

Church And Nation Declaration Revisited

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A half-century milestone in 2005 for The Presbyterian Church in Canada's *Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation* is reason enough for a revisit. Yet two other related considerations make a review of it compelling. First, it was the product of the theological recovery that took place in the Canadian Presbyterian Church in the 1930s through the early 1950s. This story is not sufficiently known and needs to be told. Secondly, the *Declaration's* adoption opened the floodgates of confessional revision, redefining the Church's relation to its subordinate standards, and opening the sluice-gate to the formulation of new statements of faith. This also merits more attention than it has received.

The aim of this paper will be to explore the theological renewal that preceded and gave rise to the *Declaration*. We will examine its purpose, content, and argument, and the consequences of its adoption. Finally, the paper will argue that the partnership of church and state has altered radically during the past five decades and it will raise the question of the adequacy of the *Declaration* fifty years later.

The 1942 Memorial and Overtures

Before examining the theological movement that lay behind it, I propose to begin with the petition and the two overtures to the 1942 General Assembly which issued in the 1955 *Declaration*. Overture 24 from the Presbytery of Toronto asked whether the state had the right to call the churches to religious observance. Since the outbreak of the Second World War the Canadian government had proclaimed "Days of Prayer" and encouraged inter-faith religious services. Did the Presbyterian Church approve of these services and the suggested forms of prayer that not only did not confess Jesus Christ but were notable "for the omission of all references to His Name?"¹ The deliberate avoidance of the name of Jesus Christ in the Peggy's Cove Memorial Service in 1999 and in the 9/11 Memorial Service on Parliament Hill in 2001 was evidently not without precedent. The Toronto overture was also vexed about the fact that Moderators and Clerks of General Assembly referred to themselves as "Right Reverends" and "Very Reverends" and that they acted without consultation with church courts to help organize such services.

The Paris Presbytery Memorial and Synod of Hamilton and London Overture 18 noted that the 1875 Basis of Union had qualified the acceptance of the *Westminster Standards* with a proviso that nothing "regarding the power and duty of the civil magistrate, shall be held to sanction any principles inconsistent with full liberty of

¹ *Acts and Proceedings of the Sixty-Eighth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (1942)*: 116-117.

conscience in matters of religion.”² This qualification, they argued, had left the Presbyterian Church without a clear and defined doctrine of Church and State, and so they called on General Assembly to produce a confession of faith “with respect to the powers and duties of the Civil Magistrate and the relation which exists, under the Lord Jesus Christ, between the Church and the State.”³

In view of the importance of the memorial and two overtures, Assembly appointed a strong committee to study them and to report. Stuart C. Parker of St. Andrew’s Church, Toronto was named convener. It was an odd choice since one of the overtures was from his presbytery and it is highly probable he was one of the “Very Reverends” named in the overture. As a former Assembly moderator he loved to refer to himself as the “Very Reverend Stuart C. Parker.” Committee members were: Prof. R. D. MacLennan of McGill University, Judge A. G. Farrell, Clarence M. Pitts, and J. C. Brown.

The committee’s response was carefully argued and moderate. With respect to the Toronto overture it said that the State did not claim the “right” to call the Church to prayer but simply invited its members to do so. Persons were not obligated to obey. Nor was the church bound by the action of voluntary organizations in which its ministers participated. The committee concluded that “in general, the Church cannot officially approve of ‘Divine Service’ that is not distinctly Christian in character. Yet its ministers are free to participate or not just as they do in societies and fraternal orders where the name of Jesus Christ is not in evidence.”⁴ The committee recommended that no general “declaration” was required and that the answers given in the report were sufficient.

With regard to Overture 18 and the Presbytery of Paris Memorial, the Special Committee recommended that their prayers be not granted since:

- (a) no issue as to the relations of Church and State exists in this land; (b) the said relations as they are among us, are founded upon mutual respect and goodwill, requiring no formal declaration by the Church as to delimitations or respective rights, other than those already set forth in Chapter XXIII and Westminster Confession of Faith, and interpreted in Art. II of the Basis of Union of 1875; and (c) to make formal pronouncements or claims in such circumstances would provoke, without any good purpose being served, controversy and division, not only between Church and State, but within the Church itself.⁵

It was a response that might not be unfairly described as espousing the view, so characteristic of the Church of Scotland Moderate party, of church and state as “bosom-buddies,” one in accord and for the most part having each other’s best interests at heart.

Others at General Assembly did not see a simple co-incidence between civil and religious loyalty. They envisaged the possibility of conflict between the claims of church and state as had occurred recently in Germany. As might be expected, a vigorous debate

² “Basis of Union (1875),” chapter 10, section 406.2, *The Book of Forms* (Don Mills, ON: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1993) 71.

³ *Acts and Proceedings (1942)*: 112-13.

⁴ *Acts and Proceedings (1942)*: 42-43.

⁵ *Acts and Proceedings (1942)*: 43-44.

ensued. The Rev. Gordon A. Peddie, author of the Paris Memorial and of the Synod of Hamilton and London overture moved an amendment that they be sent down to presbyteries for study. His motion was seconded by the Rev. George L. Douglas. It was moved in amendment to the amendment that the Assembly appoint a committee to consider the matter and to bring in a finding at the next General Assembly. The amendment to the amendment prevailed and the motion as amended was adopted. Also referred to the committee was the Presbytery of Toronto overture. It was this committee that recommended the establishment of what came to be known as the Articles of Faith Committee.

Beginnings of the Articles of Faith Committee

This was a curious beginning for this committee, now known as the Committee on Church Doctrine. During the sixty-eight years since 1875, the Church had managed its affairs without a standing committee on church doctrine. To be sure, from time to time it was constrained to deal with doctrinal issues, for example, in the 1875-1878 Rev. D. J. Macdonnell heresy case, the 1889 qualification of Chapter XXIV.4 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF)* regarding degrees of consanguinity and who may marry, and, of course, the 1904 joint Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Committee which produced the Basis of Union, a confession that was mainly derived from two non-Canadian statements of faith.

Apart from these instances, church doctrine was not a consuming interest. Immigration, western expansion, church growth, and social action tended to dominate the agendas of presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies. In his book, *Why I am a Presbyterian*, Walter W. Bryden spoke of superficial views of Scripture and disparagement of creeds that prevailed on the Canadian scene since the end of the nineteenth century.⁶ Although not unfriendly to the United Church of Canada, as he believed it was destined to play an important role in Canadian life, Walter Bryden was nevertheless a strong critic of the Church Union movement for its lack of theological concern. He was of the opinion, as James D. Smart has said, that “[. . .] the union movement sought to solve the problem of the Church’s weakness by a merger of organizations in which questions of doctrine were regarded as decidedly secondary in importance.”⁷ While this may seem to be a partisan Presbyterian “sour grapes” judgment, a similar verdict has been pronounced by the Canadian historian, David Marshall, who has written: “The United Church of Canada was born into a period of theological depression in which there was little vision or vitality. The new church lacked a statement of faith suitable for the age.”⁸

More than any other single individual, W. W. Bryden was responsible for giving the post-union Presbyterian Church in Canada, to quote the words of John Webster Grant,

⁶ Walter W. Bryden, *Why I Am A Presbyterian* (Belleville, ON: Essence Publishing, 1997) 46.

⁷ James D. Smart, “Canadian Presbyterianism Since 1925,” *Presbyterian Record* [Midland] Feb. 1954: 19.

⁸ David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief 1850-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 254; see also 203-204.

“a theological base on which not merely to survive but to stand proud.”⁹ Drawing upon the theological recovery that was taking place in Europe under the leadership of Karl Barth, Bryden inspired a new generation of younger Presbyterian ministers to do theology. It was this theological work that issued in the *Declaration of Faith concerning Church and Nation*.

In a 1941 article in *The United Church Observer*, entitled “Continental Movements and the Theological Thought of Tomorrow,”¹⁰ Bryden focused on the German Church conflict and defined the theological issue which prompted the Paris Memorial and led to the formulation of the *Declaration*. The Confessional Church in its struggle with Nazism, he noted, discovered that the battle was between Christ as Creator and Redeemer and an absolute state that arrogated to itself divine character and powers. Redirected thereby to the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions, it made its confession in the form of the *Barmen Declaration*. Article I affirmed: “Jesus Christ, as he is attested to us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear, and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death.”¹¹ It thus rejected “the false doctrine that the Church could and should recognize as a source of its proclamation, beyond and besides this one Word of God, yet other events, powers, historic figures, and truths as God’s revelation.”¹² Bryden took his cue from Barmen and insisted that confession on the Canadian scene must be christologically oriented:

The great question today is not whether we are religious—all people are religious—but whether we are Christian; not whether we believe in God—everyone can get under that canopy, even Hitler—but whether we believe in God in the Christ who was crucified for the sin of man and is risen, is alive for evermore.¹³

He sought, as did his student and follower, Gordon Peddie, a christological view of Church and State.

The groundwork for the Paris Memorial had been carefully laid not only by Bryden’s 1941 *Observer* essay but also by a number of articles on the German Church and State conflict that appeared in the pages of the short-lived *The Presbyterian Student*. In its December 1936 issue M. M. MacOdrum, minister in Sydney, Cape Breton wrote on “The Present Impasse Between Church and State in Germany.”¹⁴ He noted with alarm

⁹ John Webster Grant, *Divided Heritage: Canadian Presbyterianism As It Was*, unpublished manuscript, 194.

¹⁰ Walter W. Bryden, “Continental Movements and the Theological Thought of Tomorrow,” *The United Church Observer*, 15 June 1941: 11, 28.

¹¹ Douglas S. Bax, “*The Barmen Theological Declaration: A New Translation*,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 47 (June 1984), Eberhard Jüngel, *Christ, Justice and Peace: Toward a Theology of the State in Dialogue with the Barmen Declaration*, trans. D. Bruce Hamill and Alan J. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992) xxiii.

¹² Bax xxiii.

¹³ Bryden, “Continental Movements” 28.

¹⁴ M. M. MacOdrum, “The Present Impasse Between Church and State in Germany,” *The Presbyterian Student*, 2.2 (Dec. 1936): 2-4.

the Nazi deification of the State and its readiness to claim the totality of the soul of the German nation. It would have all Germany—the Christian Church—brought under the will of one man, Adolf Hitler. Only the Confessional Church had stood firm, unwilling to bend to this totalitarian claim. The second article by Wilfred F. Butcher, an associate editor of the journal, was devoted to the memorandum which the German Evangelical Church addressed to Hitler in June 1936, and the manifesto which was read *from* its pulpits in August of the same year.¹⁵

Preoccupation with the German Church situation continued in the February 1937 issue, with two more articles on the subject. The first one was by James D. Smart entitled, “The Conflict Within The Church.” A graduate of Knox College and a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto in Semitic languages he had spent 1929-1930 studying at Marburg and Berlin in Germany. His article drew upon his knowledge of Barth’s theology and the series of forty-six pamphlets on the German Church crisis, edited by Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen. Concerned about the implications of the German Church conflict for the Canadian church, Smart noted that in Canadian and British patriotism, loyalty to God was considered inseparable from an unquestioning loyalty to one’s country. Yet, had not an identical mind created the German Christians who idolized Hitler and his Third Reich? All things in the church’s life and message, as Barth had insisted, needed to be brought to the touch-stone of the Word of God, especially issues relating to church and state. Theology had received short shrift from both sides in the important decision of 1925. “One lesson of the German situation” he wrote, “is that a church whose ministers are disinterested in discussing upon a theological basis the matters pertaining to its life, has its doors wide open to error and courts disaster at every turn.”¹⁶

The second article, “Karl Barth and the Confessional Church” was by Arthur C. Cochrane.¹⁷ After studying in Germany, where he married a German, he took his doctorate at Edinburgh. In contrast to Smart’s carefully-balanced article, Cochrane’s was pugnacious. The German Confessional Church is the only true Church in Germany, he asserted boldly. All others are false. True confession always involves a negation, a *damnamus*. The Protestant church in Canada and the U. S. has so strayed from the Bible as its sole authority that it can “no longer claim to be the true Evangelical Church of Jesus Christ” and is dangerously near to being the Church of the Anti-Christ.¹⁸ We will do well, Cochrane said, to study closely Karl Barth’s theology for he is to the Church today what Calvin and Luther were in their day.

Not surprisingly, the next issue of *The Presbyterian Student* carried a dissenting voice. It was that of Frank W. Beare, Professor of Theology at Presbyterian College, who was later to leave not only the college but also the Presbyterian Church because of its presumed take-over by the Barthians. He went on to become an Anglican priest and to have a distinguished career as a world-class New Testament scholar at Trinity College,

¹⁵ Wilfred F. Butcher, “Manifesto of the Confessional Church,” *The Presbyterian Student* 2.2 (1936): 4-5, 16.

¹⁶ James D. Smart, “The Conflict Within the Church,” *The Presbyterian Student*, 2.3 (Feb. 1937): 4.

¹⁷ Arthur C. Cochrane, “Karl Barth and the Confessional Church,” *The Presbyterian Student* 2.3 (Feb. 1937): 8-10.

¹⁸ Cochrane 8.

Toronto. He was clearly provoked by the four articles. In a “first blast of the trumpet” against the monstrous regiment of Barth and the Canadian Presbyterian Barthians he issued a declaration of war.¹⁹ It was time, he felt, to raise the voice of warning against the intolerable spiritual and intellectual tyranny of the Barthian teaching and what he dubbed “its semi-Mohammedan creed that ‘There is one God, and Karl Barth is his prophet.’”²⁰ Barthianism was “not truly Calvinist, or catholic, or orthodox; it is a narrowly sectarian presentation of Christianity which falls far short of doing justice to the warm spirit of comprehensiveness which is the glory of our faith.”²¹ He believed Barth was wrong in insisting that the Word is contained only in Scripture. In an unembarrassed espousal of natural theology, Beare stated that God’s Word can be heard in the sublime poetry of Virgil, the philosophical writings of Plato and Aristotle, and the religious teaching of Buddha and Confucius as well as in the lawgivers and prophets.

In the December issue of *The Presbyterian Student*, Professor W. Stanford Reid wrote a letter criticizing Beare’s doctrine of Scripture. In doing so he distanced himself from what he called Barthianism, stating that in his opinion it is “very far removed from the Reformed Faith as set forth either by Calvin, or any of the great Reformed Creeds of the Church.”²² This is a judgment that would be very difficult to sustain today in the light of recent Calvin and Barth scholarship and there is reason to believe that Reid modified his judgment somewhat later. Beare cavalierly dismissed Reid’s letter by saying that he did not know the history of the Canon and had not given any serious thought to the Christian doctrine of revelation and inspiration.²³ The same issue carried an article by James D. Smart called “Defence and Counter Attack” in which he defended Barth against the charge of the “dogmatic intolerance.”²⁴ While admitting that some Barthian enthusiasts assume a pontifical attitude, Smart spoke without naming names of “the apostle of tolerance [who] becomes vehemently intolerant of any other view of Christianity [. . .] [and] that which offends is not ‘dogmatic intolerance,’ but the existence of a point of view contradictory to his own personal point of view. [. . .] The real issue,” Smart said, “is between two irreconcilable views of Christianity. Let these two views be debated in the Church so that it can be seen which view is truly Reformed in character.”²⁵ This was followed by a second article, “Is Karl Barth’s Theology Extremist?”²⁶ It was not extreme or unpresbyterian on Barth’s part to re-establish the authority of the Bible in theology, Smart wrote. This was nothing other than the re-assertion of the reformers’ scripture principle. God’s Word is spoken in the Bible as nowhere else. He explained

¹⁹ Frank W. Beare, “Against the Barthian Theology,” *The Presbyterian Student* 2.3 (Feb. 1937): 9-10.

²⁰ Beare 10.

²¹ Beare 9.

²² W. Stanford Reid, letter, *The Presbyterian Student* 3.1 (Dec. 1937): 4.

²³ Reid 4-5.

²⁴ James D. Smart, “Defence and Counter Attack,” *The Presbyterian Student* 3.1 (Dec. 1937): 6. Jim Smart had earlier defended Barth against the charge of “other-worldliness” in the pages of *The Expository Times* 45 (1933-34): 525-526.

²⁵ Smart, “Defence and Counter Attack” 6.

²⁶ James D. Smart, “Is Karl Barth’s Theology Extremist?,” *The Presbyterian Student* 3.3 (Mar. 1938): 9-14.

the reason for Barth's rejection of natural theology. When Scripture is seen as only a part of God's revelation and voices heard elsewhere are obeyed as revelations of God, these auxiliary revelations soon assume primary authority. This was clearly the case with the German Christians who claimed to hear God's voice in German history and the rise of Hitler to power. The Confessionalists responded saying that the Church dare not obey any voice except that of God's Word, Jesus Christ, who is attested in Scriptures. Those who regard Barth as un-presbyterian must show where his teaching is not in line with this accepted standard. "It is strange," he said in conclusion, "that the points in his theology which have been felt to be most extreme are those points in which he is most characteristically Presbyterian—the Scripture principle of revelation, the sovereignty of God including predestination, original sin, justification by faith alone."²⁷

As the Second World War was threatening, this concern about the German Church Conflict led to an official statement by the Presbytery of Paris in April 1939.²⁸ This "Deliverance," as it was called, was read from every pulpit in the presbytery, given to the press, and sent as a memorial to the Synod of Hamilton and London and to the General Assembly. The "Deliverance" spoke of the Christian gospel being attacked by German State leaders, of a pagan philosophy and religion being taught in schools and universities, of the faithful witness of the Confessional Church, its pastors being imprisoned and seminaries being closed. It went on to confess that "Jesus Christ is the sole Lord of the Church and of the State." The State has the responsibility to establish and maintain justice, freedom, and peace. It denies the Lordship of Jesus Christ when it becomes a tyranny. The statement concluded with a "call to repentance." There is no record of General Assembly dealing with this "Deliverance." It was not a petition and as such could not come before it. The Presbytery of Paris's 1942 Memorial embodied the concern of the "Deliverance" and went beyond it, by petitioning Assembly for a doctrine of church and state from the perspective of the Lordship of Christ.

Statement of Faith Committee

Let us now return to the 1942 Memorial and overtures. The Special Committee named by the General Assembly with E. G. Thompson as convener and George Douglas as secretary, met and recommended "that a larger committee comprising the ablest men in the Church be appointed for the purpose of re-examining our whole confessional position [. . .]."²⁹ The 1943 Assembly adopted the recommendation and appointed a larger committee. A merry-go-round ensued because this larger committee in turn thought that a smaller committee was more suited for such a task. It so recommended to the 1944 Assembly and added that this committee should consist of "specially selected members who are representative of the various views in regard to the Church's Confession [. . .]"; and that it work out, if it were thought advisable, a brief statement of the faith of our Church and as based on the Westminster Confession of Faith and Holy

²⁷ Smart, "Is Karl Barth's Theology" 14.

²⁸ "A Deliverance Of The Presbytery Of Paris," *The Presbyterian Student* 4.4 (Apr. 1939): 5-9.

²⁹ *Acts and Proceedings of the Sixty-Ninth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (1943)*: 131.

Scripture.³⁰ In 1944, General Assembly appointed the following persons to this committee: Peter Dunn, Joseph Wasson, Arthur C. Cochrane, W. Stanford Reid, T. Wardlaw Taylor, W. W. Bryden and E. G. Thompson.

Peter Dunn of St. Paul's Church, Hamilton, became convener and Joseph Wasson of Calvin Church, Toronto, served as secretary. During the next year the committee worked assiduously to write a statement of faith. What it produced resembled discussion papers more than a concise confession and the committee modestly admitted as much, saying that its work was purely tentative and partial at best. A number of doctrines were selected: Knowledge of God, Grace of God, Human Nature, Person of Christ, Election, Church, Word and Sacraments. The longest section of the report was devoted to the doctrine of Church and State and the Social Order, the specific concern of the petition and the two overtures. It contained *in nuce* the later *Declaration*. As I will argue later, one wishes that at least in part the formulators of the *Declaration* had kept more closely to this original statement.³¹ The committee also addressed the Paris Memorial and the Synod Overture. It agreed that the 1875 "forbearance" did have the effect of leaving the church "confession-less" regarding the doctrine of Church and State and thus defenceless in the event of encroachment upon its rights. It criticized the 1875 Basis of Union for making the natural conscience a judge in matters that pertain to God.³²

It is not our purpose here to follow the course which the Statement of Faith Committee pursued from 1945 to 1950, as this has been discussed in A. Donald MacLeod's fine CSPH paper of last year.³³ Suffice it to say that the committee's name was changed to "Articles of Faith Committee" in 1946, that the Assembly continued the committee's existence year after year until it became a standing committee and that its membership changed. After Peter Dunn's illness, George Douglas became the convener. Arthur Cochrane left to teach at Dubuque Seminary in Iowa, and W. Stanford Reid left the committee.

³⁰ *Acts and Proceedings of the Seventieth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (1944)*: 57.

³¹ *Acts and Proceedings (1945)*: 304-06. This section may be summarized as follows: God has ordered the state, as a consequence of human sin, for the public good and the freedom of the gospel. The power of the sword has been given to the state for its defence against menace from within and without. Christians are citizens of both heaven and of the secular realm upon which they depend for justice and peace. They have the same responsibilities as other citizens and when necessary should serve in armed forces. Church and State are directly related and subject to Jesus Christ. Both the view that the Church is the agent of the State or that it is the instrument of the Church must be rejected. So also is the view that Church and State can be absolutely separated and disassociated. The functions of the State are fundamentally protective and temporal; those of the Church are fundamentally redemptive. While these functions cannot be separated they must not be merged. The relative claims of State and Church will always be in a state of tension. The Church is to be humble and yet it must pronounce judgment against palpable injustice and call the state to its divine obligation. Under tyranny, oppression, anarchy or presumption, it is the duty of the Church to encourage and support active opposition to the false state, even to the use of arms. No civil ruler can assume the administration of Word and Sacraments or the power of the keys. Similarly, no ecclesiastical authority may interfere in the laws of the secular realm or claim jurisdiction over its people.

³² *Acts and Proceedings of the Seventy-First General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (1945)*: 308.

³³ A. Donald MacLeod, "The Formation of the Articles of Faith Committee: Ascendent Barthianism in the 1940s in the PCC," David Elliott, ed., *The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History, Papers 2004* (Thornbury, ON: The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History, 2004): 11-20.

In 1949, a Presbytery of Montreal Overture argued that the present world situation was such as to cause grave concern to the Christian Church, and since the Presbyterian Church did not have a clear confessional position on Church and State, it asked the Assembly to instruct its Articles of Faith Committee to give constitutional recognition to the work already accomplished in 1945 and to prepare a “declaratory clause” avoiding the ambiguity which now exists. Significantly, the motion was made by Charles C. Cochrane, the brother of Professor Arthur Cochrane, and it was seconded by W. Stanford Reid.³⁴ The Overture was referred to the Board of Evangelism and Social Action. It recommended that its prayer be granted in the following terms:

That the Committee on Articles of Faith and this Board’s Committee on Church and Nation be instructed to act as a Joint Committee to prepare a “Declaratory Clause” for the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 23, in terms of the 1945 statement on Church and State and the 1949 resolutions on Church and Nation, to be sent down to the Presbyteries for Constitutional adoption under the Barrier Act.³⁵

The Joint Committee began its work in the fall of 1949 and during the next four years it held upwards of forty meetings before it completed its task. Some twenty-six ministers served on the Assembly’s joint committee. The theological work was burdensome and exacting, as the committee did not hesitate to point out. Three members of the joint committee did not live to see the completion of the task. Principal W. W. Bryden of Knox College and T. Wardlaw Taylor, Principal Clerk of General Assembly, died in 1952. Principal J. Bernard Rhodes of Toronto Bible College died in 1953.

In its 1950 report to Assembly, the Joint Committee noted that the ambiguity created by the 1875 Basis of Union rider could only be removed by a newly-formulated doctrine of Church and State rather than an interpretive clause. What was proposed, the 1951 Report stated, was a *Declaration of Faith*.³⁶ If and when adopted by the Church, such a *Declaration* would supersede Chapter XXIII of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the Basis of Union rider. The Joint Committee realized that this would involve changing the ordination vows. To allay any unfounded fears, it stated that this was not an attempt to rewrite the *WCF* much less to “tamper” with it. The Confession was a historical document and if it were changed it would cease to be the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. “What we are free to do as a Church” it stated, “is to review our subscription to the Westminster Confession, in whole or in part, and declare our doctrinal position accordingly.”³⁷ In such a divisive issue, it was important that the Church move slowly. It therefore recommended that the “Preamble” and “Articles of Faith Concerning Church and Nation” be sent to presbyteries for study and report. The term “nation” had been chosen as having a broader meaning than the term “State.” It drew attention to the

³⁴ *Acts and Proceedings of the Seventy-Fifth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (1949)*: 110.

³⁵ *Acts and Proceedings (1949)*: 61.

³⁶ *Acts and Proceedings of the Seventy-Seventh General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (1951)*: 87-88.

³⁷ “Report of the Joint Committee on Church and Nation,” *Acts and Proceedings (1951)*: 88.

disastrous unguardedness of Chapter XXIII.3 of the *WCF* which gave authority to the civil magistrate to preserve the peace and unity of the church, suppress heresies and blasphemies, to call synods, and to be present at them. Whenever the German Nazi or Soviet Communist powers, it pointed out, have sought to domesticate the church to their totalitarian aims, they have claimed this kind of authority.³⁸

A number of points are arguable in its presentation. The committee was inclined to waver on the meaning and effect of the 1875 proviso. It spoke on the one hand of Chapter XXIII being virtually removed from subscription to the *WCF* and on the other hand, of the unguardedness of Section 3. If the first were true why bother about Section 3? What actually did the qualifying clause have in mind? It seems that the authors of the 1875 Basis of Union were guided by a similar proviso made by the Free Church in 1846 and by the revision of the northern Presbyterian Church to repudiate the view that the civil magistrate had authority to call Church councils and to interfere in the Church's affairs. The Joint Committee also tended to misinterpret the phrase "freedom of conscience" which the authors of the 1875 Basis of Union probably did not use in its contemporary meaning but in the sense of Chapter XX.2 where "freedom of conscience" is asserted in matters on which Scripture is silent. Moreover, to confess that Christ is Lord of both Church and State does not mean that the State is an aspect of the Body of Christ, as the Report stated. This phrase is invariably used in the New Testament to describe the Church, which is seen as an entity called out of the world and distinguished from it. When queried on this point by presbyteries, the committee stated that it was not offering its own view but that of Luther and Calvin. This was a lame response since Luther and Calvin nowhere speak in those terms. The Committee had been caught with its pants down. It promised to make a statement on this matter following further research but the subject was never mentioned again.

The 1952 Report contained a glowing tribute to W. W. Bryden which acknowledged his imprint upon all the work of the Joint Committee since its inception, and also on the Articles of Faith Committee of which he was a charter member.³⁹ It presented a revised *Declaration*.⁴⁰ A long section of the report was devoted to a study of presbytery reports. Of the twelve presbyteries that reported, the most prevalent criticism centred on the doctrine of the Trinity and particularly what some thought was an over-emphasis on the role of the Son in creation, redemption, and providence. While the committee admitted that certain statements in the 1951 report invited that criticism, it would not retreat from its basic christological focus. Without minimizing the work of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, the committee would not concede for an instant that "the Church can be satisfied with general statements about God which could be accepted by Judaism or Islam, when Christians must mean the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴¹ Faithfulness to be biblical witness⁴² means that the Lordship of Christ rather than the Godhood of God ought to be emphasized.

³⁸ "Report of the Joint Committee on Church and Nation" 91.

³⁹ *Acts and Proceedings of the Seventy-Eighth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (1952)*: 154.

⁴⁰ *Acts and Proceedings (1952)*: 152-154. The Report included a brief discussion of the matter of Loyal Addresses, the subject of a 1950 Overture from the Presbytery of Algoma and North Bay on which it failed to reach a finding.

⁴¹ *Acts and Proceedings (1952)*: 155.

In an effort to provide a clearer Biblical basis, the committee provided a statement with Biblical references on three major questions: (1) Is Jesus Christ Creator? (2) The Extent of Christ's Lordship, and (3) May the Church Aid Rebellion?⁴³ The Joint Committee was continued, Professor Keith Markell was added to its membership, and presbyteries were asked to study the statement and to report.

The following year, the Joint Committee reported the death of T. Wardlaw Taylor and paid tribute to his work on the Joint Committee.⁴⁴ Stuart B. Coles was named convener and Mariano Di Gangi vice-convener. Gordon Peddie had been called to the Banff, Alberta charge and D. W. Kerr had accepted a position at Gordon Divinity School in Boston. James G. Berry had resigned for health reasons. More comments had been received from presbyteries and these had been analyzed and assigned to the sub-committee for consideration.

Before presenting its final report to Assembly in 1954,⁴⁵ the Joint Committee held a conference in December 1953 when all the church's professors and Assembly officers who were not on the Joint Committee were invited to study the proposed *Declaration*. A revision had been produced in October 1953 and circulated to the presbyteries with request for their study and comments by 31 January 1954. In its report, the committee acknowledged that there might be another interpretation of the 1875 proviso than the one they had continually offered. By "liberty of conscience" the Basis of Union may have meant what antecedent Church documents had meant by it; namely freedom from tyrannous intervention by the civil authorities in the affairs of the Church.⁴⁶ On the other hand, it may well be as the Joint Committee had tended to argue that the term "liberty of conscience" was equated with the modern concept of the right of individual judgment. Whatever the true interpretation, there were crucial aspects of the relation between

⁴² The Report cited Philippians 2 and Matthew 28:18.

⁴³ *Acts and Proceedings (1952)*: 156-159. On the first question the committee cited a number of biblical passages, particularly John 1:1 and asserted that the Eternal Word or Son is the Creator and that Jesus of Nazareth is this Eternal Word made flesh. Where western culture speaks of a divine being without definition, Christians must not hesitate to confess without equivocation that not any "God" but Jesus Christ is Lord. On the second question, the extent of Christ's Lordship, the committee had no doubt that the weight of biblical testimony to Christ's Lordship included the civil state. The committee acknowledged, in accordance with 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, the termination of Christ's Lordship when the Son would hand over his sovereignty as Mediator and his sovereignty would be merged with the Sovereignty of the Triune God, so that He may be all in all. On the third issue, the committee must have been aware of the difficulty of finding support in Scripture for its position on the legitimacy of the church aiding rebellion against tyranny. The passage cited was 1 Timothy 2:1-2, calling for prayers and intercessions for kings and for all who are in high positions. It argued that the church fulfills its priestly task by praying not for the support but the downfall of the tyrannical power. This means that the Church might well be expected by both God and the world to fight for that for which she would pray. This seems to be nothing but a specious argument, for nowhere does the New Testament counsel us to pray for the downfall of kings. In an afterthought, the committee stated that it must be remembered that we still adhere to the Old Testament where so much blood was shed, which was a rather gratuitous remark.

⁴⁴ *Acts and Proceedings of the Seventy-Ninth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (1953)*: 305.

⁴⁵ *Acts and Proceedings of the Eightieth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (1954)*: 241-45.

⁴⁶ *Acts and Proceedings (1954)*: 242.

Church and State which were left untouched. It was these unresolved questions which the 1949 overture and the earlier documents from the Presbytery of Paris in 1939 and 1942 had brought to the Church's attention. It was the judgment of the committee that a proper doctrine of Church and Nation depended upon a recovery of the full Biblical doctrine of the Kingship of Christ. This point was strongly made by two articles that appeared in the February and April 1953 issues of the *Presbyterian Record* by the convener, Stuart B. Coles, and the sub-convener, Mariano Di Gangi. Not only were the titles similar, "Christ's Lordship Over Church and Nation" by Coles, and "Christ The King" by Di Gangi, but their argument was essentially the same; namely, that international, civil, social, economic, and political problems must be approached from confession that Jesus Christ is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19.16).⁴⁷ The Joint Committee concluded its 1954 report stating that the *Declaration* "should be judged by its treatment of this issue: the doctrine of the person and office of Christ the King."⁴⁸

The final report was presented by Stuart B. Coles, the convener. The recommendation that the *Declaration of Faith* be adopted "as setting forth the teaching of Holy Scripture on the subject of Church and Nation," was moved by Mariano Di Gangi and seconded by J. Stanley Glen.⁴⁹ Kenneth M. Glazier, minister of Glenview Church, Toronto moved in amendment, seconded by Professor F. Scott Mackenzie of Presbyterian College, Montreal, that the *Declaration* be remitted to presbyteries under the Barrier Act procedure.⁵⁰ W. Stanford Reid of McGill University, moved in amendment to the amendment, seconded by H. Lloyd Henderson of Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, that the recommendation be referred back to committee members present at Assembly so that those who disagreed may have the opportunity to present objections and to propose amendments. This became the judgment of the court. On the basis of this procedure, several minor changes were made in the text.⁵¹

The amendment that the *Declaration* be remitted to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act procedure became the main motion when the original motion was withdrawn. Mariano Di Gangi moved in amendment: "(a) That the *Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation* be adopted [. . .] as an interim Statement setting forth the teaching of Holy Scripture on the subject of Church and Nation."⁵² His amendment prevailed over the motion by a vote of 129 to 1 thus establishing it as an Interim-Act. It was also agreed that the *Declaration* be sent to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act procedure.⁵³ There was only one dissent, that of H. L. Henderson of Portage la Prairie, Manitoba who stated his preference for "Lord" instead of "Head of Church and State" and who thought that the

⁴⁷ S. B. Coles, "Christ's Lordship Over Church and Nation," *Presbyterian Record* (Feb. 1953): 25-26; and Mariano Di Gangi, "Christ The King," *Presbyterian Record* (Apr. 1953): 28-29.

⁴⁸ *Acts and Proceedings* (1954): 242.

⁴⁹ *Acts and Proceedings* (1954): 42, 242.

⁵⁰ *Acts and Proceedings* (1954): 42.

⁵¹ *Acts and Proceedings* (1954): 64-65.

⁵² *Acts and Proceedings* (1954): 65.

⁵³ *Acts and Proceedings* (1954): 65.

Declaration's statement "beset by sin in every private and public relation" inferred [*sic*] a doctrine worse than "total and complete depravity."⁵⁴

The Eighty-First General Assembly meeting at St. Andrew's Church, Toronto received the report of the Committee on Remits regarding the vote of the Presbyteries.⁵⁵ Twenty-eight Presbyteries approved while eight disapproved and twelve Presbyteries did not vote. This meant a two-thirds majority in favour. Appropriately Gordon A. Peddie, whose Paris Memorial and 1939 Deliverance had initiated the process, moved the motion, seconded by Stuart B. Coles, that it be enacted. It was carried by a two-thirds majority vote.⁵⁶ Walter Jackson was the only person who dissented.⁵⁷

The Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation

The *Declaration* was a remarkable achievement for a small national church with limited theological resources. It came about as a result of solid theological work in response to a situation which had arisen in Germany and there had taken the theological form of denying the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, the Canadian Presbyterian Church was challenged by persons such as W. W. Bryden, Gordon Peddie and many others to "do theology" by thinking through the relationship of Church and State from a christological perspective and it did so. In an article entitled "A Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation" in a *Festschrift* for Karl Barth on the occasion of his seventieth birthday in 1956, Arthur C. Cochrane wrote the following:

Although the [. . .] *Declaration* may not be described as a "Barthian" document and was not prepared exclusively by "Barthians"—whatever may be meant by the term—it nevertheless clearly reflects the tremendous influence Karl Barth has had upon the Canadian Presbyterian Church. His influence is discernible not only in a christological doctrine of the State, but in that Church's awareness of her responsibility for the purity of her doctrine and for her Confession of Faith.⁵⁸

One must then modify David Marshall's categorical statement that "The theology of crisis did not become the harbinger of a revitalized church; rather, it was largely ignored in the councils of the churches."⁵⁹ On the contrary its voice was heard and heeded in

⁵⁴ *Acts and Proceedings (1954)*: 66.

⁵⁵ *Acts and Proceedings of the Eighty-First General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (1955)*: 288.

⁵⁶ *Acts and Proceedings (1955)*: 46.

⁵⁷ *Acts and Proceedings (1955)*: 90-91. Jackson thought that the *Declaration* made the state subordinate to the Church in respect of revelation, that the *Declaration* failed to acknowledge that Christ would surrender his Lordship, and also that Presbyteries were not given adequate opportunity to make changes before the *Declaration* came to them under the Barrier Act.

⁵⁸ *Antwort: Karl Barth Zum Siebzigsten Geburtstag Am 10. Mai 1956* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag AG, 1956) 458.

⁵⁹ Marshall 255.

Presbyterian Church courts by producing the *Declaration*, the *Preamble and New Ordination Vows*, and, years later, *Living Faith*.

The Content of the *Declaration*

The *Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation* consists of twelve articles.⁶⁰ Within an explicit trinitarian context, Article 1 confesses the Lordship of Christ in Church and State using language reminiscent of the Free Church emphasis that Christ is “both Head of the Church and Head of the Civil State.” This emphasis on the universal lordship of Christ or the “crown rights of the Redeemer” was, it should not be forgotten, an important theme in the Scottish Reformation and the succeeding century.⁶¹ Article 2 speaks of the respective powers which Christ has entrusted to the Church and the Civil State. He has ordained the Church “to serve Him in the proclamation of His word, in the administration of His sacraments, and in the life of faith which works by love.” The State has been ordained “to serve Him in the administration of justice.” This is simply a repetition of the traditional doctrine of the two swords. The distinctive function of the Church is not elaborated on while the next three articles expand on the distinctive function of the State by emphasizing that civil authority has been commissioned by Christ and has “the right and duty of using force under law against internal disorder and external aggression.” This stewardship of power must not be abused for God alone is absolute Lord and must be obeyed against all authorities whether civil or ecclesiastical when they claim absolute power. Here the *Declaration of Faith* is indebted to Article 2 of the *Barmen Declaration*. Article 6 gives the Church the right to denounce and resist every form of tyranny—political, economic, and ecclesiastical—especially when it becomes totalitarian. A citizen is not barred from disowning any government that usurps the sovereignty of Christ and may be obliged to rebel against it. In giving citizens the right to resist tyranny, the *Declaration* was inclined to follow John Knox’s view rather than Calvin’s, who held that only elected magistrates may collectively resist tyrants.⁶² Article 7 on “The Relation of Church and State” asserts that both church and state are subordinate to Jesus Christ and so must mutually support each other. Neither one is to dominate the other. The church is not the religious agent of the state and the state is not to be the political agent of the church. This article explicitly denies the separation of church and state. This was a doctrine the 1890 Assembly had flirted with in a series of resolutions on the separation of church and state in reaction to the Jesuit Estates Act, expressed in the slogan “A Free Church in a Free State.”⁶³ Instead

⁶⁰ For the full *Declaration*, as provided in the Presbyterian Church in Canada’s *The Book of Forms* (Toronto: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2005) 123-126, please see the Appendix which begins on page 34.

⁶¹ See Duncan B. Forrester, *Truthful Action: Explorations in Practical Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000) 169.

⁶² For John Knox’s views see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) 230-238; and for John Calvin’s view see *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (London: SCM Press, 1961) 1518-1519; 4.20.31.

⁶³ *Acts and Proceedings of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (1890)*: 55, Appendix 32.

Article 8 says clearly: “We reject all doctrines which assume [. . .] that the Church’s life should be or can be completely dissociated from the life of the Civil State.” The Article also states that in serving the state the church must not merge the Gospel with any political, economic, cultural, or nationalistic creed. It must not hold itself aloof from the affairs of the nation but serve it through its manifold mission of preaching, sacraments, discipline, prayer, and in works of Christian love. Christians have the duty to honour the civil laws and to fulfill all statutory obligations as unto Christ the Head as well as to work to remedy unjust laws.

Article 10 on “The Civil Government’s Duty toward the Church” is problematic. This article rightly speaks of the state’s responsibility to maintain peace and justice. One wishes that it had also mentioned freedom as in the Paris Deliverance. But problems arise in what follows: To the Church in all its branches the state owes the recognition of the church’s office and its “consequent right to due resources, time and opportunity for the public worship of God, for the education of her children in His truth and for the evangelizing of the Nation.” John Moir has aptly described this view—the position of the Free Church—as the state paying the piper but being forbidden to call the tune.⁶⁴ It is not altogether clear what is meant by “consequent right to due resources” especially with regard to worship, religious education, and evangelizing. Did the authors of the *Declaration* actually hold on the basis of Ezra 7:11-25 and its theocratic understanding that the Canadian State was somehow obliged to provide funds for religious enterprises? Fifty years later this strikes us as an incomprehensible view. It is surprising that it was not questioned in 1955. What follows is even more brazen: “It [the state] must pay serious attention whenever its office-bearers are addressed by the Church in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ [. . .].” The words “must pay serious attention” are definitely ill-advised.⁶⁵ One wishes that the more careful language of the 1945 statement had been used here:

[. . .] it is the duty of the Church to be ever humble, patient, long-suffering, to respect and above all to pray for the State and its officaries believing in the power of God and His Word. But it is also the supreme responsibility of the Church [. . .] to pronounce judgment upon palpable injustices, to call the State’s attention to its subordination to God and its divine obligation.⁶⁶

It would also have been wiser to follow Barmen more closely. In its Article 5, it speaks of the Church’s responsibility to draw “attention to God’s kingdom, God’s commandment and justice, and with these the responsibility of those who rule and those who are ruled,” without prescribing that the state must give serious attention to the Church’s pronouncements, as if these always promoted “the kingdom of God and his

⁶⁴ John S. Moir, “‘Who Pays the Piper...’: Canadian Presbyterianism and Church-State Relations,” *The Burning Bush and a Few Acres of Snow*, ed. William Klempa (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994) 77.

⁶⁵ I am indebted here to John W. Morden, formerly Associate-Chief Justice of the Ontario Court, and our conversation and correspondence on Article 10.

⁶⁶ *Acts and Proceedings (1945)*: 307.

righteousness.”⁶⁷ This would also been more in accord with Article 11 of the *Declaration* that “The Civil State and the Church are constantly in need of reformation by the Word of God.” One also wishes that this had been spelled out by saying that church, society, and the individual need to be continually reshaped in accordance with Christian truth.

Consequences of the *Declaration*’s Adoption

An immediate consequence of the adoption of the *Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation* as a subordinate standard was to raise the question of the Church’s relation to its subordinate standards. As noted earlier, the Joint Committee had no intention of re-writing or changing the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. The latter was a historical document and if changed it would cease to be the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. “What we are free to do,” it said, “is to review our subscription to the Westminster Confession, in whole or in part, and declare our doctrinal position accordingly.”⁶⁸ A 1955 Overture No. 30 from the Presbytery of East Toronto had asked that the *Declaration* not be adopted as a subordinate standard but as a comment on Chapters XX, XXIII and XXXI of the *WCF* and to proceed with making a “complete Declaration of Faith” of which the said *Declaration* would be a part. Stuart B. Coles dissented from this overture as a misunderstanding of the action of the 1954 Assembly.⁶⁹ A second overture from the same presbytery, No. 46 (1955) asked for clarification of the terms of subscription to the subordinate standards and spoke of the Church’s continuing confessional task.⁷⁰ The latter overture had been referred to the Articles of Faith Committee and it recommended that its prayer be granted and that the whole matter of ordination and induction vows be referred to the committee for study and report to a future Assembly.⁷¹

In its 1956 report to Assembly, the Articles of Faith Committee made two important points: first, that to say that the *WCF* is “founded upon and agreeable to the Word of God” does not imply any doctrine of infallibility of the said Confession; and secondly that the Church has a continuing confessional task.⁷² It also presented three ordination and induction questions and asked that they be remitted to presbyteries for study and report.⁷³ The three questions were long and complex. In a *Knoxonian* editorial in 1957 two theological students, Donald Corbett and Bill Klempa, wrote: “If brevity, simplicity, and exactitude are the marks of an adequate confessional statement, then certainly the present questions are to be preferred. It is with the utmost seriousness that

⁶⁷ Bax xxiv.

⁶⁸ *Acts and Proceedings (1951)*: 88.

⁶⁹ *Acts and Proceedings (1955)*: 340.

⁷⁰ *Acts and Proceedings (1955)*: 347-348.

⁷¹ *Acts and Proceedings (1955)*: 67.

⁷² *Acts and Proceedings of the Eighty-Second General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (1956)*: 502-503.

⁷³ *Acts and Proceedings (1956)*: 503.

we suggest that the most probable answer to any of these proposed questions would be, "[Moderator, Sir,] would you please repeat that?"⁷⁴

Work on the ordination questions continued during the next few years. Since this was the subject of a previous CSPH paper⁷⁵ suffice it to say here that it was finally decided to work with both a Preamble and Ordination Questions, to put the main content in the Preamble, to make the questions as few and short as possible, and to ask them in terms of the Preamble. The task was completed in 1969 and the Preamble and New Ordination Questions were remitted to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act that same year. It was reported to the 1970 Assembly that thirty-one presbyteries approved, while twelve disapproved.⁷⁶ Before the remit was voted on, Overture No. 6 from the Presbytery of Cape Breton questioning the constitutionality of the new ordination questions came before the Assembly.⁷⁷ Assembly voted that this overture not be granted. Upon being put to a vote the remit was approved.⁷⁸

Like the *Declaration*, the Preamble and Ordination Questions reflect the strong influence of Barth's theology. This is evident in the Preamble where three different levels of authority in the church are spoken of: the authority of Christ, the authority of the Bible, and the authority of church confessions. The binding to Jesus Christ is primary, then to the Scriptures which witness to him and thirdly, to the creeds and confessions of the Reformed Church, in particular, the subordinate standard, the *WCF*. While there was some opposition to this, the criticism being that it was a unitarianism of the second person of the Trinity, nevertheless, it won acceptance.⁷⁹ The adoption of the *Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation* in 1955 added another subordinate standard. Moreover, the concluding sentence of the second paragraph of the Preamble, after describing the Church's subordinate standards, added these words "and such doctrine as the Church in obedience to Scripture and under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, may yet confess in the Church's continuing function of reformulating the faith." The effect of this was to open the door to new confessions of faith. After much use and acceptance within the Presbyterian church, the confession *Living Faith* was adopted under the Barrier Act in 1998 and it too became one of the Church's subordinate standards.

⁷⁴ Donald Corbett and William Klempa, "Editorial," *The Knoxonian* 3.1 (1957): 3.

⁷⁵ See William Klempa, "Canadian Presbyterianism and the Westminster Standards," *Canadian Society of Presbyterian History Papers* 23 (1998): 38-51.

⁷⁶ *Acts and Proceedings of the Ninety-Sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (1970)*: 401.

⁷⁷ *Acts and Proceedings (1970)*: 599.

⁷⁸ *Acts and Proceedings (1970)*: 69.

⁷⁹ See *Acts and Proceedings (1970)*: 100 for the dissent by E. H. Bean, Gordon Cameron, Murray Graham, and Wm. Fitzimons, and the Synod of Atlantic Provinces Overture No. 9, 1971. It was answered in the Church Doctrine 1972 Report (*Acts and Proceedings of the Ninety-Eighth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (1972)*): 341-343.

Concluding Remarks

In his 2001 Bampton Lecture, David Fergusson of Edinburgh University remarked: “The relationship of church to state has often been cast in terms of the relations that obtain between two dominant institutions existing in a close and exclusive partnership. With the end of Christendom, this is now outmoded. A more differentiated approach is required [. . .].”⁸⁰ His point is well-taken. The decline of the mainline churches in Canadian society means that the church is no longer the dominant institution that it was in the past. Even in 1942 it was clear to some within the Canadian Presbyterian Church that with respect to church and state *Tempora mutantur nos et mutamur in illis* (the times are changed and we are changed with them). It is to the great credit of the authors of the 1942 Toronto overture and to ministers such as Gordon Peddie, W. W. Bryden, James D. Smart, Arthur C Cochrane, M. M. MacOdrum, and many others that they saw that the times were changing and for whom the possibility of tension between the claims of the state and the claim of God in Christ was not beyond their field of vision. The German Church Conflict served as a helpful catalyst. We should be grateful to those who drafted the *Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation*. They did their work well and much of what they said will endure. At the same time, they would have been well-advised to heed the words of the apostle: “Don’t cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you all” (Romans 12.3; J. B. Phillips). To demand that the state listen to the church when it speaks misconceives the church as a dominant institution and smacks of an unhealthy church triumphalism. A more sober way of speaking would have been to say that both “rulers and the ruled” are addressed by the Word of God regarding their responsibilities without prescribing which one must listen. Yet the greater problem today is that of an omni-competent state that does not always respect the limits it has been set and as far as the future is concerned we can expect more tension and conflict of the state with the churches and vice versa. Relations between church and nation will keep on an even keel when governments recognize that they cannot take the place of the church and the church remains true to itself by taking good care not to take the place of the state. To employ the language of Barmen and also of the Bible: “in the not-yet-redeemed world” the church must seek “[. . .] the welfare of the city where I have sent you [. . .], and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jeremiah 29:7).

⁸⁰ David Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 1.

Appendix

THE BOOK OF FORMS¹

APPENDIX E

DECLARATION OF FAITH CONCERNING CHURCH AND NATION

The Lordship of Christ in Church and State

1. The one holy triune God, sovereign Creator and Redeemer, has declared and established his kingdom over all powers in heaven and earth. (Hebrews 1:12:10; Isaiah 44:24-28; Acts 4:24-28; cf. Psalm 2; Daniel 7:13-14, 27; Zechariah 9:9-10; Matthew 28:18) By the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and by his exaltation to the right hand of the Father, all things have been made subject to Him, so that even age-long evil is overruled for good. (Luke 1:31-35; Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Romans 14:9-12; Colossians 2:15; Philippians 2:5-11; Acts 2:22-36; I Corinthians 15:24-28; cf. Psalm 100; I Peter 3:21-22; Romans 8:18-23, 31-39) We worship and obey Jesus Christ as Lord of lords and King of kings, Judge and Governor among the nations. (I Timothy 6:13-16; Revelation 1:5, 11:15-18; 17:12-14, 19:11-16; Psalm 22:28) He is both Head of the Church and Head of the Civil State, although their functions under him are to be differentiated, and their relationships to him are not to be confused. (Ephesians 1:10-11, 19-23; Colossians 2:10; Matthew 28:19-20; Isaiah 10:5-19, ch. 45; Jeremiah 27:111)

The Respective Functions of Church and State

2. Jesus Christ, in the administration of his Father's will, employs all the heavenly and earthly powers he may choose to serve Him. (John 3:35; I Corinthians 15:20-28) He employs the Church and the Civil State, entrusting to each its own distinctive function. (Jeremiah 1:9-10; Deuteronomy 4:32-40; Isaiah 45:1-7; John 19:11) He has ordained the Church to serve him in the proclamation of his word, in the administration of his sacraments, and in the life of faith which works by love. (Ezekiel 33:1-9; Matthew 16:18-19, 28:18-20; II Timothy 4:1-5; James 2:14-17) He has also in his grace ordained the State to serve him in the administration of his justice and benevolence, by discerning, formulating, and enforcing, such laws and policies as will promote the well-being of all its citizens and curb license, discord, and destitution. (Romans 13:1-7; Luke 3:12-14; Genesis 45:5-8; I Kings 3:3-28; I Timothy 2:1-2; Amos, e.g. 2:6-8, 5:11-12, 24, 8:4-8)

The Authority of the State

3. Christ, the eternal Word of God, through Whom all things consist and from Whom by the Holy Spirit all men receive their gifts and powers, calls and appoints men to the offices of civil government. (John 1:1ff.; cf. Psalm 33:6; Hebrews 1:1-3; Colossians

¹ *The Book of Forms* (Toronto: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2005) 123-126. Copyright 2002 by The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Used with permission.

1:15-17; Ephesians 1:3-14; Genesis 45:5-8; Jeremiah 27:5-11; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 2:21) He commissions the civil authorities with the right and duty of using force under law against internal disorder and external aggression. (Isaiah 10:5ff; 45:1-6; Romans 13:3-4; Nehemiah 4:7-20)

The Stewardship of Power

4. The righteousness of God, which came to decisive triumph in the cross and resurrection of Christ, is the sole foundation of national justice, development, and destiny. (Colossians 2:14-15; I John 5:4-5; Revelation 1:18; Hebrews 1:3, 8-9; Psalm 72:1-4) Every organ of power in the nation, whether cultural, political, or economic, is a stewardship under Christ, and can properly function only by obedience to his revealed word. (Romans 13:1, 6-7; Nehemiah 5:15; Matthew 24:45-25:30; John 12:35-36; Romans 14:23b) Every abuse of power constitutes a breach of trust, destructive to the abuser and injurious to the glory of God among his creatures. (Deuteronomy 28:58-68; Daniel 5:17-28; Deuteronomy 8:11-20; Acts 12:20-23)

The Limits of Earthly Authority

5. It is high treason against the Lord Jesus, and deadly both for the Church and for the Nation, to attribute to any man, group, or institution, the total power that belongs to Him. (II Thessalonians 2, esp. vss. 3-4; Acts 4:23-30; cf. Psalm 2; Revelation 13 and 14:9-11, 17:13-14) God alone is absolute Lord of the bodies and consciences of men, and he demands that we obey him against all authorities, whether civil or ecclesiastical, whenever they claim absolute power, especially the power to control men's thinking on right and wrong. (Romans 14:7-9; I Corinthians 4:1-5; 6:15-20; John 5:22-23; James 4:12; Acts 4:18-20, 5:27-32; Daniel ch. 3; I Kings 22:13-14; Jeremiah ch. 26)

The Church and Tyranny

6. It is the Church's duty to denounce and resist every form of tyranny, political, economic, or ecclesiastical, especially when it becomes totalitarian. (II Samuel 12:1-14; I Kings ch. 21; Amos 7:10-17; Daniel 3:18; Exodus 1:17) A citizen is not barred from disowning any government or organ of power which usurps the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, and indeed may be obliged by God's word to rebel against it. (I Kings 11:26-40; II Kings ch. 9; Acts 4:18-20, 5:25-32) But if involved in such action, the Church must remember that the weapons of her warfare are finally out of this world. (Matthew 4:1-11; 10:16-22, 26:51-54; II Corinthians 4:7-11, 10:3-5; II Kings 6:15-17) Led by the Holy Spirit she will in any situation bear public witness to the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ and to the freedom of all men in Him. (Acts 2:32-36, 5:25-32, 7:51-60, ch. 26; James 5:1-11; II Timothy 2:8-9)

The Relation of Church and State

7. The Church and State are intimately related, with manifold overlying concerns and common responsibility to their Lord. (Amos 7:10-15; Acts 22:22-29; Deuteronomy ch. 8; Malachi 2:10-16; Jeremiah 1, esp. vss. 5, 9, 10) Their true relationship derives from the subordination of each to Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:18-20) Each is bound to

aid the other according to its appointed power and functions, but neither is given any right thereby to attempt domination over the other. (Daniel 3:16-18; I Timothy 2:1-5) We reject any doctrine which misconceives the Church as the religious agent of the State. (Matthew 22:15-22; Luke 12:13-14) We reject any doctrine which misconceives the State as the political instrument of the Church. (John 18:28-37) We reject all doctrines which assume, whether on sectarian or on secular grounds that the Church's life should be or can be completely dissociated from the life of the Civil State. (Matthew 5:13-16, 17:24-27)

The Church's Service to the State

8. The Church must not merge or confuse her Gospel with any political, economic, cultural, or nationalistic creed. (Mark 12:28-34; cf. Exodus 20; Matthew 6:24; Daniel chs. 3, 6) At the same time the Church may not hold aloof from the affairs of the Nation, whether the authorities be of the faith or against it, for she must fulfil the ministry laid upon her by her Lord who became one with man for man's redemption. (The Prophets, passim, e.g., Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah; Romans 13:1-6; I Peter 2:12ff.; Matthew 25:31-46) She owes a manifold service to the State. (Romans 13:7-14; Matthew 5:13-16) Her preaching, sacraments, and discipline confront the Nation with Christ's judgment and grace. (Jeremiah 1:5; Acts 3:12-21; I Peter 2:11-12, 4:1-5) She offers thanksgiving and supplication to God on behalf of all men, with particular intercession for those in authority, praying that the overruling power of the Holy Spirit may fructify what is good and uproot what is evil in national and international life. (I Timothy 2:1-2; Daniel 9:9-19; II Chronicles 6:21-40, 7:14) In discharging her commission to evangelize she promotes righteousness and peace among men. (Amos 5:14-24; II Corinthians 5:14-21) As her Lord may lay it upon her, she declares and commits herself to his will by public proclamations of her courts or agents. (Acts 4:13-20; II Samuel 12:1-15a) In fulfillment of the law of Christ, she engages in special work of Christian love. (II Corinthians 8:11-15; Philippians 4:10-17; Luke 10:25-37) Her members take full share as their Christian calling in commerce, politics, and other social action. (Luke 3:10-14; John 17:15-18; Ephesians 6:5-9)

The Christian's Civil Duty

9. Christians must always do their utmost to honour the civil laws, and to fulfil all statutory obligations whether financial or personal, as unto Christ the Head. (I Peter 2:13-25; Titus 3:1-2; Romans 13:5-10; Mark 12:14-17) Nevertheless, no citizen is thereby relieved of his constant responsibility to work for the remedy of any unjust statute, or iniquitous assessment, or violation of conscience. (Acts 5:27-29; Isaiah 1:17; Amos 5:14-15; Micah 6:6-8; Esther 4:12-14)

The Civil Government's Duty Toward the Church

10. In its ordained service of God, the State has a three-fold duty to the Church. It has the duty of establishing public peace and providing protection, guarding impartially the rights of every citizen. (Acts 19:28-41, 21:30-39, 22:24-29) It owes to the Church in all her branches, without partiality, the recognition of her office and of her consequent right to due resources, time and opportunity, for the public worship of God, for the education of her children in his truth, and for the evangelizing of the

Nation. (Exodus 5:1-4; Ezra 7:11-25) It must pay serious attention whenever its office-bearers are addressed by the Church in the name of the Lord Jesus concerning the kingdom of God and his righteousness. (Acts chs. 25, 26)

Reformation by the Word of God

11. During the present age, while the Lordship of Christ is not yet openly disclosed nor perfectly acknowledged, men are beset by sin in every private and public relation. (II Thessalonians 2:1-12; Mark 13:21-23; Luke 18:8b; II Corinthians 4:3-18; Romans 1:18-32, 3:9-18, 7:15-25; Jeremiah 17:9) Our existence in this world is continually threatened by anxiety, covetousness, imperfect justice, and proneness to corruption. (I Kings 12:25-33, 13:33-34) The Civil State and the Church are constantly in need of reformation by the Word of God. (James 4:1-3, 5:1-6; Isaiah chs. 55, 59; Hebrews 4:12-13) Wherefore it behooves all civil and ecclesiastical persons to seek the grace of Christ without which they cannot rightly know or do his will. (John 12:25-26, 35-50)

The Final Manifestation of Christ's Dominion

12. The Lordship of Christ, in the midst of the evil and sorrow of this present world, must be discerned by faith, with the full assurance of our hope in Him. (John 5:17-29; I Corinthians 12:26; Hebrews 10:37-12:3; Romans 8:18-25; I John 3:2-3; Colossians 3:3-4) He is coming again for the healing of the nations and the perfecting of the Church. (Acts 1:11; II Peter ch. 3; Luke 12:35-40; Revelation 7:9-17, 22:1-2; Ephesians 5:25-27) In that day when he reveals the New Jerusalem, his sovereign dominion over the universe will be made openly visible to all, causing every knee to bow and every tongue to confess that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, to the glory of God the Father. (Revelation ch. 21; Romans 2:11-16; Philippians 2:10-11; Revelation 1:7-8, 5:11-14, 19:11-16; I Corinthians 15:20-28)