

Statement on Revelation, Scripture and Tradition

Presbyterian & Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue

1966

The discussions of the theological section [of the dialogue] were based upon the “position papers” of Dr. Schmidt and Father McKenzie. It is not possible to do justice to the learning and subtlety of these analyses or to the discussion itself in a summary statement. Some stereotypes were broken down and some common problems clarified. Continuing divergences were also identified.

It was agreed that the one divine source and substance of revelation is God in Christ. In the view of each, He communicates Himself or is transmitted both through our common Holy Scripture and through the continuing teaching and preaching (the tradition) of the Church. The Reformed acknowledged the indispensability of this continuing transmission and exposition of the Gospel in and by the Church. *Sola Scriptura* should be understood as functioning within this context. The Roman Catholics acknowledge a normative character to the Scriptural testimony to Christ in their tradition, although there are some teachings (e.g. as concerning Mary) whose Scriptural basis is problematical. There is thus an agreement on the mutual inclusion or “coinherence” of Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition.

Within this consensus the most conspicuous divergences seemed to be related to the Church’s teaching role and office. The Reformed questioned whether the Roman Catholic Church was in fact always faithful to Scripture and subject to it. The Roman Catholics questioned whether the Reformed were not subject to irregular and arbitrary claimants of teaching authority. The Roman Catholic teaching authority seemed to be more specifically located and to be accorded more authority than proper in the view of the Reformed. In the Roman Catholic view the Reformed teaching authority seemed very indefinite and uncertain.

The section wishes to continue the analysis of the elements of continuity and change in the continuing tradition of the Church and the exposition of Scripture down the centuries. The topic is stated as “The Development (or Reform) of Doctrine.”