it does not underline a particular characteristic of the church and therefore has a less denominational flavor. It points to the movement initiated by the Reformers and to the commitment to ever renewed reform in conformity with God's revealed Word. The full meaning of the term can be rendered by the phrase "The church reformed according to God's Word."

Reformed is the oldest self-designation of the churches, arising from the Reformation in Switzerland and the south of Germany. They called themselves *ecclesiae reformatae* in distinction from the Lutheran churches. The term was used of the churches identifying with the Swiss Reformation by the churches on the European continent and continues to be used by them today. Generally, the churches which came into existence through European migration, e.g., in the USA or South Africa, or through missionary efforts, e.g., Indonesia, call themselves Reformed.

The designations *Presbyterian* and *Congregationalist* came into use in the Anglo-Saxon world and are closely connected with the history of the Reformation in Britain. For decades of its early history, the Reformed church in Scotland had to defend its identity against the claims of the British crown and the Anglican church. In this struggle, the ministry of elders (presbyters) and the church order arising from it acquired more and more importance. The terms *episcopal* and *episcopalian* stood for the order to be rejected; the church reformed according to God's Word *had* to be *Presbyterian*. Today, the term is widely used throughout the Anglo-Saxon world, especially by churches which came into existence through Scottish and North American migration and missionary work.

The term *Congregationalist* is connected with the congregationalist movement which started in the late 16th century and emphasized, in contrast both to the Church of England and the Presbyterian Church, the role of the locally "gathered church" in worship, witness, and decision-making. Though in agreement with the doctrinal teaching of the Westminster Confession, the movement differed from it in its convictions in the area of church order (Savoy Declaration 1658). Congregationalism spread worldwide primarily through the London Missionary Society. Since many Congregationalist churches united with Presbyterian Churches or became part of even wider unions, fewer and fewer churches call themselves congre-

gationalist, though many of them retain features of their congregationalist heritage. In 1970 the International Congregational Council, originally founded in 1891, united with the World Alliance of Presbyterian Churches to form the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational). The specific titles in brackets, which had been regarded as essential in the beginning, were later usually dropped.

Manifold meanings are connected with the term *evangelical,* which appears in many self-designations of Reformed churches. Originally *euangelikos* simply means "related to the Gospel." The adjective does not occur in the Bible, but it came into use in later centuries to point to a life in accordance with the demands of the Gospel. When it is used in church names, it is generally meant to point to the sustaining ground of the Gospel. But there are nuances of meaning in various contexts. While in the first period after the Reformation the term was used to designate the churches that had joined the movement, it served later to point to the bond uniting the various streams of the Reformation: in Europe Lutheran and Reformed churches increasingly called themselves Evangelical-Lutheran or Evangelical-Reformed. In some cases, as, e.g., in the case of Evangelical Presbyterian churches, the term evangelical serves to place the particular characteristic of church order in the wider context of the church's indebtedness and commitment to the Gospel. The revival movement of the 19th century had a preference for the name because it wanted to emphasize both the message of the Gospel and the urgency of bringing it to all people. Today, some churches coming out of the revival bear the name *evangelical* (e.g., Société évangélique de Paris). At the same time, the term evangelical increasingly acquired the connotation of "anti-liberal." People and groups that wanted to distinguish themselves from liberal positions tended to claim the term for themselves. The Evangelical Alliance, founded in 1846, is a typical example of such an identification. In the 20th century, this tendency became even stronger. Those who upheld the doctrine of the inspiration of Scriptures and fought against the erosion of the church's missionary commitment called themselves *evangelicals.* Evangelical and ecumenical increasingly became mutually exclusive terms. There are, however, differences in various languages. While in English and French the term evangelical has come to mean conservative, the older use persists in other languages. In German the two meanings are expressed by two different terms — *"Evangelisch"* and *"Evangelikal."*

The term *Protestant* appears in some church names. It points to the common ground of all movements in the Reformation and is used especially in French (e.g., Eglise *protestante* unie de Belgique).

The issue of the relationship between church and state has been a source of preoccupation throughout the centuries. Especially during the 19th century, it was the reason for splits in several countries, including Scotland, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Movements against the subservience of the established church to the state have led to the formation of *free, liberated, or independent churches*, such as the Free Church of Geneva or the Free Church of Scotland. The term *independent* can also refer to autonomy with regard to mother churches, as in the case of the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil.

The term *covenant,* which also appears in some church names, is closely related to the congregationalist heritage. Reformed churches in general, and congregationalists in particular, conceived of the church as a covenant community. Faith in Christ leads to a common commitment to praise and serve the God of the covenants — the locally gathered community is a "covenanted community." This concept of covenant played a particularly important role in the revival and free church movements of the 19th century and gave rise to certain churches calling themselves covenant churches (e.g., the Mission Covenant Church in Sweden).

To underline their commitment to the authority of the Bible some churches call themselves *Fundamentalist* or add to their name the word *Bible*, e.g., Bible Presbyterian Church. Other churches, wanting to emphasize their faithfulness to traditional Reformed doctrine, add the term *Orthodox.* These self-descriptions have their roots in 20th-century debates concerning the verbal inspiration of Scriptures and the validity of the classical Reformed confessions.

Quite a number bear the term *united* in their name. In many cases it refers to intraconfessional unions or reunions of Reformed churches. The term is added to the name both to recognize the continuing existence of different Reformed streams and to celebrate their coming together. In other cases, the term designates a wider transconfessional union. In order to underline that all these unions do not yet represent the unity of the Una Sancta and that further steps are to be envisaged, some churches have chosen the name *uniting*.

Some church names are specific and unique. This is particularly the case for the churches pre-dating the Reformation — the Waldensian Church in Italy, named after its founder Peter Waldo (12th century), and the Czech Brethren whose origin goes back to the Hussite movement of the 15th century. Another very particular name appeared at the beginning of the 19th century with the movement of the "Disciples of Christ" (cf. Chapter 2, Appendix and Chapter 5).

Names are more than just labels. Anyone who has been engaged in debates about names, and especially name changes, knows to what extent names are connected with feeling and emotions. Names are also expressions of identity. They point to past experiences and present struggles. While a common name underlines the bonds of communion within one and the same family, particular names distinguish a church from other churches and tend to harden the lines of separation. It is therefore essential not to lose sight, within the great variety of names, of the common heritage all Reformed churches share.

1.2. THE HISTORY OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES: A BRIEF SURVEY

1.2.1. The Reformation

The Reformation of the 16th century was not a sudden or isolated event but the prolongation and culmination of earlier attempts to reform the church. In Western Christianity the idea of reform was alive from at least the 12th century. The ap-

pearances of the Waldensian and later the Hussite movements were signals that the structure of the medieval church was not going to last forever. These movements, which later joined the Reformation, are often called the "First Reformation." In the 15th century the Reform movement found expression in the Reform Council of Constance (1414-18) and Basel (1431). The Humanist Movement called for reforms. The urgency of change was widely recognized when Luther, in 1517, began to spread the message of salvation in Christ alone, reinterpreting and at the same time accelerating the movement.

From the very beginning the Reformation occurred in various movements, distinct in their origin and profile but, of course, in constant interaction. Luther's message found wide response in Germany and adjacent countries. For many years the Reformation movement was identified with his name, and those engaged in spreading the message and in renewing and reorganizing the church were generally called Lutherans. Almost simultaneously, other centers sprang up in the south of Germany, in Strasbourg, and in what is today Switzerland. Under the leadership of Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) the city of Zurich introduced the Reformation in 1523. Other cities followed — Strasbourg with Martin Bucer (1491-1551), Basel with Johannes Oecolampadius (1482-1531), Berne with Bertold Haller (1492-1536). At a very early date (1525) the Anabaptist movement made its appearance in various places. The whole of Europe was caught in a movement of religious unrest.

The life of Zwingli came to an abrupt end in the war setting Zurich against the Swiss Cantons of central Switzerland, which maintained and defended the traditional faith (1531). Zwingli was replaced by Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), who for decades led the church of Zurich and gave to the Zwinglian Reformation its lasting profile. Through his writings and his correspondence he exercised wide influence throughout Europe. He was the author of the Second Helvetic Confession (1561).

The movement of the Reformation was well advanced when, under the leadership of John Calvin (1509-1564), Geneva emerged as a new center of the Reformation. Born in Noyon in France, Calvin studied Latin, logic, and law in Paris, Orléans, and Bourges. A conflict at the university of Paris forced him to leave France in 1533. Three years later Guillaume Farel persuaded him to stay in Geneva, whose citizens had decided to join the Reformation movement. In the following two years Calvin devoted all his strength to consolidating the changes the population had opted for. But soon a controversy about church discipline arose, and Farel and Calvin were forced to leave the city. During the following three years he served the French-speaking community in Strasbourg; he worked there on his *Institutes* and began in his sermons the series of Bible commentaries that were to become characteristic of his spirituality. Called back by the Genevans in 1541, he gradually succeeded in introducing the reform of both the church and the city of Geneva. In 1542 he published his famous Catechism for the religious instruction of children. In the same year he published liturgical material to guide worship in the city. The singing of psalms, already introduced in Strasbourg, also became a practice in Geneva. Soon his activity again met with resistance. For many years his ministry was contested by a group of Geneva citizens. It must also be remembered

that the city of Geneva lived under the constant threat of neighboring Savoy, which looked for any opportunity to reconquer the city. Independence could only be maintained through the support of the Swiss cities, especially Berne, which had joined the Reformation. An important step in the history of the Geneva Reformation was the foundation of the Theological Academy in Geneva in 1559, whose first rector Theodore Beza (1519-1605) was to become Calvin's successor.

The impact of Calvin's teaching and leadership was immense. His personality has given rise to different interpretations. To this day, views on him fundamentally diverge. While he is praised for the clarity of his thinking, for his biblical insights, for his commitment to social justice, for his awareness of new problems, and for his extraordinary perseverance in carrying out the reform, his critics denounce the strictness of his thinking both in the doctrinal and ethical fields, and reject his style of leadership as dictatorial. From generation to generation his image has remained controversial. There is unanimity, however, that Calvin regarded himself as the servant of the church of Christ and always warned against attributing excessive significance to his own person. Though he is and remains, no doubt, the primary source of inspiration, the Reformed tradition is not bound to his person, and it would be a mistake to call Reformed Christians "Calvinists." Calvin's passion was to point to Christ and God's Word in the Scriptures and to invite the church to live in accordance with it.

In his letter to Cardinal Sadolet, Calvin explains why the Reformation had become inevitable. He understood his own activity as the effort to "gather the dispersed servants of Christ in the one Church." In his eyes, there was no room for compromise with regard to the inherited teaching, worship, and practice of his time. Unity could only be achieved "in Christ." Calvin was, however, deeply concerned with the unification of the churches of the Reformation. He succeeded in bringing together the churches of Zürich and Geneva through the *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549). His hopes to solve the dispute on the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper were not fulfilled. Despite his efforts at mediation (cf. especially his masterful Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper of 1541), the rift between Lutherans and Reformed over the interpretation of the Eucharist could not be healed. The controversies he was drawn into, especially with Westphal in the second half of his ministry in Geneva, led to a hardening of the lines of separation.

At the time of Calvin's death the Reformed churches had spread widely in many parts of Europe. Switzerland remained the heartland of the Reformed churches. The movement had penetrated into France, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, Austria, Czechia, and Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland. In 1537 the Waldensians of Italy also joined the Reformation at the Synod of Chanforan.

Of special importance were the developments in France. King Francis I (1515-1547) was undecided in his attitude toward the Reformation. On the one hand he sympathized with change; on the other hand he took severe measures against the threat of dissidence. Throughout his reign Reformed Christians were arrested and burned. Persecutions continued under his successor, Henry II. Despite these difficulties Reformed leaders were able to convene in 1559 the first National Synod and to decide on both a confession of faith and a church order. While the

Reformation in Switzerland was a magisterial decision, involving cities as a whole, the Reformation in France led to another model — a minority church which could not count on the support of the political authorities and could at any time become the object of persecution. In Geneva, Calvin fought for the relative independence of the church from the state, but, since the Reformation had been introduced by the city, the interdependence of church and state was almost inevitable. In France the pattern of an independent church was forced on the Reformed community. Both models have played a significant role in the history of the Reformed churches. In the second part of the century the tension in France deteriorated into armed conflict which lasted from 1560 to 1598. During the first years a settlement still seemed to be within reach. In 1571 the National Synod met in La Rochelle and issued the Confession of Faith of the French Reformed Church. But a year later the massacre on the "Night of Saint Bartholomew" destroyed all hope for peaceful coexistence. The war resumed until the end of the century. Finally, in 1598, Henry IV (1589-1610) granted the Reformed community freedom of conscience through the Edict of Nantes.

In the middle of the century Reformed influence began to become dominant in the Netherlands. Already in preceding decades, the message of the Reformation had found a favorable response in the country. Increasingly in the 1550s and 60s Reformed theologians and preachers were active in the country. In 1563 the Heidelberg Catechism was translated into Dutch, and in 1566 a Dutch version of the Geneva psalms was published. For the Netherlands, the Reformed tradition took shape in the course of the liberation struggle (1568-1648) against the Spanish occupation. The war led to a clear division within the Netherlands. While the southern provinces under the domination of the House of Hapsburg remained Catholic, the northern provinces gained independence and developed gradually into a powerful Protestant nation. During the war the role of the Reformed tradition was strengthened. At the Synod of Emden (1571), the *Confessio Belgica* (1561) and the *Confessio Gallicana* (1559) were accepted and the Calvinist church order introduced.

The Reformation also took roots in Scotland in the 1550s. The main figure of the Scottish Reformation was John Knox (1505-1572), who in the 1540s had become a fervent defender of anti-Roman convictions. In 1547, he was sentenced to the French galleys but managed to escape. After a period as preacher for the English-speaking refugees in Geneva (1553-1555), he returned to Scotland but met with so much resistance that he had to withdraw again to Geneva. Here he published his famous pamphlet "against the monstrous women's régime" to denounce Queen Mary of Scotland. In 1559 he returned to become the religious leader of the Scottish Reformation. Deeply impressed by Calvin's teaching, he introduced Reformed teaching and practice. Three texts were issued — the *Confessio Scotica* (1560), the Book of Discipline (1560), and the Book of Common Order (1564). With its strong emphasis on the ministry of elders, the church order promoted by John Knox can be called "Presbyterian." In 1567, when Queen Mary left the country, the victory of the Reformation was complete. But there were other struggles ahead. Scottish Presbyterianism had to face the claims of the British crown and the Church of England.

1.2.2. Consolidation of the Reformation Movement

Gradually, the Reformation became a separate tradition. Various stages can be distinguished in the history of the Reformed churches. They can be illustrated by the various statements or confessions of faith that were drawn up. The first stage was the struggle to introduce the new order of the Reformation: to give room to the demands of the Word of God; to replace the celebration of the mass with regular preaching and the common celebration of the Lord's Supper; to simplify the spiritual life and the activities of the church, and so on. In order to reach a decision, the Reformers offered to defend their positions in public. Normally disputations were arranged and in the light of the debate the magistrate decided whether or not to join the Reformation. When a city opted for the Reformation, those who dissented either had to obey or emigrate.

Theses prepared for disputations were the first form of Reformed confessions, e.g., Zwingli's 67 "Schlussreden" of 1523, the Berne Theses of 1528, and the like. Soon the need arose to explain and to defend the Reformation both to the population and to the outside world, in particular to the authorities of the Empire. It had to be shown that the Reformation corresponded to the true Tradition over against the deviations in the medieval church. Also, it had to be made clear that the Reformed cities rejected the extreme position of the Anabaptists and later the Anti-trinitarians. Examples of this new type of confession are the *Fidei ratio* of Ulrich Zwingli addressed to the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, the Synod of Berne formulated by Wolfgang Capito, and the First Helvetic Confession of 1536.

A further stage was reached by the middle of the 16th century. The need arose to give a coherent account of the Christian faith as it was taught by the Reformed churches. The Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Second Helvetic Confession are summaries of this kind. They serve both as the source and the criterion of the correct teaching of the church. It is worth noting that no confessional statement ever acquired the adherence of all Reformed churches. While for the Lutheran churches the *Confessio Augustana* (1530) became *the* authoritative confession of faith, throughout the centuries various confessional statements continued to exist side by side among the Reformed churches. Unity among Reformed churches found expression through processes of mutual recognition rather than through the acceptance of a single text. From time to time attempts were made either to suggest a single confession or to underline the unity of doctrine by a harmony or synopsis of all Reformed confessions, but none of these efforts had a lasting impact on the Reformed Churches.

The second part of the 16th century saw the beginning and gradual rise of Reformed Orthodoxy. In contrast to Luther and other Reformers Calvin had developed his teaching in a systematic way. The first edition of his *Institutes*, a full development of Christian doctrine, was published in 1536, even before the beginning of his ministry in Geneva. Throughout his life he worked on the text, refining and completing it. The fullest edition of the *Institutes* appeared a few years before his death. But Calvin never fell prisoner to his own system. His thinking and spirituality were rooted in a constant intercourse with the biblical witness. He was primar-

ily a preacher and biblical scholar. Through biblical studies he was led to teach the doctrines of covenant and predestination, but they do not hold in his thinking the central place often ascribed to them by later generations. Calvin's thinking is characterized by a deep sense for the mysterious nature of God's action. After his death, Reformed doctrine took a more definite form. More and more, Reformed thinking was organized into a coherent system by theologians like Theodore Beza. More and more, Reformed theology appealed to reason to develop the truth revealed in Christ. More and more, the notions of predestination and covenant became the organizing principles of the Reformed doctrinal edifice.

A similar development took place in the field of church order. Increasingly, the ministry of elders which had been introduced by Calvin in Geneva became *the* characteristic of the Reformed churches. In Scotland, in the controversies with the Church of England over episcopacy, the emphasis on eldership acquired the status of a sign of independence. Andrew Melville (1545-1622), a Scottish theologian and teacher who had passed several years of study and teaching in Geneva, promoted the Presbyterian system with fervor. He was the author of the Second Book of Discipline, which was accepted by the General Assembly in 1581. While Calvin was still prepared to accept other forms of church structure, as long as the preaching of God's Word was assured, the Presbyterian order was now regarded as the only biblically valid form of government.

Reformed orthodoxy did not remain unchallenged. In particular, the doctrine of predestination led to controversies and threatened to divide the Reformed family. Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), professor in Leiden in 1603, called the doctrine of double predestination into question. He found followers but was also sharply attacked by the representatives of Reformed orthodoxy. The real conflict began after Arminius's death. In 1610 Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547-1619) published a public declaration, the *Remonstratie,* deviating from the strict doctrine of predestination. He held that God has destined for salvation those who believe, that Christ has died for the whole of humanity; that grace is not within reach of human will but that it is not irresistible. The controversy, which was theological in nature, also had political connotations. The opponents of Arminianism fought for the independence of church from state control. To come to a common mind among the Reformed churches, the authorities called an international synod — the *Synod of Dordrecht* (November 13, 1618, to May 29, 1619). In addition to the Dutch participants, it was attended by 26 delegates from abroad. Arminianism was clearly condemned. The Canons of Dordrecht maintain that election does not depend on faith, that Christ's death brings salvation only to the elect, that human nature is corrupted by sin, that conversion is effected exclusively by God, and that the elect will surely persist in faith. The Remonstrants were removed from the ministry. Oldenbarnevelt was executed by the state, and the famous lawyer Hugo Grotius imprisoned for life. The Canons of Dordrecht acquired the status of a Reformed confession and even today are recognized as such by certain Reformed churches.

In the last decades of the 16th century, England gave birth to two movements which were to have a considerable impact on the Reformed tradition — Puritanism and Congregationalism. The Reformation in England had been a political act. In

1539, Henry VIII had declared independence from Rome. Only under Henry's successor Edward VI (1547-1553) was the reform carried out in depth. In 1549 the Book of Common Prayer and in 1553 the 39 Articles were published. Refugees from all over Europe found protection in England. Under the leadership of Johannes a Lasco the refugee community became a model of Reformed teaching and discipline. But soon the situation changed. Succeeding Edward, Queen Mary (1553-1558) sought to reestablish the Catholic faith. The Protestants had to leave the country, and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer was executed (1556). Following this interlude the long reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), who affirmed the reforms introduced under Edward VI, began. Elizabeth I's primary interest was the supremacy of the crown over the church. The maintenance of the episcopal system was therefore beyond any dispute.

For the Puritans, the Reformation in England had not gone far enough. They questioned the validity of the *via media* between Geneva and Rome favored by the queen and called for more thorough changes. For many, the model of the Scottish Reformation served as inspiration. Their theological and spiritual views were radical. Their primary concern was to give honor and glory to God alone. God's Word had to be the guiding principle in all aspects of life. Though they respected political authority, they left no doubt that they were not prepared to accept any compromise when the integrity of God's Word was at stake. Worship had to follow the prescriptions of the Bible. All external forms, such as rites, images, or vestments, were to be rejected. Puritans were, in particular, suspicious of liturgically ordered worship. Though adamant in their demands, they did not impose their views by force but were prepared to bear the consequences of their protest. Among the Puritans the names of the following deserve to be mentioned: William Perkins (1558-1603), William Ames (1576-1633), and John Robinson (1576-1625). Until the middle of the 17th century the movement was a political force. As a type of spirituality it had continuing influence in subsequent centuries. It has left deep marks on the Reformed tradition in North America.

Congregationalists went a step further. They organized independent congregations. The first to advocate the congregationalist order was Robert Browne (ca.1550-ca.1633), who in 1582 defended in two volumes the principle of the gathered church. The concept was new and represented a deviation from both Calvin's and Melville's teaching. When in 1562 the Frenchman Jean Morély defended the thesis that the local church was to be considered the ultimate authority in the life of the church and therefore that church discipline had to be carried out by the community as a whole, Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva, rejected the idea. He was as unable to agree with the "Morellian democracy" as with the "Tyranny of Rome." In England, the movement was regarded as a threat to the established order and therefore met with fierce repression. John Greenwood, Henry Barrow, and John Penry, the leaders succeeding Browne, were hanged in 1593. Nevertheless, their number and significance increased. Many independents emigrated to the Netherlands and to America. The Mayflower expedition of the Pilgrim Fathers, which resulted in the establishment of colonies in New England, had a deep impact on the history of the church in America. Congregationalism later de-

veloped in various directions — while on the one hand many were deeply engaged in the rising revival movement, others increasingly adopted more liberal positions.

Elizabeth's successors, the Stuarts, James I (1603-1625) and Charles I (1625-1649), had to grapple with all these contesting movements. In Scotland the conflict with the British crown entered into a new stage when, in 1637, the liturgy of the Church of England was to be introduced in Saint Giles in Edinburgh. In response, national leaders declared a National Covenant. Also confronted with resistance in England, in 1640 Charles I finally agreed to call first the "short" and then the "long" parliament. When the king sought to limit its power, the struggle turned into armed conflict. In 1642 the parliament decided to turn its attention to the reform of the church, to abolish the episcopal system, and to call a special synod. Against the declared will of the king the synod convened on July 1, 1643. Its membership consisted of 20 members each of the Upper House and the House of Commons and 121 ministers — Anglicans, Puritans, and Independents. The Synod, called after the place of its meetings the Westminster Synod, quickly set to work and achieved in a relatively short time the revision of the 39 Articles. In the following years the Synod issued guidelines for worship and church order (1645), the Westminster Confession (1647), and two — the shorter and the larger — Catechisms (1648). In 1643 the Scottish leaders had strengthened the authority of both the parliament and the synod by entering the Solemn League and Covenant. In 1647 the Church of Scotland adopted the Westminster Confession, with some amendments, as its confessional basis. It was to become the most widespread of all Reformed confessional writings.

The Westminster Confession follows the teaching of Reformed orthodoxy, stressing the doctrines of predestination and the covenants. Independents had their reservations. In 1648 the Congregationalists in New England formulated their principles of church order in the so-called Cambridge Platform. In England, in 1658, they issued the Savoy Declaration, in which they basically recognized the teaching of the Westminster Confession but developed their own understanding of church order.

In the 17th century Presbyterianism began to develop in Ireland. James I, eager to bring Ireland under English control, consequently implemented a "plantation system" with immigrants from England and southwestern Scotland. Scots settled in the "Plantation of Ulster" in Northern Ireland, taking with them their Presbyterian commitments. Tensions between the Irish and the English grew during the 17th century. In 1641 Irish Catholics revolted and massacred many of the Protestant immigrants. To protect their countrymen the Scots sent troops to strengthen Cromwell's army to suppress the insurrection. Under James II, who was himself Catholic, the Irish Catholics threatened the Protestants in an extended siege of Derry. William of Orange, the new king of England and leader of the Protestant army, lifted the siege and defeated the deposed James II at the battle of the Boyne (1690), a victory which is remembered by the Irish Presbyterians to this day. Problems continued, however. The Anglican Church being recognized as the official church, and Presbyterians were regarded as dissenters. In the 18th century many Irish Presbyterians left the country for North America.

1.2.3. Persecutions and New Horizons

In the course of the 17th century Reformed churches began to take roots in other continents. As result of a French expedition a small Reformed community had come into being in Brazil already in 1557, and in 1562 Huguenots settled in Florida. But the real expansion began in the following century. In the early 17th century several Reformed churches took roots in North America. The emigration of Independents to New England (Plymouth Colony 1620, Massachusetts Bay Colony 1630) has already been mentioned. In 1624 Dutch emigrants founded New York, then called New Amsterdam. Presbyterians followed at the end of the century. Francis Makemie (†1708), an Ulster Scot, settled on the eastern shore of Virginia in 1683, planting churches in Maryland as well as in Virginia. He later played a leading role in organizing the first presbytery in Philadelphia (1706). As the numbers of immigrants increased, this presbytery was transformed into the synod of Philadelphia with three presbyteries — Philadelphia, New Castle, and Long Island (1716). In 1729 the synod adopted the Westminster Confession and the catechisms and required that all members assent to these documents; but the synod also provided for a way of "scrupling," that is, of allowing those who felt the need for it to express disagreement. It declared that the articles of the Westminster Confession dealing with the relation to the civil magistrate were not essential and necessary for faith and life in the American colonies.

Although all major Christian confessions were represented among the immigrants, Christians of Reformed persuasion dominated the early colonization process in the New World. The various streams of immigrants did not, however, come together to form one Reformed church. They all had their particular roots and history, and developed as separate communities with their separate history.

Another important factor in spreading Reformed Christianity internationally was the rise of the Dutch as a leading commercial power. In connection with the activities of the Dutch East India Company (1602), Dutch Reformed congregations were set up in several parts of the world (Caribbean, South Africa [1652], Sri Lanka, Batavia, Formosa). The involvement of the Dutch in northern Brazil (1624-1654) led to the foundation of a Reformed church. Between 1630 and 1648 nineteen presbytery meetings and four synodal assemblies took place in Recife, the political center of the Dutch colony. Fifty pastors served throughout the vast northeastern region; their ministry included Dutch, Portuguese, black, and indigenous people. Generally the Dutch presence had only a limited impact. Their limited understanding of indigenous cultures meant that the efforts of Dutch pastors had no lasting effect. As a rule they ministered to the Europeans, in particular the Dutch, who had settled in the Dutch colonies.

During the period of expansion into other continents, the Reformed churches suffered setbacks in several European countries. The systematic efforts of the Counter-Reformation led to persecutions, especially in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the 17th century the Reformed believers in Hungary became victims of severe repression. Roman Catholicism was ruthlessly reimposed in the country. Measures culminated in the "Bloody Tribunal" of Bratislava (1673). Pas-

tors were forced to renounce their faith; many were expelled or sold as galley slaves.

In 1685 an event took place in France that was to have lasting repercussions on the history of the Reformed churches, not only in France but also in other countries. For years, the Reformed churches in France had been the object of harassment and injustice. In the eyes of Louis XIV the presence of dissident communities seemed to undermine the unity of the nation. In 1685 he finally decided to abrogate the *Edict of Nantes* issued by Henry IV in 1598, which granted the Reformed believers freedom of conscience. Protestant Christians were forced to return to the Catholic faith. Though adherents of the Reformed Church were not allowed to emigrate, more than 200,000 left the country and sought new homes in other countries — in Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, and the like. Many eventually emigrated to other continents, in particular to South Africa. In almost all Reformed churches, "Huguenot" communities were established. In many respects the "Grand Refuge" was a blessing for the Reformed churches. It challenged their sense of solidarity and brought a new quality to their life. The experience of the French Reformed minority church made manifest what it meant to be a conscious member of the church.

The second part of the 17th century marks the beginning of a new period not only for the Reformed churches but for the whole of Christianity. With the Enlightenment new modes of thinking became dominant. Knowledge was to be based on the criteria of reason and reasonable deduction. While the Reformers of the 16th century had taken for granted God's revelation in Christ, now no truth could be admitted that could not be proved by reason. While the Reformers started from the recognition that human beings, blinded by disobedience and sin, were unable to know God through the capacities of their reason and had therefore to rely on God's redeeming Word, the Enlightenment was guided by a new confidence in the ability of human beings to discover the truth. Generally, philosophers of the Enlightenment did not question the existence of God and the validity of Christ's teaching. But they based their acceptance of the fundamental Christian doctrines on deduction by reason.

Traditional Reformed teaching was called into question primarily in two areas — predestination and the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. The doctrine of predestination seemed to deny the capacity of human beings to take responsibility for their lives. God's initiative occupies the center; human beings are to glorify God's name. The claim that the Scriptures were divinely inspired and therefore to be accepted in all areas of life as ultimate authority seemed to preclude the free exercise of human reason. Increasingly, in the course of the 18th century, the Enlightenment stressed the historical character of the biblical books. Written by human authors at a particular time and in a particular historical context, they witnessed to the truth. Their truth claims had to be verified.

Though the Synod of Dordrecht had clearly rejected all proposals to attenuate the doctrine of predestination, the criticism increased in subsequent years. For the orthodox mind, the Enlightenment undermined the Christian message. A last attempt to defend the integrity of orthodox Reformed teaching was made in Swit-

zerland in 1675 through the publication of the *Formula Consensus Helvetica,* which reiterated orthodox teaching. It met with only limited approval, and a generation later the teachers in most Swiss theological schools sought ways to reconcile the affirmations based on revelation and the Reformed confessions with the demands of reason ("Enlightened Orthodoxy": Turretini, Ostervald, Werenfels). Gradually, the significance of the Reformed confession diminished. Reformed theology became more and more open to free research.

Orthodox positions were also increasingly shaken by the call for a more personal piety. In all parts of the Protestant world movements arose placing primary emphasis on personal conversion, spiritual renewal and sharing in fellowship — Pietism in Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, Methodism in Britain, and the Great Awakening among the American colonialists. Mere acceptance of the correct doctrine on justification by faith was not sufficient. To be saved Jesus Christ had to touch and to transform the heart. True faith had to transform life and to bear visible fruits. In Germany the movement started with Lutheran Philipp J. Spener (1635-1705) and his famous book *Pia desideria,* published in 1675. The most creative representative of the movement was Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), the founder of the Moravian church (Brüderunität) in Herrnhut. Among the Pietists in the Netherlands Jean de Labadie (1610-1674), a former Jesuit, Theodor Undereyck (1635-1693), and Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769), a layman and author of outstanding hymns, deserve special mention. The Methodist movement in England was largely inspired by Reformed theology and had a strong impact on the Presbyterian Church both in England and America. George Whitefield (1714-1770) especially had a considerable influence on the Reformed constituency in America during his colonial itineracy. The main representatives of the Great Awakening in America were Gilbert Tennent (1703-1764) and Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), both powerful preachers of personal conversion. The movement led to a temporary split in the nascent Presbyterian Church of America. For two decades the Presbyterian Synod was divided into the "New Side" and "Old Side" churches. In 1758 re-union was achieved.

Increasingly, in the course of the 18th century, Reformed churches began to advocate tolerance in society. The experience of Reformed minorities and especially the expulsion in France led to a reflection on the rights of minorities. Traditionally, where the Reformation had been magisterial in character, dissidents had no place in society. The Reformed churches' attitude toward religious minorities, in particular the Anabaptists, belongs to the darker chapters of their history. Both in Zurich and in Berne Anabaptists were persecuted or expelled; the repression continued even into the 18th century. To escape hardship, many emigrated to North America. But in the course of the 18th century the mentality began to change; in some areas, in particular in the Netherlands, Germany, and North America, the principles of religious freedom and "human rights" began to be accepted and promoted.

At the end of the 18th century, the Reformed churches found themselves in a deeply contradictory situation. Reformed teaching as it had developed since the Reformation was called into question from many sides. How were the Reformed

churches to respond? On the one hand the need for new interpretations and departures was felt. The challenges of the new era needed to be met, and they could not be met within the framework of Reformed orthodoxy. On the other hand, continuity with the past had to be maintained. As basic affirmations of the Christian faith were denied, faithfulness to the heritage of the Reformers and the confessions which had sought to respond to their message was required. Ever since the end of the 18th century the "Reformed tradition" had this double face. On the one hand, there were Reformed Christians who regarded themselves as being on the way, from horizon to horizon, responding to the questions of their time on the basis of the Scriptures and of the witness of the Reformation, affirming but also correcting and reinterpreting the teaching of the past. On the other hand, there were those who regarded the teaching of the Reformed confessions as definitive and unalterable and were therefore determined to "conserve" and protect it against new modes of thinking. Ever since the end of the 18th century, the Reformed tradition has been characterized by the struggle between progressive and conservative approaches. Again and again, Reformed churches have split along this dividing line.

1.2.4. The 19th Century

In the course of the 19th century the profile of the Reformed tradition changed considerably. New interpretations of the Christian heritage became dominant.

Of greatest significance in this respect is Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Reformed preacher at the Charité in Berlin (1798) and later Professor of Systematic Theology at the universities of Halle (1802) and Berlin (1807). In his theology he sought to develop an alternative to the rationalism of the Enlightenment. He made an attempt to understand Christian teaching as the expression of true religion. Religious experience is part of human existence. Christian teaching has arisen from religious experience and in order to be plausible needs to be retranslated into it. Humanity reaches its fullness in religious experience, in the awareness of being fundamentally dependent on God and the universe. In his theology Schleiermacher sought to show that Christianity is the most adequate expression of this basic experience. Revelation in Christ basically means the recognition of true religion, and redemption the transition from a limited to a more complete understanding of God. Schleiermacher places strong emphasis on the significance of the church. True religion creates community; the church is the place where religious experience is cultivated and developed. Throughout his life Schleiermacher was not only a theological teacher but exercised his ministry as preacher with conviction. His theology remained influential throughout the 19th century, especially in Europe.

Another significant development was the birth of the Revival Movement around the turn of the century. In many respects the revival was the continuation of the 18th century movements already mentioned — Pietism, Methodism, and the Great Awakening. Faced with the rise of anti-Christian forces, the Revival Movement sought to reconquer souls for Christ. Often their message included rationalist

elements, e.g., apologetic attempts to "prove" or make plausible revealed truth by rational arguments. From the beginning the movement was characterized by a strong commitment to evangelism and mission. The two brothers Robert (1764-1846) and James Alexander Haldane (1768-1851) belonged to the founders of the movement in Scotland. On the basis of a theology which combined a commonsense philosophy with pietist perspectives they called for the renewal of the Church of Scotland. Robert Haldane traveled widely on the European continent and had a decisive influence on the Revival Movement in Geneva and France. In 1797 James Alexander founded the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home. The movement swept through the European countries and had its parallel also in America. Its most famous representative in the United States was Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875).

These developments in theology and spirituality had varying impacts on the Reformed churches. In some places they contributed to unions of Protestant churches, in others they were the cause of new divisions.

In Germany the jubilee of the Reformation in 1817 became the occasion for the Evangelical churches — Lutheran and Reformed — to form united churches. Convinced that "the differences between the two streams of the Reformation did not touch upon the essential content of religion," the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm II, called on the Protestant churches in his territories to unite. Initially, the response was enthusiastic. In the course of a few years the churches in several German states joined the movement of union, e.g., Hassia in 1817-18, Baden in 1821, and Kurhessen-Waldeck in 1821. Controversy broke out when, in 1822, the Prussian king proposed a common liturgical order (Agendenstreit). In certain areas the move was strongly opposed, and it took some time and much political wisdom to maintain peace in the churches of the Prussian territory.

In America a new situation had arisen with independence from Britain. On the whole the Reformed community, especially the Presbyterian churches, had supported the movement toward independence. John Witherspoon (1732-1794), a Presbyterian pastor, even helped to shape the Declaration of Independence (1776). The new era brought new challenges to the churches. They had to organize themselves within the new nation. Some groups merged, e.g., two Presbyteries related to Scotland, the Associate Presbytery (formed in 1753) and the Reformed Presbytery (formed in 1774), united in 1782 to become the Associate Reformed Synod. Presbyterians gave themselves a national structure in 1788 by forming the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA). Comparable processes took place in other Reformed churches. At the same time the churches had to come to terms with the general movement to the western part of the continent. New churches had to be set up. The challenge of the "frontier" led to collaborative efforts but also to many tensions. Several splits took place. Deeply affected by the revival experiences in Kentucky, groups of Presbyterians in the Cumberland region wanted to engage in a more effective ministry on the western frontier; their critique of the Westminster Confession eventually led to a split which resulted in the formation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (1810).

The foundation of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) is also part of

the same context. The church emerged on the frontier, then western Pennsylvania and Kentucky, in the years 1800-1840. Its founders were Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) and Barton Stone (1772-1844), and the two movements initiated by them united in the 1830s. In conflict with a conservative Presbyterian community, Campbell decided to go his own way. He appealed to Protestants of all traditions to form a church exclusively based on the biblical Word of God. The Disciples quickly grew but suffered several splits in subsequent times.

On the European continent, especially in Switzerland, Reformed churches were marked by controversies over the validity of the Reformed confessions. The authority of the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* had already been rejected in the 18th century. In the 19th century the controversies centered on the role to be attributed to the Second Helvetic Confession and, finally, even the Creeds. The question arose especially in state churches, which claimed to represent the whole of the population and therefore had to take into account a wide range of religious and intellectual sensitivities. The abolition of the binding character of confessions and creeds by majority votes sharply raised the question of the independence of the church from the state. The debates on the status of confessions resulted in the formation of a number of Free churches.

The church of Scotland was especially shaken by the debates on the relationship of church and state. It had already been the main issue in the 18th century. The controversies centered on the question of the approval of the election of pastors by the congregation. In 1733, in protest against the claims of the state and against the subservience of the church, the first secession took place (Ebenezer Erskine), and in 1752 a second secession (Thomas Gillespie) followed. In the 19th century a further split occurred. The revival movement had led to a renewal in the Church of Scotland. Under the leadership of Thomas Chalmers the "Evangelicals" sought to give increased significance to local communities. In protest against the rights of patrons to name pastors, they finally decided to leave the Church of Scotland. In 1843, 470 pastors founded the Free Church of Scotland.

The most important development for the future of the family of Reformed churches was the birth of the missionary movement. Mission had not been a central theme of the Reformation. While Roman Catholics, especially the Jesuits, engaged in missionary efforts from the 16th century, the attention of the Reformers concentrated on the proclamation of God's Word and on the renewal of the existing church. It took the Reformed churches almost three centuries to discover the relevance of the missionary mandate. In the 18th and 19th centuries, coinciding with the colonial period, intense missionary activity developed. In a few decades the Gospel was brought to many parts of the world. Gradually the Reformed tradition became a worldwide reality. The breakthrough was due to Pietism and the Revival Movement. Among the pioneers, Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, the founder of the Moravian community, holds a special position. He took the initiative for starting missionary efforts, especially in the Caribbean. At the end of the 18th and in the early 19th centuries centers of missionary outreach were founded in several countries: in England, the London Missionary Society (1795); in Holland, the Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap (1797); in South Africa, the South African

Mission Society (1799); in the USA, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (1810); in Switzerland and Germany, the Basel Mission (1835); in France, the Mission évangélique de Paris (1822), to mention only a few. Perspectives differed. Most mission societies saw their primary task as bringing the Gospel to the peoples of the world and minimized, at least initially, the importance of links with the churches of their own countries. Others, e.g., the South African Mission Society, sought an explicit mandate from their church. More and more, in the course of the 19th century, mission societies established closer links with the denominations to which they belonged. But the original impulse of the Revival Movement found expression again and again in the foundation of new non-denominational missionary enterprises. Important examples were the China Inland Mission founded by J. Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) and the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM, 1893, since 1989 called Society for International Ministries).

The missionary movement resulted in the founding of churches in all continents. Initially efforts were principally directed to countries in Africa and Asia. In the second part of the 19th century, mainly through efforts from America, Reformed and Presbyterian churches were also established in Latin America. Many of these churches bear the characteristics of the Revival Movement. As a rule, missionary efforts were carried out without much concern for thorough coordination. In many countries, therefore, they led to the foundation of separate churches within the same country. Often splits which had occurred in the home county were reproduced on the mission field.

In the 19th century social witness increasingly became part of the churches' life and activities. A new sense of freedom led many church people to join the struggle against slavery. The issue of whether or not holding of slaves could be reconciled with the biblical witness was hotly debated. Controversies led in 1866 to a split in the Presbyterian Church of the United States into North and South. As the industrial development advanced, the Reformed churches were increasingly challenged by the living conditions of workers. They had to respond to the socialist movement and its vision of a better future. For a long time, the attention of the churches had been confined to alleviating the situation of the poor by relief work. But gradually the awareness grew that their witness had to address the root causes of injustice. Presbyterian witness in the United States was to go in two directions. Presbyterians were numerous among the entrepreneurs responsible for the "Gilded Age" in the USA. In 1900 Andrew Carnegie published the *Gospel of Wealth* in which he defended individualism, private property, competition, accumulation, and plain hard work; he also promoted philanthropy and argued that the rich should not die rich; wealth was to be used as a trust from God. Others, though emphasizing the same values, were more critical of societal developments. Charles Hodge, of Princeton Theological Seminary (1797-1878), wrote on the need to deal with human misery, unrest, and violence caused by industrialization and urbanization. In Europe in the second part of the 19th century more and more theologians and church leaders began to recognize socialism as a sign of the times, pointing the church to the God-given mandate to contribute to the struggle for justice. Among the Reformed representatives of this movement two stand out — Hermann

Kutter (1863-1931) and Leonhard Ragaz (1868-1945). Responsibility for society became an integral part of the witness of many Reformed churches.

The 19th century marked the beginnings of the ecumenical movement. As horizons were widened by the missionary movement and the challenges of the communicating the Gospel in the modern world became more pressing, the divided state of the church appeared increasingly intolerable. The message of reconciliation had no credibility as long as the churches themselves were opposed to one another. A process of reconciliation was required. Among the pioneers of the ecumenical movement, Philip Schaff deserves to be mentioned. Born in Switzerland, he moved in 1841 to the United States and became a leading representative of the Mercersburg School. In the name of the catholicity of Christ and the church he denounced, in a famous and controversial address, the sectarian spirit of the Protestant churches in the New World. He identified rationalism and individualism as the main reasons for the fragmentation of the church. To overcome the trend towards divisions, the place of the church as God's gift had to be more clearly affirmed. Schaff was among the founders of the Evangelical Alliance in 1846 and later, in 1875, of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches throughout the World holding the Presbyterian Order, two attempts to bring together Protestant churches of the various countries. A parallel effort led, in 1892, to the foundation of the International Congregational Council.

1.2.5. Two World Wars and Their Aftermath

With World War I, a new period opened in the history of the Reformed churches. The confidence which had characterized Europe in the 19th century broke down. In many countries World War I meant the end of the "Christian society." Faced with a bewildering variety of philosophical and intellectual approaches, the church had to learn to rely anew on its own resources. The years after the war saw the rise of dialectical theology (Karl Barth, Eduard Thurneysen, Emil Brunner) — a passionate plea to recognize God's majesty and otherness in the face of all attempts to encapsulate God in human schemes and projects. Dialectical theology rejected both pietist and liberal theologies and developed an understanding of Christian faith based on God's revelation in Christ as witnessed to in the Bible. Dialectical theology revived the message of the Reformers. No salvation is possible for sinful human beings except through God's own initiative. At the same time, faced with the spiritual and material destruction of society, religious-socialist thinking gained new strength in the churches.

The United States gradually rose to a dominant position in both world politics and economics, and the churches in the United States began to play a more determinative role on the world scene. Unlike in Europe, there was in the United States considerable optimism about the future. In 1902, characteristically, the Presbyterian Church of the United States adopted an amendment of the Westminster Confession which reads as follows: "God in infinite and perfect love, having provided in the covenant of grace . . . a way of life and salvation, sufficient for and adapted to the whole

lost race of man, does freely offer this salvation to all men and women in the Gospel. In the Gospel God declares his love for the world and his desire that all men should be saved." The country had to fulfill a God-given task with the whole of humanity. The experience of World Wars I and II confirmed this conviction. Missionary activity intensified. Developments in the United States increasingly affected the life and witness of the Reformed churches worldwide.

Three distinct but nevertheless connected movements in the last century deserve special mention: Fundamentalism, Evangelicalism, and Pentecostalism.

Fundamentalism developed in North America in the early years of the century. The term refers to fundamental convictions which must be held indisputably by Christian believers. It was first used in a series of pamphlets *The Fundamentals,* which were published from 1910 to 1915. The central convictions concern the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. In many respects Fundamentalism shares the outlook of the Revival Movement; but, generally, a much stronger emphasis is placed on the second coming of Jesus Christ. An apocalyptic interpretation of history dominates. The church is seen as the group of the elect who are called to meet the Lord and to reign with him in the millennium. Proclaiming God's word means to denounce human sin and to withdraw from fellowship with the unbelieving world. The movement spread into all branches of Protestantism in America and also into other parts of the world. Given the strong emphasis on the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture, it found a particularly favorable response in Reformed churches. In the 1940s a Presbyterian, Carl McIntire, became one of the prominent leaders of the movement. To counteract the witness of the Federal Council of Churches in the USA, he started the Council of American Churches and, a few years later (1948), took the initiative for the foundation of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC). The movement eventually became the cause of many splits in Reformed Churches. Part of the ICCC message was an unconditional rejection of the Roman Catholic Church, of the ecumenical movement, and, in particular, of communism. With the radical political changes occurring in the 1980s and 1990s the movement lost much of its vigor.

Very different perspectives are represented by the Evangelical movement. It can be regarded as the true heir of the Revival movement. Committed to the authority of the biblical Word and to the missionary mandate, it sought to maintain the integrity of the churches' message. It rejected liberal views that had been adopted by theologians and which, in their view, undermined the life and witness of the churches. It viewed with suspicion the churches' political and social activities and warned against the dilution of the central message of the church by secondary concerns. After World War II the movement gained in strength. More and more institutions of evangelical inspiration came into being, and gradually the movement in the United States also became politically influential. In 1960s and 1970s it established itself more and more at the international level as well. In 1974 the International Conference on World Evangelism in Lausanne gave the impetus for new evangelistic and missionary efforts. In many respects, the movement has become an integral part of the Reformed churches. It appealed especially to those in the Reformed pietist tradition.

Pentecostalism emerged as a distinct movement in the early years of the century. Based on older spiritual traditions, the movement emphasized the personal experience of the Holy Spirit in baptism and, generally, in worship. William Joseph Seymour (1870-1922), the son of a black slave, is regarded as its founder. He was at the origin of the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles (1906) which brought together people of very different backgrounds — black, white, rich, and poor. In the course of the century these small beginnings grew into a worldwide movement. Pentecostal churches sprang up in many countries. The message was particularly appealing to the lower classes. The experience of the Spirit gave self-respect to marginalized people. The movement also had a considerable impact on existing churches. Pentecostal spirituality constituted a challenge to inherited forms of piety. What place could be attributed to the experience of the Holy Spirit? While in some countries Pentecostalism was successfully integrated into the life and witness of the churches, splits occurred in others. In several countries the Pentecostal revival led to the establishment of new Reformed churches.

A crucial period for the Reformed churches was the confrontation with the regime of National Socialism in Germany in the 1930s. Nazi ideology had made deep inroads into the German churches. The authenticity of the church and its witness was at stake. To clarify the situation, mainly through the inspiration of Karl Barth, an extraordinary synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany was called in 1934 that adopted the *Barmen Declaration*, a text that clearly rejected in six "theses" any compromises with Nazi ideology. The declaration resulted in the formation of a "confessing church" (Bekenntniskirche). In subsequent years many of its members were arrested by the Nazis and some executed. For the Reformed churches the experience of Barmen was important for several reasons. In the first place the declaration was important because it gave tangible expression to the resistance against an anti-Christian regime. But it had wider implications for their witness. For the first time, it had become apparent that the period of confessions was not closed. In confronting the challenges of today, new acts of confessing could take place. The Barmen Declaration was more than a statement concerning the present situation; it was an attempt, in a critical situation, to gather the church around the truth of the Gospel. It was the basis for a confessing church. Without abrogating past confessions, the Barmen Declaration placed them within the perspective of responsible confessing in the present. For many Reformed churches, this experience was to serve as a model in subsequent years.

The persecution and annihilation of the Jewish population by the Nazi regime and the foundation of the Jewish state raised fundamental questions about the relationship between the Jewish people and the church. The debate was conducted with particular vigor in a number of Reformed churches, especially in the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, and later also in the United States. How could anti-Semitism reach such atrocious forms? To what extent does Christianity share in the responsibility for it? Are anti-Jewish attitudes perhaps connected with anti-Jewish interpretations of Scripture? Does Christianity not need to recognize its fundamental dependence on the Jewish tradition? Several Reformed churches began to rethink their relation to the Jewish people. To avoid thinking about the

Jews as an item of Christian theology, these churches sought direct contact through dialogues. In several countries Christian-Jewish fellowships were founded.

After World War I the development of the ecumenical movement accelerated. Confronted, on the one hand, with the devastation of the War and, on the other, with increased interaction among the nations, churches began to recognize the need for a new manifestation of the universality of the church. The division of the churches on the mission fields was the subject of a series of conferences culminating in the Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910), which led to the foundation of the International Missionary Council. After World War I the ecumenical movement found expression in the two movements of "Faith and Order" and "Life and Work." From the beginning, Reformed Christians were active participants in both movements. In 1939 the unification of these two movements was agreed upon, and after World War II the World Council of Churches was solemnly founded in Amsterdam (1948). The first two General Secretaries of the Council were Willem A. Visser 't Hooft (1948-1966) of the Netherlands Reformed Church and Eugene C. Blake (1966-1972) of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA.

The new ecumenical fellowship found a mixed reception in the Reformed churches. Many Reformed churches welcomed the new departure and joined the organization. Of the founding members about one third were Reformed, Presbyterian, or Congregationalist. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches promoted the ecumenical movement and explicitly encouraged its member churches to participate in it. It even went a step further. Whatever could be done through the World Council of Churches, in the context of the wider ecumenical family, should not duplicated by the Alliance. To strengthen the collaboration, it decided to move its headquarters from London to Geneva.

Other Churches viewed the World Council of Churches with suspicion. A number of Reformed Churches, mainly of Dutch origin and strongly committed to the classical Reformed confessions, set up the Reformed Ecumenical Synod in 1946 as an international platform for an unambiguous Reformed witness. Much more aggressive opposition was launched by fundamentalist circles. One of the main purposes of the International Council of Christian Churches, founded by Carl McIntire in 1948, was to denounce the attempts of the ecumenical movement as betrayal and apostasy. For many Reformed churches participation in the ecumenical movement became a source of controversy and in some cases even division.

1.2.6. Recent Developments

World War II resulted in the defeat of Nazi Germany. But after the victory the conflict between the allied nations of the West and the communist regime of the Soviet Union reemerged. The armistice arrangements divided Europe into two spheres of influence and soon the confrontation of the two superpowers — the USA and its European allies and the USSR and its satellites — became the deter-

mining factor in world politics. The conflict also involved the newly independent nations of Asia and Africa, the "Third World," as it was called since the Bandoeng conference of 1955. For Reformed churches the conflict became the source of many tensions, misunderstandings, and suspicions. What witness were the Reformed churches to bear with regard to Communism? Many advocated a radical rejection of Communism. Others, among them Karl Barth, promoted the idea of an independent third way between the radical rejection and the alliance with Communist régimes. While there was no doubt that Marxist ideology was incompatible with the Christian faith, the Christian mind should not be blinded to the injustice inherent in the capitalist system. The World Council of Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches adopted this nuanced approach and were, therefore, the target of violent criticisms from more conservative circles. In some countries the tensions led to disruption and splits. Much of the international activity of the ICCC was based on an unconditional anti-Communist stance.

World War II also meant the end of the colonial period, and the conception of mission as a civilizing arm of colonial expansion also ended. In the decades after the War not only countries but also a large number of churches in Asia and Africa gained independence. In some cases the autonomy of the church preceded, in other cases it followed, the independence of the state. With independence came the need to develop indigenous leadership and become self-supporting. Reformed missions of all stripes carried as an ideal the early development of indigenous leadership in mission churches, but the reality often lagged behind the ideal. In many countries, indigenous leadership had been recruited at an early date and the churches were therefore prepared to take on responsibility for their own ministry. In some countries, such as India, Reformed churches united with other Reformed churches or with churches of other traditions, while in others separate, autonomous churches continued to live side by side. Some churches have become self-supporting. More and more churches in Asia and Africa are engaged in missionary work not only within their own country but also abroad. Others continue to look to a "mother church" or mission agency to provide personnel and finances. The Reformed presence in many former mission fields is deeply divided today.

While there has been a fundamental change in the understanding of the missionary mandate in most "historical" Reformed churches, the more conservative Reformed churches continue in their evangelistic commitment. In the course of the last decades, a large number of small churches have been founded in many countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Reformed churches that maintain strong separation in their home country often feel it necessary to establish separate churches on their mission fields as well.

Recent years have seen a phenomenal growth of churches in many parts of the world. While Reformed churches in Western countries seem to be on the decline, churches in countries recently touched by the Gospel have considerably expanded. The younger churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America vastly outnumber the historical "white" churches in Europe, North America, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Three countries deserve special mention in this respect: Indonesia, Korea, and Nigeria. In all three countries, Reformed Christianity

experienced phenomenal growth in the last few decades, so that they now have the largest Reformed communities in the world. A striking phenomenon is the rapid growth of Reformed Christianity in East Asian countries — Korea, China, and Taiwan. Though Chinese Christians regard themselves as postdenominational, the Reformed tradition is strongly present in their midst. There seems to be a particular affinity between the Reformed tradition and the Confucianist world.

The period since 1960 has been a time of particular ecumenical challenges. From 1962 to 1965 the Second Vatican Council introduced far-reaching reforms in the Roman Catholic Church. Many of the reforms introduced by the 16th century Reformation — the use of the vernacular, the participation of the faithful in the life of the church, the celebration of the Eucharist with bread *and* wine, and in particular the regular preaching of the Word — were now accepted. While the Roman Catholic Church had earlier stood aloof from the ecumenical movement, it now decided to engage in dialogue and discussion. The debate, which had been broken at the time of the Reformation, could now be resumed and carried further. In many parts of the world new relations have developed. Some Reformed churches have explicitly modified their teaching by declaring obsolete certain anti-Roman sentences in the Reformed confessions. Many Reformed churches remain reserved, if not hostile, to sustained contacts with the Roman Catholic Church. The relationship with the Roman Catholic Church continues to be a bone of contention among Reformed churches.

Several important ecumenical developments took place in the '70s. In 1970 the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the International Congregational Council decided to unite to form the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational). From the doctrinal point of view the two traditions had always been close to one another. On issues of church order, a rapprochement had taken place in more recent times. In several countries, Presbyterian and Congregational churches had already united. It therefore seemed appropriate to join forces also at the international level.

Another significant ecumenical advance was the adoption of the Leuenberg Agreement in 1973, which allowed Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches of Europe to declare full communion. Without denying their particular confessional traditions they were able to formulate a common understanding of the Gospel and the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, thus opening the door to full, mutual recognition. A rift that had started in Marburg (1529) and, despite all efforts, could not be overcome in the 16th century, was now seen as a dispute that does not correspond to present positions of the churches on both sides. In 1997 a similar agreement was adopted in the United States.

A particular test for the Reformed churches was the attitude to the apartheid system in South Africa. For a long time the Afrikaans-speaking white Reformed churches in South Africa supported the system. In the eyes of the victims of apartheid, Reformed Christianity was on the side of oppression. The black and Colored churches that had come into existence through Reformed missionary efforts called on the worldwide family to take sides in the conflict. The debates on apartheid led to considerable tensions. In the initial stages of apartheid the response remained am-

biguous. Some European and US churches explicitly supported the Dutch Reformed Churches. Others hesitated to take a clear position. Gradually, largely through the insistence of the churches in Africa, the Reformed attitude became more definite. In 1982 the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches declared the *status confessionis* with regard to apartheid and accordingly suspended the white Dutch Reformed member churches from the exercise of membership rights.

Another issue that increasingly preoccupies Reformed churches since World War II is the place of women in the church. Since the late 19th century both Christian and secular women's organizations have militated for equal rights of men and women in church and society. But in recent decades, more radical questions are being raised. To what degree has Christian teaching contributed to discrimination against women? For centuries, the church has affirmed the leading role of men. The biblical witness seemed to warrant the subordination of women to men. Do we have to admit that the Bible itself reflects in part the thinking of a patriarchal society? How are the biblical passages on the roles of men and women in the church to be interpreted today? The debates on the issue found expression in controversies over inclusive language, the participation of women in decision-making, and the ordination of women to the ministry. In a relatively short time a large number of Reformed churches came to the conclusion that the basic message of the Bible called for the admission of women to the exercise of *all* ministries in the church. A considerable number of churches continue, equally on biblical grounds, to refuse their ordination. For some, the issue has church-dividing significance.

The quest for inclusive communities has brought to the fore still other concerns. In recent years the issue of homosexuality, in particular the question of the place of homosexuals in the church and in the ministries of the church, has been hotly debated in some churches, especially in the industrialized countries; the discussion is likely to expand in the future and may prove to be divisive in many Reformed churches.

In the last decades, faced with challenges from all sides, the churches have increasingly felt the need to rethink their heritage and to express it in modern terms and language. Several churches have issued, on the basis of careful and protracted conversations, new contemporary confessions of faith. The Barmen Declaration had shown that the classical Reformed confessions need not necessarily be understood as the last word. The church could still today respond to God's Word through common statements of faith. In the '50s churches in Great Britain issued new confessions, and in the '60s and '70s several churches in North America followed. A particularly instructive example was "Confession 1967" of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, a confession bearing in its title the date of its proclamation and thus indicating that it was to be considered the expression at a particular moment of history. Even more important were the attempts at formulating new confessions in the younger churches: Cuba, Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan, and South Africa.

The Reformed family today can be described by two terms — dynamism and diversity. In many parts of the world Reformed churches are rapidly growing. There is much creativity in theological thinking, in mission, and in social involve-

ment. At the same time, the diversity among Reformed churches is such that it is difficult to make out elements that are common to all. The diverse forms and expressions represent an immense richness but evidently also lead to controversies, estrangement, and splits. In many places, dynamism becomes paralyzed by unresolved conflicts of the past. To allow for real new departures, a new sense of communion needs to be born — not to kill diversity but to relate churches to one another through a new commitment to mutual understanding and communication.

1.3. THE REFORMED HERITAGE

What is it that characterizes Reformed churches today? The answer is not obvious. The universe of the Reformed churches cannot easily be described, and the descriptions will differ according to the particular background of the authors. The following attempt does not claim to give a complete and definitive exposition but names certain common emphases as well as unresolved issues within the Reformed heritage.

1.3.1. Christus Solus

The Reformed churches emphasize with special passion Jesus Christ as the only and exclusive source of salvation. Calvin writes in his *Institutes*:

"When we see that the whole sum of our salvation, and every single part of it, are comprehended in Christ, we must beware of deriving even the minutest portion of it from any other quarter. If we seek salvation we are taught by the very name of Jesus that he possesses it. If we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, we shall find them in his unction; strength in his government; purity in his conception; indulgence in his nativity, in which he was made like us in all respects, in order that he might learn to sympathize with us; if we seek redemption, we shall find it in his passion; acquittal in his condemnation; remission in the curse of his cross; satisfaction in his sacrifice; purification in his blood; reconciliation in his descent to hell; mortification of the flesh in his sepulchre; newness of life in his resurrection; immortality also in his resurrection; the inheritance of a celestial kingdom in his entrance into heaven; protection, security, and the abundant supply of all blessings in his kingdom; secure anticipation of judgment in the power of judging committed to him." (2,16, 19)

1.3.2. God to Be Glorified in All Things

For the Reformed churches the first commandment is fundamental: "I am the LORD your God . . . you shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:2-3). Human beings have abandoned God and do not have the capacity to restore communion with God. For salvation, they depend entirely on God's initiative. Hav-

ing sinned and been caught in sin, they cannot expect to be saved. They can only turn to God's grace and give praise for the gift of the new life. The doctrine of predestination has its ultimate root in this emphasis on God's exclusive initiative. Some Reformed confessions go so far as teaching that the effectiveness of Christ's saving work is limited to those whom God has chosen to save. The doctrine of predestination has been the subject of controversies among Reformed churches. Whatever the position taken, two points are not to be forgotten. The doctrine of predestination is not meant to exalt the sense of election but rather to underline the mysterious character of God's dealings with humanity; and it does not reduce the urgency of proclaiming and sharing the good news of salvation to *all* people.

1.3.3. Salvation and Trinitarian Thinking

Reformed teaching affirms Trinitarian teaching — God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God the Creator of all things is the same God who became human in Jesus Christ and fulfills redemption through the power of the Holy Spirit. Reformed theology places particular emphasis on the saving and healing power of the Holy Spirit. In Reformed theology the concept of covenant and covenants has often served to affirm the same truth. Throughout history God's covenant takes ever new forms, but God remains the same God leading humanity and the whole creation to the fulfillment in the coming kingdom.

1.3.4. The Authority of the Bible

All Reformed confessions converge in stressing the authority of the Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testaments. The Scriptures are the source of all decisive knowledge and have to serve as guide in the life of the church. The emphasis on the Bible has had a varied history in the Reformed tradition. In the first period of the Reformation, the Bible was used as the criterion for distinguishing the authentic Christian witness from the distortions of history. Increasingly, beginning with the First Helvetic Confession (1536), the authority of the Bible was affirmed as the unique and all-sufficient source of truth. More and more emphasis was placed on the verbal inspiration of Scriptures. Calvin developed the concept of the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the Bible and today — with readers and listeners of God's Word. Only through the power of the Spirit can the meaning of the Bible be properly understood. Increasingly, the authority of the inspired words of the Bible was stressed in isolation from the community. The recognition of verbal inspiration became the test of orthodoxy. In response to historical-critical biblical research, however, many Reformed churches began to rethink and revise their understanding. They began to see the Bible as a book that witnesses to God's great deeds in creating and redeeming the world; as a response of the community of faith to God's deeds to be read, interpreted, and acted out today by the church. Recent Re-

formed confessions deal with the authority of Scriptures, as a rule, under the articles on the Holy Spirit and the church.

1.3.5. Confessions of Faith

Reformed churches have formulated confessions of faith to affirm and to give account of the truth of the Gospel. They do not possess the same authority as the Bible but are regarded as "subordinate standards." In principle the church must remain open to new insights gained from the witness of the Bible. There has never been one single Reformed confession. In the early 16th century several confessions existed side by side; they were supplemented in the second part of the century by more comprehensive confessions. Different "generations" of confessions can thus be distinguished. Since the Barmen Declaration (1934), a wide range of new confessions has been formulated, some by progressive, some by more conservative churches. Today the Reformed family is faced with a variety of voices and has the task of bringing the various positions into a constructive dialogue. The passionate struggle for the right response to God's Word belongs to the characteristics of the Reformed family. Diversity without dialogue is bound to harden divisions.

1.3.6. The Church

God calls people to be the church, God's people, Christ's body, and the temple of the Spirit. Throughout history there have been the chosen people who glorify God's name. Now, the church is the place where God's liberating word is announced and can be responded to. There is no way to determine the borderlines of the true church. Ultimately God alone knows the true members of the church. But the church as it exists in history must not be despised. To listen to God's Word and to respond to it we depend on the community; its message can only be proclaimed through the joint efforts of all. Calvin calls the church the mother who nourishes the faithful on the pilgrimage of their life. Justified through God's saving work, we are called to live in the church a life inspired by thankfulness. Justification leads to sanctification.

1.3.7. Prayer and Worship

The first response to God's gift of grace is prayer and praise. Both individually and as a community we are called to glorify God. Worship is primarily a corporate act. It is the occasion to preach the Word and to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Calvin was of the opinion that the Lord's Supper was to be celebrated regularly every Sunday. He stressed the need to receive the signs of bread and wine. As in medieval times the mass had included communion only exceptionally, he suggested that, as a first step, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated four times a year. How-

ever his ultimate goal, the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper, was never realized.

The central elements of corporate worship are prayer, proclamation, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Everything detracting attention from these essentials was to be removed from worship. There was, in particular, in the Reformation a clearly negative attitude to images. The Reformed churches took seriously the second commandment. The line was taken even further in the Puritan movement. All external forms were to be rejected. Worship had to be "in spirit and in truth." While Calvin had basically followed the order of the mass, Puritans claimed that no form not explicitly indicated by the Bible should be admitted. Some churches were not prepared to allow hymns other than the psalms. Today there is a wide variety of worship styles in the Reformed churches. A debate on the appropriate forms of worship is urgently required.

1.3.8. Discipleship and Discipline

Justification and sanctification are two sides of the same coin. Communion with Christ is to bear fruits in the practice of love. The law is not only meant to demonstrate our inability to fulfill God's will and demands. It is also a guide for a renewed life *(tertius usus legis)*. Renewed life, in the eyes of the Reformers, especially Calvin, is not only a personal but a communal matter. Through discipleship the community is being built up. Failure in Christian life leads to the destruction of relationships and thus to disintegration. Therefore, not only preaching and the celebration of the sacraments but also the exercise of discipline are characteristics of the true church. Today Reformed churches differ on the form discipline is to take. Only a minority of Reformed churches continue to exercise an institutional form of discipline. For the majority, especially in the secularized countries of the West, discipline is left to the interaction of members of the congregation.

1.3.9. Ministries and Church Order

Generally, in Reformed churches much attention is devoted to the structures of the church. In his *Institutes* Calvin made the attempt to propose an order of ministries that was in harmony with the directions set out in the Bible. According to his view, four ministries were necessary for the life of the church — pastors to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, elders to assist the pastors and to exercise discipline, deacons to look after administrative aspects and to care for the poor, and doctors or teachers who were responsible for the pure teaching of the church. Calvin was prepared to accept other forms of ministry also, as long as the regular preaching of the Word was assured.

Later developments led to stricter views. In particular the Scottish Reformation and its subsequent struggles with the episcopal system of the Church of England gave rise to the conviction that the Presbyterian system was the only biblical

way to order the ministries. There is no doubt that the Presbyterian system, with its strong emphasis on the collegial exercise of authority and even more the congregationalist approach, strengthened the sense of participation in the life of the church. An anti-hierarchical element is inherent in both Presbyterianism and Congregationalism. These qualities have become characteristics of Reformed churches. The question is, however, to what extent these qualities can also find a place in other ways of ordering the church, e.g., in an appropriately revised episcopal system. In recent years, a number of unions have taken place which combine presbyterian, congregationalist, and episcopal elements.

1.3.10. The Church — Local and Universal

The Reformers placed strong emphasis on Christ's presence in the local community. God's gifts do not require mediation by a hierarchical order. Christ is present wherever God's Word is proclaimed and the sacraments administered. Congregationalism went even a step further in stressing the primacy of the local community. The Spirit bestows all gifts necessary for the life and witness of the church on the local church. Under God's Word the gathered community has ultimate authority. The positive side of this emphasis is the strong sense of participation and responsibility that often characterizes local Reformed churches.

The mainstream of Reformed churches at the same time stressed the need for common decision-making at regional and national levels. They developed a structure of representation in presbyteries (classes) and synods (assemblies). Decision-making through representative assemblies has become one of the characteristics of the Reformed heritage.

On the whole, the horizon of the Reformed churches remained confined to the national level. Communication between national churches was not a matter of course, and only exceptionally have Reformed churches come together to exchange, debate, and decide on essential issues of faith and witness. None of the international bodies which have been set up by Reformed churches is synodal in nature. They serve as platforms of exchange; some bring together a limited number of like-minded Reformed churches and tend to perpetuate divisions at the local level. The lack of a spontaneous sense of responsibility and commitment to the universal church is the reason for many of the divisions that exist today among Reformed churches.

1.3.11. Called to Be Witnesses of the Gospel

Reformed churches, as a rule, have a strong commitment to the missionary calling of the Church. In the 16th century mission was not a central concern. Calvin was even of the opinion that the missionary mandate had been addressed to apostles and had been fulfilled in the apostolic period. Its relevance was only rediscovered in later centuries. Mainly through the Revival Movement and through the practice

of mission since the beginning of the 19th century, it has become a characteristic of the Reformed churches. Most recent confessions speak explicitly of the missionary responsibility of the church; the Church of Scotland amended the Westminster Confession in this sense.

1.3.12. Truth and Unity

Like all churches, Reformed churches face the dilemma of faithfulness to the Gospel and commitment to the oneness of the Body of Christ. Both sides of the dilemma find strong expression in the Reformed tradition. On the one hand, the primary plea of the Reformation was to return to Christ. Unity could be achieved only on the basis of a common commitment to Christ. On the other hand, it was clear from the beginning that commitment to Christ also meant to live in communion with one another. Ways needed to be found to remove obstacles to communion. The dilemma has been dealt with differently by different Reformed churches. While many felt unable to join the ecumenical movement, the majority have become active in endeavors of dialogue, collaboration, and union. The search for unity on the basis of thorough debate on matters of doctrine and church structure has become a characteristic of the Reformed churches.

1.3.13. Church and State

As a rule, Reformed churches advocate the autonomy of the church from state authorities. They recognize the authority of the state in all matters concerning the temporal life of society, but they resist attempts to subordinate the internal life and witness of the church to the magistrate. The church needs to constitute itself, and its structures need to function, without the interference of the state. Since in some countries the Reformation was carried out by the state authorities, churches came into being that to a large extent depended on the state. For centuries, in some cases even today, the struggle for the appropriate relationship to the state has been a major concern for these churches. Basically, the strong emphasis on a coherent, constitutionally established internal order of the church militates in favour of autonomy from the state.

1.3.14. The Witness of the Church in Society

The Reformation was primarily concerned with the life of the church, but from the beginning the witness of the Reformers extended to the whole of society. God's will had to be respected and followed in all realms of life. Society had to be so ordered that justice could prevail. From the beginning, Calvin regularly intervened with the magistrate of Geneva to advocate for justice and the protection of the

poor. The Barmen Declaration affirms a genuinely Reformed conviction when it states: "We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords, areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him." However, this witness in society has often been the cause of disputes and even divisions in Reformed churches.

1.3.15. The Church as Wandering People

The Reformed churches are on the Way. In the sense of the Epistle to the Hebrews they regard themselves as the wandering people of God. Facing new situations, they seek to be faithful to God's Word as witnessed to in the Bible and to correct and renew the life of the church accordingly. They are prepared to be led to new horizons. To point to this readiness Reformed Christians like to cite the formula *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*. The formula should, however, be used with care. It was not created by the Reformers themselves but first appeared in the early 17th century in the Netherlands. The formula can easily be misused to legitimize change for change's sake. Nevertheless, the dictum stands for an important characteristic of Reformed churches — openness to new insights gained through living intercourse with the Bible. *Semper reformanda* must not mean constant adaptation. True reform is always the result of listening to God's Word in the light of a changing situation. There is, today, a wide divergence among Reformed churches about the extent and the validity of such new insights. But there are certain points which, to various degrees, have become part of the common Reformed heritage.

- The missionary commitment of the Reformed churches has already been mentioned.
- The values of tolerance and the commitment to the struggle for human rights have their roots in intellectual and spiritual developments of the 18th century.
- The Reformed churches have developed a special sense of solidarity with the Jewish people. In fact, the strong emphasis on the authority of the Old Testament has always been a cause of special interest in the destiny of the Jewish people. The covenant theology, especially of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669), reflected on the role of the Jewish people in the fulfillment of God's plans in history. It was through the experience of the persecutions of Jews in World War II that the theme became dominant in Reformed theology. Several churches have adopted statements on the continuing election of the Jewish people. The way of witnessing to the Jews remains an issue of controversy. While a growing number of Reformed churches consider dialogue to be the appropriate form of Christian witness, others continue to think in terms of Paul's mandate "first to the Jews, then to the gentiles."
- The quest for women's rights and the rise of the feminist movement have

deeply affected many Reformed churches. For many, the participation of women in the life of the church, in particular the ordination of women to be pastors and elders, has become a matter of principle. For other churches, the ordination of women continues to be seen as contradicting the words of Scripture. Though a great number of Reformed churches now ordain women to the ministries of the church, the issue is far from resolved.

- The ecological crisis has brought the theme of creation to the fore. Many Reformed churches have become aware of the fact that traditional teaching did not give sufficient place to the need for human beings to live in harmony and communion with the whole of creation. Several churches have adopted statements of faith offering a new and more responsible orientation. In the "Contemporary Testimony," adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1983, we read: "We make grateful use of the good products of science and technology, on guard against idolatry and careful to use them in ways that fit within God's demand to love our neighbor and to care for the earth and its creatures."