

In Search of Ecclesial Autonomy. A Church Historical and Church Juridical Study of Developments in Church Polity in the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa (DRMC) and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) from 1881-1994.

by

Leslie Bernard van Rooi

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Promoter: Dr Robert Vosloo

Co-Promoter: Prof LJ Koffeman

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DECLARATION

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PREFACE

After nine full years of study, of which this dissertation is indeed the culmination, I would like to acknowledge the following people and institutions who made my studies possible and whose support inspired me:

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Summary

The Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) was established in 1881 and 1910 respectively. As pointed out in this study both these churches grew from the mission endeavours of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC).

In April 1994 the DRMC and the DRCA united in forming the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). This church has as confessional base the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Canons of Dordt and the Heidelberg Catechism as well as the Belhar Confession. The church order of the URCSA is built on these Confessions and in particular on the Belhar Confession. In this study I argue that it was only after the unification of the mentioned churches that a history characterised by guardianship, subordination and semi-autonomy came to an end.

However this may be the histories of the DRMC and the DRCA point out that, on a church juridical level, these churches were subordinate and to a large extent directly governed by the DRC. Here the model for the church planting as followed by the DRC will receive attention. By looking into the primary documents through which these churches were governed as well as the documents that formed the church orderly backbone of the mentioned churches in that, through their principles and stipulations, the DRMC and DRCA were organised internally, I attempt to evaluate these documents. These documents include the initial constitutions for the governance of the DRMC and the DRCA, the deeds of agreement between the regional synods of the DRC and the regional synods of the DRCA as well as the Deeds of Agreement between the DRC in South Africa (the Western and Southern Cape Synod of the DRC) the Synod of the DRMC, the first church orders of the DRMC and the DRCA and, to a lesser extent, the church order of the URCSA.

Through their histories these churches were granted church juridical liberties. These liberties form the foundation for the initial development in the polity of these churches. The content of the abovementioned documents highlights these liberties as well as the effect it had on the theological identities of the DRMC and the DRCA.

As the histories of these churches depict a strong strive towards reaching a position of ecclesial autonomy and the acknowledgment of their autonomy by the DRC, special attention is given to the concept and interpretation of ecclesial autonomy. In this regard I remark on the historical interpretation of ecclesial autonomy as it played out in the histories of the DRMC and the DRCA. Through the works of renowned Reformed theologians, I further look into historical interpretations of this theological principle, which is ecclesial autonomy. In doing this I attempt to formulate a specific understanding of ecclesial autonomy based on a particular interpretation of the Lordship of Christ. As outcome this interpretation shows towards the interdependent relation between churches. It can be argued that this impacts directly on the relation between the DRC, the DRMC and the DRCA, specifically in the ongoing processes of church re-unification. In a final turn in which I affirm

the interdependent and interrelatedness between churches, I argue towards the building of a vulnerable ecclesiology which impacts directly on an understanding of ecclesial autonomy, the specific polity of a church, as well as on the structures embodied by a community of believers.

Some of the tenets and convictions of Reformed church polity, as they are relevant to this study, are discussed in detail. In turn I use these principles in evaluating the church juridical position of the DRMC and the DRCA in the mentioned period. As such I point towards the strong deviations in Reformed church polity as it played out in the history of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. In this regard I also point towards the interrelatedness of these churches within the broader social context of South(-ern) Africa. I argue that these unique deviations are to a large extent distinct from the ecclesial context of South(-ern) Africa. Concluding remarks are made in this regard. Through the unpacked notion of what is termed an ecclesiology of vulnerability, built on the interdependent relation between churches, I make brief suggestions regarding the ongoing process of church re-unification between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

Opsomming

Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk (NGSK) en die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika (NGKA) het onderskeidelik in 1881 en 1910 tot stand gekom. Soos wat hierdie studie uitwys, het beide hierdie kerke gegroei vanuit die sendingaktiwiteite van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK).

In April 1994 het die NGSK en die NGKA verenig in die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika (VGKSA). Hierdie kerk het as konfessionele basis die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, die Dordtse Leerreëls, die Heidelbergse Kategismus sowel as die Belydenis van Belhar. Die kerkorde van die VGKSA is dan ook gebou op hierdie belydenisskrifte en dan in besonder op die Belydenis van Belhar. In hierdie studie redeneer ek dat dit eers ná die eenwording van die vermelde kerke was dat 'n geskiedenis gekenmerk deur voorgdyskap, ondergeskiktheid en semi-outonomie agterweë gelaat is.

Dit kan vermeld word dat die geskiedenis van die NGSK en die NGKA duidelik uitwys dat hierdie kerke, op 'n kerkregtelike vlak, ondergeskik was aan, en tot 'n groot mate regeer is deur die NGK. Die model vir die planting van kerke soos gevolg deur die NGK geniet in hierdie verband in die studie aandag. Verder het ek probeer om die inhoud van die primêre dokumente waardeur die NGSK en die NGKA regeer is, sowel as die dokumente wat as kerkordelike basis vir die interne organisering van hierdie kerke gebruik is, te evalueer. Die vermelde dokumentasie sluit in die oorspronklike Grondwette vir die regering van die NGSK en die NGKA, die Aktes van Ooreenkoms tussen die streeksinodes van die NGK en die streeksinodes van die NGKA sowel as die Aktes van Ooreenkoms tussen die NGK in Suid-Afrika (die sogenaamde Kaapse Kerk) en die sinode van die NGSK, die eerste kerkordes van die NGSK en die NGKA, en, tot 'n mindere mate ook die kerkorde van die VGKSA.

Deur die verloop van die geskiedenis is daar sekere kerkregtelike vryhede aan die NGSK en die NGKA toegestaan. Hierdie vryhede vorm, myns insiens, die basis van die oorspronklike kerkregtelike ontwikkeling(-e) in die vermelde kerke. Die inhoud van die bovermelde dokumente wys juis hierdie vryhede uit sowel as die effek wat dit op die teologiese identiteite van die NGSK en die NGKA gehad het.

Aangesien die geskiedenis van die NGSK en die NGKA 'n sterk strewe na kerklike outonomie en die erkenning van hierdie outonomie deur die NGK uitwys, word spesiale aandag gegee aan die bespreking van die konsep en interpretasie van kerklike outonomie. Die historiese begrip van hierdie term word verduidelik en spesifiek hoe dit uitgespeel het in die geskiedenis van die NGSK en die NGKA. Deur te verwys na die werke van welbekende Gereformeerde teoloë, word daar ook aandag gegee aan die historiese interpretasie van kerklike outonomie as teologiese beginsel. Daarvolgens probeer ek om 'n spesifieke begrip vir kerklike outonomie te formuleer. 'n Bepaalde interpretasie van Christus se heerskappy is hier as basis gebruik. As uitkoms dui hierdie geformuleerde interpretasie van kerklike outonomie op inter-afhanklike verhoudinge tussen kerke. Myns insiens impakteer dit direk

op die verhouding tussen die NGK, die NGSK en die NGKA en hier spesifiek dan op die proses van kerklike hereniging tussen hierdie kerke.

In 'n finale rondte gaan my argument oor die bou van wat genoem word 'n kwesbare ekklesiologie. Hierdie argument is gebou op 'n verstaan van kerklike outonomie wat wys op die inter-afhanklike verhouding tussen kerke. Myns insiens impakteer hierdie argument direk op 'n spesifieke begrip van kerklike outonomie, die spesifieke kerkreg wat uitspeel in 'n kerk, sowel as op die strukture wat beliggaam word in 'n gemeenskap van gelowiges.

Van die oortuigings van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg komend vanuit 'n spesifieke konteks, soos wat dit betrekking het op hierdie studie, word gedetailleerd bespreek. Ek het ook hierdie oortuigings gebruik om die kerkregtelike posisie van die NGSK en die NGKA in die vermelde periode te evalueer. In hierdie verband wys ek op hoe daar in die geskiedenis van hierdie kerke sterk afgewyk was van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg. Melding word in hierdie verband gemaak van die inter-afhanklikheid van hierdie kerke en die breër sosiale konteks van Suid(-er)-Afrika. Myns insiens is hierdie vermelde eiesoortige afwykings tot 'n groot mate uniek aan die kerklike konteks van Suid(-er)-Afrika. Slotopmerkings word in hierdie verband gemaak. Wanneer die konsep van 'n kwesbare ekklesiologie, gebou op 'n verstaan van die inter-afhanklike verhouding tussen kerke, beskryf word, maak ek kort opmerkings rakende die aangegaande proses van kerkhereniging tussen die kerke binne die familie van NG Kerke.

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| Chapter 1 |

Introduction

‘We believe and confess one single catholic or universal church - a holy congregation or gathering of true Christian believers, awaiting their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by his blood, and sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit’.¹

1.1 Research theme and introduction to the study

The theme of this dissertation is developments in church polity in the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa (DRMC) and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) from 1881-1994. This will be done by evaluating these developments from a church historical and juridical perspective. Specific attention will be given to the notion of ecclesial autonomy.

The specific use of the title ‘In search of Ecclesial Autonomy’ has a two fold meaning. On the one hand it points to the historical search for ecclesial autonomy by the DRMC and the DRCA and the acknowledgement of the autonomy of these churches by the DRC. On the other hand it points to a theological understanding of ecclesial autonomy characterised by interdependence between churches. As will be pointed out in the study this theological understanding is built on a specific interpretation of the Lordship of Christ.

The main focus of this study will fall in the period between 1881 and 1994. The reasoning behind this is found in the fact that the oldest ‘mission churches’ of the DRC, namely the DRMC was established in 1881. In 1994 the DRMC and the DRCA united in forming the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). As will be discussed, this date holds specific church juridical significance for the DRMC and the DRCA.

It needs, however, to be mentioned that, to fully comprehend the reasoning behind the 1881 establishment of the DRMC, chapter two will show towards significant historical events that took place prior to 1881 and thus impacted on the eventual establishment of ‘mission churches’. As will be pointed out in the last chapter brief mention is made of the continuous process of church re-unification that takes place post 1994.

In order to introduce this theme, some brief introductory remarks are made relating to the mission history of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). It must be remembered that the mission outlook of the DRC had as outflow the establishment of separate ‘mission churches’

¹ The Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 27, *the Holy Catholic Church*. In Pelikan & Hotchkiss (eds), *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, Volume II, 2003, 419.

under the different cultural groups in South(-ern) Africa. This included the establishment of the DRMC and the DRCA in 1881 and 1910 respectively - the two churches that this study focuses on.²

When comparing the mission endeavours of the DRC with that of other mission organisations actively involved in mission during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, it is interesting to note that the DRC started relatively late with official mission work. As will be illustrated in especially chapter 2, it was only in the second half of the 19th century that the mission enterprise of the DRC grew to the extent that it made this church the major role player on the mission frontiers of South(-ern) Africa. It is therefore no surprise that a church historian like Hannes Adonis is of the opinion that, although the DRC started relatively late and rather lethargically with official mission work, its enterprise grew to be unrivalled to that of mission societies/churches in the rest of the world within the mentioned period.³

As will be noted in the chapters to follow the mission enterprise and the enormous growth in converts brought about certain - and perhaps unforeseen - challenges to the DRC. These included the (re-)structuring of existing congregations to include the new converts and the growing opposition from the side of individual members of the DRC towards culturally integrated congregations. This, over time, led to the introduction of separate services for the coloured and black members of the DRC. However, after this compromise a gradual movement relating to the place of coloured and black members within the congregations of the DRC took place. The mentioned separate services gave rise to the building of separate church buildings, to the establishment of separate churches for the different cultural groups of the once structurally united DRC. As mentioned in historical documentation the synod decision of 1857, directly or indirectly, can on the one side be seen as a catalyst for an existing process that would, after this decision, open the way for official separation on the basis of colour.⁴ I argue that the eventual establishment of separate 'mission churches' is a direct and inevitable outflow of this decision.

This study will focus on the motivation for establishing the different 'mission churches' and specifically on the church juridical regulations and policies behind the formation and

² It should be noted that the DRCA officially came to being in 1963 after the unification of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in the Orange Free State (1910), the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in Transvaal (1932), the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in South Africa (1951), and the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in Natal (1952).

³ See in this regard, JC Adonis, 'Bevryding tot Eenwording en Getuigenis. Die Geskiedenis van die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika'. In P Coertzen, *350 Years Reformed. 1652- 2002*, 2002, 13.

⁴ *De Synode beschouwt het wenschlijk en schriftmatig, dat onze ledematen uit de Heidenen, in onze bestaande gemeenten opgenomen en ingelijfd worden, overal waar zulks geschieden kan; maar waar deze maatregel, ten gevolge van de zwakheid van sommigen, de bevordering van de zaak van Christus onder de Heidenen, in de weg zoude staan, de gemeente uit de Heidenen opgerigt, of nog op te rigten, hare Christelijke voorregten in een afzonderlijk gebouw of gesticht genieten zal.* See in this regard *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1857, 59-60. As the Dutch quotation makes clear the synod argued that, although it was not in accordance with Scripture, separation on the basis of the weakness of some would from now on officially be allowed in the DRC.

governance of the DRMC and the DRCA. As this had direct implication on the relation between the DRMC and the DRCA in relation to the DRC, these varying relations will be highlighted throughout this study. In this regard I agree with Smith when he notes that within the mentioned regulations the relation between the 'planting church' and the 'planted church' can indeed be found.⁵

With the establishment of the different 'mission churches' specific constitutions were drafted and implemented. The DRMC and the DRCA would be governed through these constitutions with their strong and definite characteristics of paternalism and governance from the side of the DRC over the DRMC and the DRCA. From a church juridical perspective this meant that the DRMC and the DRCA were subordinate to the DRC. This in turn impaired the synods of the DRMC and the DRCA when it came to them taking autonomous decisions relating to especially governing and structuring the mentioned churches. As such the autonomy of the DRMC and DRCA was weakened through the guardianship of the DRC. Included in this study is a detailed discussion on ecclesial autonomy from a Reformed perspective on the basis of the tenets of Reformed church polity. This will be followed by an evaluation of the historical realities of the DRMC and the DRCA specifically relating to the church juridical position of these churches.

Although regulations regarding mission and the planting of churches were drafted by the different Dutch Reformed Churches,⁶ it was not until 1935 with the drafting and acceptance of an official mission policy (1935) by the federated DRC that a more or less uniform paradigm for mission came into being within the ranks of the DRC. The outcomes were clear. Separation on an ecclesial level - on the basis of race/culture - should be seen as in aid of mission and should therefore be maintained. This was in line with social segregation on the political front in South Africa. As such the different 'mission churches' were to grow in autonomy and would in the process be aided by the DRC in this self-defined process of reaching ecclesial autonomy moulded by the mission outlook of the DRC. With this the DRMC and the DRCA cannot but take in a position of subordination in relation to the DRC as 'mother church'.

From a church juridical perspective, and as will be noted in this study, the DRMC and the DRCA took in a subordinate position in relation to the DRC as their guardian. As such the autonomy of these churches in historical perspective was questionable. However this may be, I will indicate that the DRMC and the DRCA underwent certain church juridical developments within their ranks, mostly on the basis of certain 'freedoms' allowed by the DRC. As such the synods of the DRMC and the DRCA gradually had more autonomy in

⁵ See in this regard NJ Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke vir die nie-blanke bevolkingsgroepe deur die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika.' In *Annale*. Vol 34. Serie B no.2 Stellenbosch University, 1973, 5.

⁶ It should be remembered that from 1862-1962 four Dutch Reformed Churches existed namely the DRC in South Africa (the Cape Church), the DRC in the Orange Free State, the DRC in Transvaal and the DRC in Natal.

making autonomous and authoritative decisions. This gradual process followed the line of amendments to the different constitutions, the ending of the constitutions with their central tenets, the implementations of the different Deeds of Agreement between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA, and the drafting of church orders by the DRMC and the DRCA. I will point out that the unification of the DRMC and the DRCA in the formation of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) on the basis of a new and unique church order can indeed be seen as the culmination of these developments.

As such this study will examine church juridical developments within the DRMC and the DRCA from a position of absolute subordination to a position of ecclesial autonomy on the basis of church juridical principles with the establishment of the URCSA. The relation between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA will provide the key in noting these developments.

1.2 Research methodology

This study will be done from a Reformed ecclesial perspective focusing on Reformed church polity and Reformed Church history. The focus will be on historical developments in Reformed church polity spanning over a period of more than 100 years within the DRMC and the DRCA. Illustrations, documentations and reports in synodical documents and missional descriptions will be some of the primary documents used in this study. Added to these are the different constitutions for establishing the 'mission churches', the Deeds of Agreement between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA, as well as the early church orders of the mentioned churches. These central documents relating to the planting and governance of the DRMC and the DRCA will be evaluated through the re-reading of historical church juridical documents from the Dutch ecclesial context. The family of Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa shares in the history and heritage of the different Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

Due to the interrelatedness of the histories of the DRMC, the DRCA and the DRC special mention will be made of the relational history between these churches. As this study will point out, it is in this relation between the mentioned churches that the outflow of church polity is most vividly illustrated. The histories of the DRMC and the DRCA (and also that of the DRC) were directly influenced by socio-political factors as it played out in the history of South(-ern) Africa. Legitimation for the prevailing social paradigms was given through the structures and polity of the mentioned churches. As such this study will also focus on the socio-historical context of South(-ern) Africa in as much as it relates to the ecclesial histories of specifically the DRMC and the DRCA.

Therefore two main methodological elements can be distinguished in this study, namely:

- 1) the theory and practice of Reformed church polity

- 2) historical research relating to developments in church polity as it relates to the DRMC and the DRCA

1.2.1 The theory and practice of Reformed church polity

From the time of the reformer, John Calvin, and the Sixteenth Century Protestant Reformation certain context and time specific principles developed⁷ relating to, amongst others, how the governance of a church occurs through the Lordship of Christ, and how this should be structurally expressed in the church. As time passed, these and other aspects relating to church governance became part of the theological discipline of Reformed church polity impacting directly on the family of Dutch Reformed Churches in South(-ern) Africa.⁸

It can without any doubt be said that Reformed church polity, with its strong biblical base, should develop constantly and as such should undergo necessary changes and developments. However this may be, there are certain central elements of Reformed church polity that (can) still provide clear guidelines for this developing science and as such need to be rediscovered. These include the biblical principles that Christ alone governs His church and that no church or office shall rule over another. This is illustrated through the famous 'golden rule' of Emden. Our ecclesial history points out that in neglecting these and other principles the Reformed church tolerated practices of domination between churches that had a very negative effect on the identity of churches. As will be pointed out in this study this comes to clear expression in the relational history of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

To point out how skewed practices influenced by contextual circumstances and justified amongst others through Reformed church polity played out in the history of the DRMC and the DRCA, I will make use of the work of renowned Reformed theologians including Gijsbertus Voetius, Harm Bouwman, Frederik Rutgers and Abraham Kuyper as a point of departure in my evaluation of the mentioned practices. I will also look into historical data relating to the planting of churches within the Reformed tradition placing a special focus on the Dutch and South African ecclesial contexts. In this regard I will look into synodical decisions, historical church orders as well as documentation relating to mission (church planting). I will evaluate church juridical developments within the context of the DRMC and the DRCA on the basis of historical documentation within Reformed church polity. Due to

⁷ It needs to be mentioned that these 'principles' are continuously developing in relation to an ever changing ecclesial context.

⁸ In his church juridical research Coertzen mentions that it is indeed of importance to note that the Reformation impacted on a vast number of contexts and also directly on the Reformed Churches in South Africa. *'Die betekenis van hierdie studie is onder meer geleë in die feit dat Genève, Londen, Parys, Antwerpen, Wezel, Emden, Den Haag en Dordrecht inderdaad die historiese agtergrond vorm vir ons kerklike reg in Suid-Afrika. En deur hierdie kerkordes, die teologie wat hulle begrond en die mense wie se geloof daardeur gevorm is, is Johannes Calvyn en die Reformasie ook deel van Suid-Afrika se geskiedenis'*. See PC Coertzen, *Vanaf Genève na die Suidpunt van Afrika*. Stellenbosse Teologiese Studies, Nommer 17, 1989, 3. Cape Town: NG Kerk Uitgewers.

the fact that these historical figures and their works need to be constantly re-evaluated on the basis of Scripture, I will bring the mentioned work/documentation into conversation with more recent theological works including that of Willie Jonker, Hannes Adonis, Leo Koffeman, Pieter Coertzen, and others. In their work these theologians - amongst others - point out the value of re-interpreting the principles of Reformed church polity on the basis of Scripture. In my evaluation of their works I will try to point out that Reformed church polity needs to be constantly re-evaluated. However, this can only be done if one takes the historical developments into account.

These sources will further provide the necessary material to evaluate church juridical developments as it played out in the history of the DRMC and the DRCA.⁹ This historical evaluation will provide the researcher with the opportunity to assess the place, worth and method of practicing Reformed church polity responsibly within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. Here the ecclesial history of the DRMC, the DRCA and the URCSA - with its confessional basis - will provide the best milieu.¹⁰

1.2.2 Historical research relating to developments in church polity within the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA 1881-1994

For the largest part of their histories the DRMC and the DRCA were regarded and treated - from a church juridical perspective - as inferior/subordinate in relation to the DRC that governed over the so-called 'daughter churches' as 'mother church'. As time progressed, the DRMC and the DRCA were systematically allowed to develop in a church juridical sense. This increasingly opened the way for the mentioned churches to make their own synodical decisions relating to the governance and structuring of the churches. In this study I will identify certain phases of church juridical development in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA. These go hand in hand with documentation relating to the governance of the DRMC and the DRCA, namely the phase of church planting and the drafting of constitutions for the DRMC and the DRCA, the phase within which these constitutions were amended to give more 'freedoms' to the DRMC and the DRCA on the basis of certain prerequisites, the phase characterised by the partial ending of the constitutions and the drafting and implementation of the Deeds of Agreement between the DRMC and the DRCA, and the DRC. The last distinguishable phase was introduced by the drafting and implementation of church orders by the DRMC and the DRCA, which find full expression in the unification of the DRMC and the largest part of the DRCA on the basis of a church order to form the URCSA.

⁹ This cannot be done without taking into account church juridical developments within the DRC. However, the central focus of the study is on the DRMC and the DRCA and as such any remarks on the developments within the DRC will be made to highlight the importance of these developments with regard to the DRMC and the DRCA.

¹⁰ As will be pointed out in this study the influence of the Belhar Confession on the ecclesiology and therefore also on the church polity of the URCSA should not be underestimated.

To be able to do this and to fully comprehend the complexities surrounding the mentioned phases I will evaluate historical data relating to the establishment of the mentioned churches. I will further assess synodical decisions made by synods of the DRMC, the DRCA and the DRC. I will also focus on documentation relating to the mission outlook of the DRC in so far as it impacts on the DRMC and the DRCA.

The establishment of separate 'mission churches' by the DRC is deplored by many. At the time of writing this dissertation, renewed efforts to unite the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches seem, however, to be in vain. This study will highlight the historical relationship between the DRMC, the DRCA and the DRC. By focusing on issues relating to ecclesial autonomy I will point towards the importance of a sound foundation for ecclesial relations on the basis of the Lordship of Christ. This is of major importance in efforts relating to church re-unification within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

1.3 Research questions and hypothesis

Primarily three specific questions will be addressed in this study. In the first instance this study wants to determine how and to what extent church juridical developments occurred in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA from 1881-1994. Attention will thus be given to gradual developments from a position of total subordination and the right of veto of the DRC over the DRMC and the DRCA to a position of ecclesial autonomy. These developments found a culmination in the formation of the URCSA on the basis of a new and unique church order (1994).

In the second instance this study wants to determine to what extent one can assume the church juridical autonomy of the DRMC and the DRCA over different historical phases. To determine this special attention is given to the study of historical documentation relating a historical discussion of autonomy within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

In the third instance attention will be given to an effort to determine what is to be understood under autonomy on an ecclesial and church juridical level. The histories of the DRMC and the DRCA will form the background in this regard. A theological discussion on the Lordship of Christ will follow. A specific interpretation of the Lordship of Christ will give directions to an understanding of ecclesial autonomy that point towards the interdependence between churches. From this flows a discussion on the notion of an ecclesiology of vulnerability.

In this study I will argue that because of their histories the DRMC and the DRCA cannot be viewed as autonomous mission churches due to the paternalistic stronghold of the DRC imbedded in church juridical tenets over these churches. The unification of the DRMC and the DRCA in the formation of the URCSA points to a different reality.

1.4 Motivation for the project

It is remarkable to note how limited data and documentation are regarding church juridical developments in the ranks of the DRMC, the DRCA and the URCSA. In the first instance this study aims to make a tangible contribution in this regard. Although the primary focus of this study is on the family of Dutch Reformed Churches this contribution is however not limited to the mentioned churches. This study will in essence affirm the interrelatedness of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches - both in historical perspective and in its current reality.

In the second instance this study impacts on the matter of church re-unification within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. As such attention will be given to the historical relation between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. Through an interpretation and study of the histories of the mentioned churches this study will work towards an understanding or definition of ecclesial autonomy that has as aim to show towards the intrinsic interrelatedness of churches as equals under the Lordship of Christ. By pointing towards the impact of this interrelatedness of churches an ecclesiology of vulnerability is proposed. In the last instance it is pointed out that this interrelatedness between churches and the proposed ecclesiology of vulnerability has direct implications for the processes of church re-unification between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

The process of church re-unification has direct implications on the practicing of church polity within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. In this regard this study wants to point out the value of historical Reformed church juridical tenets. At the same time the study will show that these tenets need to be continuously re-interpreted and, if needs be, it should be newly formulated. One of the direct implications of this study on Reformed church polity relates to the specific understanding of ecclesial autonomy as will be indicated in this study.

1.5 Structure and content

In the following section, I will highlight the outline of and flow within the chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter 1 gives a general overview of the background, methodology, hypothesis and aim of this study.

Chapter 2 gives attention to the missional history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches by specifically focusing on the model followed by the DRC in planting separate, indigenous 'mission churches' under the different cultural groups in South(-ern) Africa. Further attention is given to the differing missionary enterprises in the different geographical regions in South Africa. The focus is also on the apparent fear of equalisation (*gelykstelling*) in the context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches and the South African society in general, pointing towards the influence of this apparent fear on the formulation of the

model for church planting as formulated by the DRC. This chapter ends with some brief remarks relating to the first official mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches (1935).

Chapter 3 gives a detailed discussion on the historical documents that played a significant role in establishing the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa (1881), the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in the Orange Free State (1910), the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in Transvaal (1931), the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in Natal (1952), and the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church (1951). These documents include the constitutions for establishing and governing the mentioned churches (1881-1961), the Acts of Agreement between the different regional synods of the DRC and the DRMC and the regional synods of the DRCA (1963-1986), the first church orders for the DRMC and the DRCA (1963-1990), and the church order of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (1994). With this the church juridical position of the DRMC and the DRCA over a period of more than 100 years is illustrated.

Chapter 4 gives attention to issues relating to the autonomy of the church by evaluating ecclesial autonomy at the hand of historical documentation in the Reformed tradition. Throughout this chapter I opt for a specific understanding/interpretation of ecclesial autonomy founding this interpretation on a Reformed understanding of the Lordship of Christ. Throughout this chapter mention is made of historical church juridical tenets specifically relating to the offices in the Reformed tradition, the planting of churches, and the relation between churches. Due to its major impact on the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, a discussion follows on the so-called 'three selves theory' of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson. This chapter concludes with a discussion on the Lordship of Christ from a Reformed perspective.

Chapter 5 gives a concise church juridical evaluation of the content as described in especially Chapters 2 and 3. I do this by making specific references to citations in Chapter 4. As such this chapter evaluates the church juridical position of the DRMC and the DRCA in historical perspective (1881-1994). The relation between these churches and the DRC is once more highlighted. Concluding remarks are made on the Belhar Confession and its impact on the theology and identity of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA).

I conclude this dissertation with Chapter 6. In this chapter I indicate how ecclesial autonomy was understood in the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. As discussed in Chapter 4 I further discuss the proposed understanding of ecclesial autonomy, building it on an ecclesiology of vulnerability and the principle that Christ alone governs His Church. I conclude this chapter and the dissertation with brief remarks on the ongoing strive towards church re-unification within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. By highlighting the proposed understanding of ecclesial autonomy as well as pointing towards the impact of an ecclesiology of vulnerability I make brief proposals for this ongoing process.

1.6 Terminology and key concepts in this dissertation

The Family of Dutch Reformed Churches

Within the context of South Africa the term ‘family of Dutch Reformed Churches’ refers to the deep and historic relation between the DRC, the DRCA, the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) and the URCSA.¹¹ It should be noted that in the broader African context this term further refers to the relatedness of other ‘Dutch Reformed Churches’.¹² In terms of the aims and outcomes of this study this term specifically points to the relation between the DRMC, the DRCA and the DRC.

Mother Church/Daughter Church

Reformed church polity knows no Biblical basis for the use of terms including ‘mother church/daughter church’, ‘planting church/planter church’ and ‘older church/younger church’.¹³ However, within church history the use of these and other terms over history is acknowledged. Where possible different terms should however be used that would specifically depict the interrelatedness and interdependence of churches from a Biblical perspective.

For the aim of this study these terms are used frequently to try to point out the paternalistic description behind theme. This is of importance in pointing out the historical relation between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA. This in turn had a direct effect on the church juridical position of the DRMC and the DRCA in relation to the DRC and therefore the significance of the use of these terms in this study.

Ecclesial Autonomy

The term ecclesial autonomy is often used in this dissertation. In short it expresses the autonomy of a church as a community in its own right. In this dissertation I show towards the historical interpretation of this term in the Reformed ecclesial tradition. It is also pointed towards the specific understanding of ecclesial autonomy as it played out in the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. In a final instance an alternative understanding of this concept based on the notion of ecclesial interdependence or the direct relatedness of churches under the Lordship of Christ is proposed.

¹¹ In historical perspective this term should include the former DRMC.

¹² For an overview in this regard see <http://www.ngkerk.org.za/ngkfamilie.asp>

¹³ Even the term and concept ‘separate church’ is a *contradictio in terminis* as the Bible knows of only one church of Christ.

The Lordship of Christ

This concept is well known in the Reformed church polity and it has an immense impact on church governance - depending on its specific biblical interpretation.¹⁴ In the Reformed churches this concept shows towards the theological presupposition that Christ alone governs His Church. As such the offices are aligned to this principle.

In this dissertation I highlight the historical interpretation and value of this theological concept pointing towards its direct impact not only on the offices in the Church but also on the relation between churches. As such I point toward a re-appreciation of this term in the light of the proposed understanding of ecclesial autonomy.

Guardianship

In this dissertation the term guardianship refers to the relation between the DRC and the DRMC and DRC. As is pointed out, the relation between the DRC and the mentioned churches is one characterised by an unequal relationship where the DRC directly or indirectly controlled and governed the DRMC and the DRCA. The paternalistic relation between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA affected every sphere of the ecclesial life over the largest part of the histories of the mentioned churches as dealt with in this study.

This historical relation between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA had as effect a strong distrust of the DRC from the side of the DRMC and the DRCA. As such it hampers the relational growth of these churches in the process of church re-unification.

An ecclesiology of vulnerability

This theological concept is built on the vulnerability of the church. In the dissertation I attempt going into a conversation with Nico Koopman and Leo Koffeman. In essence this term expresses the vulnerable nature of the church as founded through its ecclesiology. This vulnerability points toward the deeply interrelated nature of the church in relation to other churches. As this has a direct impact on the ecclesiology of the church it further impacts on the polity, ecclesial structures, confessionality and, as Koopman highlights, the public calling and witness of the church.

This dissertation points towards the vulnerability of the church and the impact it has on the relation between churches. As such it impacts on my understanding of ecclesial autonomy.

¹⁴ It needs to be mentioned that the term 'Lord' can be viewed as patriarchal. However, the specific use of this term in this dissertation wants to show towards a new interpretation of this well known term.

| Chapter 2 |

Planting 'mission congregations' and establishing separate 'mission churches'. The mission history of the DRC

'And so this holy church is not confined, bound or limited to a certain place or certain persons. But is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world, though still joined and united in heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith'.¹⁵

2.1 Introduction

On the 14th of April 1994 the former Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) united in constituting the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA).¹⁶ With this, unification between the two oldest of the so-called 'daughter churches' of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) came to being.¹⁷ This unification signalled the end of an ecclesial history characterised by the formation of racially separated churches under guardianship of the DRC within the context of South(-ern) Africa.

In this chapter the establishment of the DRMC (1881) and the DRCA (1910)¹⁸ as churches stemming from the mission activities of the DRC is discussed. This is done by focussing on the model for church planting created and followed by the Dutch Reformed Churches in establishing racially separate churches for the so-called Coloured and Black peoples/communities of South(-ern) Africa. The researcher is of the opinion that the model for the planting of churches as followed by the DRC along with other more general mission practises directly led to the formation of separate 'mission churches' for different racial and cultural groups.

The specific model for the planting of churches was created by the DRC under the influence of certain factors that played a role within the context of the Dutch Reformed Churches. This chapter therefore looks into possible social and historical influences that played a role and directly contributed to the establishment of the specific model. In this chapter it further

¹⁵ The Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 27, *the Holy Catholic Church*. In Pelikan & Hotchkiss (eds), *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, 2003, 419.

¹⁶ See *Acta Synodi*, URCSA, 1994, 38-40, 311-312. It needs to be mentioned that in November of the same year the DRCA Regional Synod of Phororo decided to split from the URCSA. In 1997 the Evangelical Reformed Church in Africa (ERCA) with its stronghold in Namibia joined this uniting Church.

¹⁷ The DRMC and the DRCA, both racially distinct and separated churches, mostly came into being through the extensive missionary work of the DRC within the (missional) context of South(-ern) Africa.

¹⁸ Here it needs to be noted that the date of 1910 refers to the establishment of the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in die Oranje Vrystaat* (Dutch Reformed Mission Church in the Orange Free State). This is the eldest of four churches that in 1963 united to form the DRCA.

needs to be determined whether the bases of these influences were socially and/or theologically motivated. All of this can best be done by looking at the historical run-up to the DRC synodical decision of 1857 and the contributing factors that led to the first official mission policy of the DRC in 1935.

In the first instance this chapter is of a historical nature as it focuses on the eventual establishment of the DRMC and the DRCA by the different Dutch Reformed Churches within the diverse context of South(-ern) Africa. It is important to note that, although this is not in the first instance a purely historical study, historical data will to a large extent form the basis of this study. Furthermore this chapter looks into missiological data regarding the illustrious mission enterprise of the DRC focussing on the formation of the DRMC and the DRCA. The history of the DRC shows that this church, historically speaking, rests on its understanding of its mission task and witness within its diverse context. Therefore this chapter looks back into the missional growth of the DRC and how this influenced not only this church model for church planting but also how this would eventually help determine the specific direction in which church polity within the broader family of Dutch Reformed Churches would develop.

As noted the focuss of this study will show towards the establishment of the DRMC and the DRCA in 1881 and 1910 respectively. However, as was pointed out in chapter one, to fully comprehend the reasoning behind the eventual establishment of the mentioned churches, it is important to look into historical events leading up to this establishment. Due to its immense influence on church juridical developments in the DRMC and the DRCA and these churches understanding of autonomy specific mention is also made of the mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches (1935).

2.2 The beginning of missionary work at the Cape by the DRC

With regard to the mission history of the DRC the question of when exactly mission work started at the Cape is often asked within a wide range of historical studies. Here the role and work of the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) and the so-called *sieketroosters* are often discussed within missiological and anthropological studies as a point of departure.¹⁹ The direct and interwoven relation between the DEIC and the Church (DRC) makes it very difficult to clearly establish who of the two parties initiated mission work in these earliest times.²⁰ It is, however, not the primary aim of this study to look into this specific aspect in detail. What does need to be looked at within this chapter is how official mission work

¹⁹ For good discussions in this regard see JC Adonis, *Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur weer opgebou*, 1982, 28-32, GBA Gerdner, *Die wording, wese en werking van die NG Kerk se sendingbeleid*, 1951, and NJ Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke vir nie-blanke bevolkingsgroepe deur die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika'. *Annale*. Vol. 34. Serie B no.2. Stellenbosch University. 1973.

²⁰ PJJ Els, *Kerkplanting by die Suid-Afrikaanse Sendinggenootskap. 'n Sendingwetenskaplike ondersoek na gemeentevorming in die Suid-Afrikaanse Gestig*, 1971, 21. 'Eers namate die Ned. Geref. Kerk verder gegroei en ontwikkel het, het dit die besliste leiding in die sendingsaak geneem'. See Els, *Kerkplanting by die Suid-Afrikaanse Sendinggenootskap*, 1971, 21.

started within the ranks of the DRC at the Cape and what model, with regard to the planting of churches, was followed by the DRC in doing mission work.

It is interesting to note that, although the settlers shared a strong religious conviction, not much official mission work was done by the DRC during the first 150 years of this church's presence and establishment at the Cape. Gerdener refers to this period (1652-1826) as the period of private initiative and he notes the following: '*Gedurende die eerste honderd jaar na Jan van Riebeeck het die Ned. Geref Kerk as sodanig geen sendingwerk gedoen nie; amptelik het daardie kerk nog nie opgetree nie. Hier en daar het 'n verbygaande predikant hom die lot van die slawe en Hottentotte aangetrek.*'²¹ Historical reasons for this are found in the fact that the DRC at the Cape was under 'governance' of the DEIC as well as the fact that the church did not have the capacity, both in terms of human and financial resources, to be involved in mission.

This gradually changed from early in the nineteenth century onwards. It should be noted that this was largely due to a mission revival within the European protestant churches of the time and the forthcoming impact of this on the DRC through some of her ministers.²² In this period (from 1799 onwards) the DRC, although at a very slow pace, started with missionary activities, of which Adonis describes the later product as unequalled when compared to the missionary work of other churches of this period.²³

To understand the enormous mission effort done by the DRC in the region of what is today known as South Africa, the date of 1824 is of great importance. On 2 November 1824 the first synod of the DRC was held on African.²⁴ Not only was this synod significant for future developments in mission but it also led in a new day in the ecclesial history of the DRC. In this regard Van Heerde notes that '*(N)ou sou die Ned. Geref. Kerk van Suid-Afrika vir die eerste keer die geleentheid geniet om as 'n eenheid op te tree; die pad was oop vir gesonde ontwikkeling en die ontwikkeling het dan ook dadelik op elke gebied, insluitende die Sending,*

²¹ GBA Gerdener, *Reguit Koers Gehou*, 1951, 14. It is interesting to note that Giliomee calls the DRC a church of slave owners due to the fact that the Dutch settlers made up the biggest chunk of slave owners at the Cape and because these settlers were members of the DRC. See H Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 2004, 79.

²² Relating to the establishment of the South African Mission Society in 1799 Rev DJA Jordaan notes the following: '*Die stigting van die Suid-Afrikaanse Sendinggenootskap 179 jaar gelede in Kaapstad vloei uit die sendingywer wat in die laaste kwart van die 18de eeu in Europa geheers het. Die gevolg van hierdie ywer is die stigting in Engeland van die Londense en in Nederland van die Rotterdamse Sendinggenootskap*'. See DJA Jordaan, *Gedenkskrif oor die Suid-Afrikaanse Sendinggestig, Kaapstad (1799-1978)*, 1978, 5.

²³ JC Adonis, 'Bevryding tot Eenwording en Getuigenis'. In P Coertzen (ed), *350 Years Reformed. 1652 - 2002*, 2002, 13.

²⁴ Gerdener views the fact that the Dutch church in South Africa had obstructive ties with the church in Holland as one of the reasons why mission started so slowly. In his view the Synod of 1824 "freed" the church to a large extent. But the church would remain under the control of the State until 1843 and it would not be until this time that the DRC would be a freed church according to Gerdener. See Gerdener, *Reguit koers gehou*, 1951, 29 & 31.

*ondanks belemmeringe plaasgevind.*²⁵ Specifically regarding the impact of this synod on mission it is noted that decisive decisions regarding mission were taken and this set the tone for the eventual development and establishment of separate 'mission congregations'. In this regard Crafford rightly notes that the decisions of this first synod had a great impact on the mission history of the DRC.²⁶

At this synod it was decided that the office of missionary, as a distinct office separated from the office of minister, was instituted and on 14 November 1824 the first missionary in the person of Leopold Marquard²⁷ was ordained.²⁸ The main aim was to put the Church (DRC) on the path of active mission. It was decided that this could best be done if the missionary only focused his ministry on the christianising and spiritual well-being of the 'heathen' and therefore the separate institution of the office of missionary came into existence in the mission context of the DRC. In this regard the synodical resolution with regard to the ordination of missionaries of 1824 clearly states that those ordained as missionaries would specifically serve the 'heathen'.

*De Synode heeft vasgesteld, dat Zendingen, Ledematen der Hervormde Kerk zynde, voortaan, as zy zulks verlangen, door en van wegens de Algemeene Kerkvergadering zullen kunnen worden geordend, om onder de Gemeenten, door hen uit de Heidenen verzameld, de Heilige Sacramenten te bedienen, onder die bepalingen, welke de Synode dienstig zal oordeelen, des aangaande te maken.*²⁹

This decision regarding a more structured and organised approach to active mission work paved the way for new and far-reaching developments within the DRC that would keep on having an effect on the divisions within the broader family of Dutch Reformed Churches until this very day.

It should be noted that, until the time of this decision, missionary endeavours were undertaken by the individual members/congregations of the DRC at the Cape, the *Zuid-Afrikaanse Zendingen Genootskap* or the South African Missionary Society (SAMS), and by the other Mission Societies³⁰ actively present at the Cape and surrounding areas. Periodically even after this decision the DRC largely left mission work to the SAMS and other mission societies. Due to external influences, especially from the side of the colonists, the SAMS, who initially had close ties with the London Missionary Society (LMS), later sided

²⁵ GL van Heerde, *Twee Eeue van Sendingwerk. 'n Oorsig oor ons Kerk se sendingwerk in Suid-Afrika 1652-1857*. 1951. 75-76.

²⁶ D Crafford, *Aan God die Dank. Geskiedenis van die sending van die Ned.Geref. Kerk binne die Republiek van Suid-Afrika en enkele aangrensende Buurstate*, Deel I, 1982, 36.

²⁷ It is interesting to note that as time progressed and as more missionaries were ordained by the DRC some of the ordained missionaries included missionaries who formally served in the ranks of the LMS.

²⁸ See the *Reglementen voor het Bestuur der Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika*, 1824, 37.

²⁹ *Reglementen voor het Bestuur der Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika*, 1824, 37.

³⁰ Here the extensive work of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in large parts of South Africa could be mentioned.

more with the DRC and her missionary work - especially from 1812 onwards - and thus broke away from a direct relation with other mission societies.³¹ In later developments all the activities of this organisation were to a large extent taken over by the DRC through individual congregations and ministers.

At the synod of 1826 a '*Reglement betrekkelijk het ordenen van Zendelingen*' (Procedural Rules for the ordination of Missionaries) was drafted.³² From the onset this document clearly stated that ordained missionaries were to only serve and only have jurisdiction over the 'christianised heathen'. With regard to the procedural rules for the ordination of missionaries (1826) it is clearly and quite regularly stipulated that the jurisdiction of the missionary is to only be over the 'christianised heathen' and that he is not to perform any duties regarding ministry in the rest of the (white) congregation. He is thus in service of the congregation but with the understanding that he is to focus on the spiritual well being (including the ministering of the sacraments) of only the christianised and not anyone else.³³ With this resolution came a clear distinction within the existing congregations at the Cape with regard to the ministry of/to the white Christians on the one side and the coloured and black Christians on the other side.³⁴ As such the tone was set for not only the separate ministry of the natives, slaves and freed slaves apart from their white sisters and brothers, but also the establishment of separate congregations within the DRC at the Cape thus directly influencing later developments inland. This development would ultimately lead to the establishment of separate Dutch Reformed Churches for the different cultural and racial groups.

With regard to Dutch Reformed mission activities in the interior of South Africa all of the abovementioned developments should be taken into account as this model was well established at the time of the *Groot Trek* inland. Thus it could be said that abovementioned practices were a deep and integral part of the mission enterprise of the DRC at the Cape and because of this separate church buildings were already erected for the 'natives' within the borders of some of the existing Dutch Reformed congregations round about the beginning of the *Groot Trek*. With regard to the establishment of Dutch Reformed 'mission' churches in the interior of South Africa, this fact along with other social developments in the Cape colony would have a deep impact on the mission outlook of the later established Dutch Reformed Churches in the Orange Free State, Transvaal and Natal.

³¹ JC Pauw, *Anti-Apartheid Theology in the Dutch Reformed Family of Churches*, 2007, 53. See also Els, *Kerkplanting by die Suid-Afrikaanse Sendinggenootskap*, 1971, 34-39.

³² *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1926, 1-5.

³³ See in this regard the *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1926, 1-5. Within the regiment it is made clear that, should the missionary at any stage of his ministry not adhere to this, his admission will be terminated.

³⁴ Historically it seems that there were some cases where missionaries served/helped out in the white congregations. As example can be mentioned the ordination of Jakob Verhaag on 27 August 1873, to serve the freed slaves in Franschhoek, whilst at the same time serving as 'hulpprediker in die blanke gemeente'. See Van Heerde, *Twee eeue van sendingwerk*, 1951, 82.

The *Groot Trek*, and here especially the reason for it taking place as well as its later social implications, had without any doubt a deep and tangible impact on mission and the expansion of Christianity in South(-ern) Africa. The *Voortrekkers* saw themselves as Godly called and responsible pioneers of and for the Christian faith and likewise the European lifestyle.³⁵ However, due to the importance of a clear distinction between *Voortrekker* and Native, and white and black, mission and social relations had to be defined clearly before active engagement with mission could start in the interior. Large-scale mission work in the Orange Free State, Transvaal and Natal thus started very slowly and it is only well after the formation of the Dutch Reformed Churches as separate synods in these regions (1862) that tangible attempts with regard to mission were made.³⁶ It is important to note that the Liberation Wars³⁷ took place over a large period of time and this severely hampered active and organised missionary work within the ranks of especially the DRC in the Orange Free State and the DRC in the Transvaal. A limited amount of resources and ministers, alongside the abovementioned can be mentioned as secondary reasons for the slow awakening of mission within these churches.

The primary reasons are however quite different. Foreign mission societies, including the 'infamous' LMS, were already actively present in the Northern and North-Eastern areas of South Africa by the time that the *Voortrekkers* occupied these regions. This was the very cause of deep tension as the relation between the *Voortrekkers* and especially the English missionaries of the LMS was not always very positive.³⁸ Regarding the attitude of the Afrikaner over and against one of the most famous missionaries of the LMS namely David Livingstone, Kies notes that at the time there was a clear dislike in Livingstone. He was portrayed as someone who fought against the principles of the Afrikaner nation and as a 'lover of black people'. Or as he states: '*Livingstone kom voor as 'n besliste lasteraar van ons volk, terwyl hy soos sy voorgangers van die Londense Sendinggenootskap die ultra-negrofiel is vir wie alleen die naturel in alle gevalle altyd reg handel, terwyl die Afrikaner altyd verkeerd is*'.³⁹

Jordaan notes that the words *sendeling* (missionary) and *sendingstasie* (mission station) were despised by some of the *Voortrekkers* as these words had a very negative connotation with politics.⁴⁰ In an article by NJ Hofmeyr in 1853 he makes mention of the fact that, even at this relatively late stage in the mission history of the DRC, the negative attitude towards

³⁵ AA Odendaal, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sending in die Oranje Vrystaat (1842-1910)*, 1970, 50.

³⁶ Odendaal, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde sending*, 1970, 61. See also JT Jordaan, *Die Ontwikkeling van die Sending van die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk in Transvaal*, 1962, 385.

³⁷ These include the South African War. See in this regard H Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 2004.

³⁸ This was the case even before the *Groot Trek* took place as missionaries of the LMS and the settlers especially on the eastern border of the Cape Colony had frequent struggles.

³⁹ CF Kies, 'Die Afrikaner en die Sending', In *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel*, Deel VII. Maart 1939. No. 3, 109.

⁴⁰ Jordaan, *Die ontwikkeling van die sending*, 1962, 45. Politics should here be read as the very negative (political) relation between the Boer Republics and the English Government.

missionaries was still felt.⁴¹ This fact should however not be generalised. The negative relations have largely to do with the direct relation of the missionaries with the peoples/tribes of these regions and the fact that especially some of the English missionaries in some cases fought for the acknowledgement of the rights of these peoples by the government(s) involved. This was as true in the Cape as it was in the interior of the country.⁴² This at times stood in direct contrast to the stance of the *Trekkers* in this matter. This position of especially the LMS along with its 'political interference' was met with discontent.⁴³ With regard to the situation in the Orange Free State, Odendaal states that the Afrikaner people at the time sided more with German and American missionaries over and against English missionaries. '*Die boere het 'n skeidslyn tussen Engelse (en later Franse) sendelinge aan die een kant, en Duitse en Amerikaanse sendelinge aan die anderkant getrek. Eersgenoemde was vir hulle die verpersoonliking en aktiewe en spraaksame ondersteuners van 'n politieke beleid wat aan hulle veel leed gebring het.*'⁴⁴ However, Gerdener, in a very poetic sense notes that not even this could extinguish the healthy love of the Afrikaner for the mission.⁴⁵ From this it becomes clear that, although active mission by the *Trekkers* only took place on a limited scale, the fire and drive to do mission was never fully extinguished by the mentioned factors. It should however be mentioned that there were indeed instances of a negative attitude from the side of the Afrikaner nation towards missionary activities even within its own ranks - even as late as the 1930s. This is clearly pointed out in an article by JMN Breedts relating to the education of coloured children. In this regard Breedts notes that one of the factors that hamper the education of coloured children is in fact the prejudice of white people at the time. Or as Breedts states: '*(D)ie misverstand by, en vooroordeel van 'n groot deel van die blanke bevolking*'.⁴⁶ Here the issue of *gelykstelling* or equalisation played a direct role.

The position taken by especially the English missionaries gave further rise to the existing fear of *gelykstelling* amongst the *Voortrekkers* in relation to coloured and black peoples. Under no circumstances could this be allowed. In turn this gave further rise to a negative outlook with regard to not only missionaries but also to the notion of mission in its own

⁴¹ See NJ Hofmeyr, 'Iets over het Zendingwerk', in *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode in Zuid-Afrika*, 1853, 65.

⁴² With regard to the influence of John Phillip (LMS) at the Cape, Giliomee notes the following: '*Die leier van die bevryding van die Khoi-Khois van alle vorme van wetlike diskriminasie was die sendeling John Phillip wat in 1819 in Kaapstad aangekom het om die bedrywighede van die LMS te koördineer*'. See Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 2004, 63. Also see D Roy Briggs and Joseph Wing (eds). *The Harvest and the Hope. The Story of Congregationalism in Southern Africa*. 1970. Pretoria: Craft Press (Pty.) Ltd. History points out that there were indeed instances that, through the involvement of especially the English missionaries, the natives were in some instances lawfully regarded as equal in status to the *Voortrekkers*.

⁴³ Odendaal, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde sending*, 1970, 34.

⁴⁴ Odendaal, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde sending*, 1970, 34. Also see AM Hofmeyer, *Die sending van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk onder die Zoeloes in Natal, 1839 – 1952*, 1973, 85.

⁴⁵ GBA Gerdener, *Die Afrikaner en die Sending*, 1959, 60. My own translation.

⁴⁶ See JMN Breedts, 'Die Opvoeding van die Kleurling van die Standpunt van die Sending Besien'. In *Die Soeklig*, Deel XII. No. 8. Augustus 1934, 235.

respect. Mission was often understood as being synonymous with *gelykstelling*. This did not only have a direct influence on mission, but also on ecclesial unity within the DRC and between the DRC and the *Hervormde Kerk* - especially in the Transvaal.⁴⁷ Time and time again the DRC in The Orange Free State, The Transvaal, and Natal had to defend itself and its missionary objectives over and against the notion that mission equals *gelykstelling* and this posed serious problems for mission expansion in the interior of South Africa. In this regard JMA de Beer points out that there can indeed be dangers to mission. One of these dangers is what he describes as the '*Negrofilistiese Beskouing*'. He is of the opinion that this danger, which in his view tries to eradicate the clear distinctions between white people and black people is one of the biggest dangers that manifests within mission and as such it should be rejected.⁴⁸

It was only after a clearly defined mission policy had been drafted, a policy that unmistakably dismissed racial mixing and equalisation, that the DRC felt 'more comfortable' with mission in South Africa and therefore promoted mission endeavours and the establishment of separate 'mission churches'.⁴⁹ Segregation along cultural/racial lines would now be used as a tool in aid of mission which had as outcome the establishment of autonomous indigenous churches. As such it would become the hallmark of Dutch Reformed mission.

As it is clear that the negative outlook on *gelykstelling* had a definite impact on not only the mission enterprise of the DRC but also on the Afrikaner nation and for that matter the South African society as a whole⁵⁰, I will now look into this concept and in the process note what was understood by this term whilst also evaluating the impact of this fear of mission and social life in general.

2.3 The notion of and fear for equalisation (*gelykstelling*) in the context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

As pointed out earlier the strong feeling of distinctness on the side of white settlers can be found from the earliest years of the South African colonial history, or as Van der Watt notes

⁴⁷ Jordaan, *Die ontwikkeling van die Sending*, 1962, 319 & 321.

⁴⁸ See JMA de Beer, 'Die Sending van die Gefedereerde N.G. Kerke en die Gevare wat dit Bedreig', In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang IV, Junie 1942, No.2, 88-89.

⁴⁹ To this fact Van der Watt adds that '(H)ierdie geskiedbeeld het veral sterker na vore getree rondom die dertigerjare, maar veral met die Eeufeesvieringe van die Groot Trek in 1938 toe Afrikaner-nasionalisme 'n sterk oplewing beleef het'. See Gideon van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener. Koersaanwyser in die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk se Sending en Ekumene*, 1990, 117. In this section of his dissertation Van der Watt points out that Gerdener had as aim to point out in an historical sense that the Afrikaner was never against mission. See Van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 117-119.

⁵⁰ In 1940 CP Pauw published an article showing that, in his view, the Afrikaner did not want the so-called coloured people to, in any way, regard themselves as equal to their white masters. See in this regard CP Pauw, 'Die verhouding tussen Blankes en Kleurlinge'. In *Op die Horison*. Jaargang 2. Junie 1940. No.2. 59-62.

that ‘(D)ie wortels van segregasie strek ver terug in die koloniale tydperk’.⁵¹ It should however be remembered that the fear of equalisation is a later development that is clearly expressed in the circles of Afrikaner nationalism. The perceived fear of *gelykstelling* should not be underestimated as it had an enormous impact on ecclesial, social and political life in South Africa over a long period. The significance of this word (*gelykstelling*) in the history of the Afrikaner nation is pointed out by Reynecke when he notes the following: ‘(D)aar is miskien geen enkel woord in die Afrikaanse taal wat so saaklik die Afrikaner-standpunt oor ’n algemene beleidsvraagstuk vertolk, as die woord “gelykstelling”’.⁵²

Historians pointed out that the fear for *gelykstelling* was one of the major reasons why the *Groot Trek* took place and Gerdener is of the opinion that it can be viewed as the precursor of the apartheid policy.⁵³ The question namely what is to be understood within an ecclesiastical understanding, with the notion of equalisation or *gelykstelling* can indeed be asked.⁵⁴ Inline with this, it is important to understand how this social construct found expression in a society whose existence centred round the Church and how the Church in turn sanctioned the rejection of equalisation amongst peoples.

Jordaan gives a simple and in many regards an obvious answer stating that within the ecclesial context of Transvaal *gelykstelling* was understood as black and white worshipping in one church building.⁵⁵ Van der Walt agrees with this when he makes a similar statement namely that ‘(D)ie kleur van die huid en die feit dat die inboorlinge heidene was, het die segregasiegedagte gevoed én in die kerklike idioom is *gelykstelling* vertolk as die saamverkeer van blankes en nie-blankes in één kerkgebou’.⁵⁶ Keeping this in mind it could be said that equalisation was hardest felt within the church and indeed sanctioned by the church. A distorted outlook on mission was the direct outflow of this kind of thinking and would later find a clear expression in the mission policy of the DRC (1935). Therefore the best remedy/solution for this serious “problem” of *gelykstelling* would be found in ecclesiastical segregation. Nicol points out that this policy would indeed show the distinct difference between the ‘English Policy’ that had equalisation as outcome, and the ‘Afrikaner Policy’ that had racial segregation and guardianship as outcome.⁵⁷ The church would thus reflect what was already practised in the rest of society namely the sharper growing distinction between ‘white’ and ‘black’ and as such ecclesial segregation would be the first

⁵¹ ‘Vanuit die aanname, of ervaring dat die Europese beskawing tegelyk die Christelike beskawing is, behels die Christelike roeping dan aan die een kant dat die Europese beskawing glad nie met die heidense [sic] vermeng mag raak nie – die beginsel van segregasie.’ Van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 171.

⁵² Johan Reynecke, ‘Gelykstelling’, In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang 1, Januarie 1939, No. 1, 35.

⁵³ Gerdener, *Die Afrikaner en die sending*, 1959, 76.

⁵⁴ Here it should be mentioned that at this time in history there was no real difference between church and society; between the ecclesiastical and the social.

⁵⁵ ‘om saam in een kerkgebou te aanbid’ See Jordaan, *Die ontwikkeling van die Sending*, 1962, 321.

⁵⁶ PB van der Watt, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1824-1905*, 1988, 345.

⁵⁷ See WM Nicol, ‘Die Federale Sendingraad’, In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang III. Desember 1941. No.4. 166.

form of structurally endorsed 'apartheid' in the South African society.⁵⁸ One should however not make the mistake to make a clear cut distinction between ecclesial segregation and civil segregation. Therefore it should be taken into account that, during the focus period of this study, no clear distinction can indeed be made between an ecclesial fear of *gelykstelling* and a socio-political fear of equalisation. As such, a general response from within the Afrikaner circles is given.⁵⁹

In this regard Kuperus points out that, with the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism, '(A)frikaners were beginning to solidify their identification along class and social lines in the years between 1910 and 1930...'.⁶⁰ These were the years when the fear of *gelykstelling* came to its fullest expression in policies and laws both in the ecclesial and social spheres of South Africa. Reynecke articulates perhaps best what is to be understood with the term '*geen gelykstelling*' when he states that it points towards separate development for white and black people in the context of South Africa. For him this should be done in order to protect the white people.

*Deur geen gelykstelling as grondslag van sy naturellebeleid neer te lê, bedoel die Afrikaner nie dat hy daarmee die onderdrukking, of selfs veragting, van een ras deur die ander beoog nie, maar wel dat hy 'n beleid van aparte ontwikkeling en voortbestaan van beide rasse voorstaan – in teenstelling met die sogenaamde assimilasiebeleid van sommige wat uit die aard van die saak sal moet uitloop op rassevermenging – iets wat vir die Afrikanersiel afskuwelik is. Dit is wel waar dat die Afrikaner (soos trouens enige ander nasie sal doen), in die stryd om sy bestaan – veral waar hy voel dat wat getalsterkte betref, hy 'n ongelyke stryd moet voer, homself wil beskerm sover hy kan – selfs ten koste van die naturel – maar hy doen dit dan met die oog op selfbehoud, nie uit afguns of met 'n begeerte om te onderdruk nie. Dit is eweneens waar dat hy die naturel nie wil verag, as hy weier om hom as sy sosiaal-gelyke te erken en as sodanig met hom om te gaan nie. Hy weier omdat dit in beginsel geld – omdat hy alles wil vermy wat die suiwerheid van sy ras, al is dit ook indirek, kan bedreig; maar hy doen dit nie omdat hy homself wil verhef of op die naturel wil neersien as veragtelik nie.*⁶¹

Kuperus makes it clear that the DRC, as a custodian of Afrikaner interests and as 'one of the most respected institutions within Afrikaner society', was directly involved in dealing with

⁵⁸ It should be noted that, although interrelated, the policies regarding segregation and policies regarding apartheid were quite distinct.

⁵⁹ For an overview of the interlinked relationship between church (the DRC), the South African state and the Afrikaner nation in historical hindsight, see Tracy Kuperus, *State, Civil Society and Apartheid in South Africa. An examination of Dutch Reformed Church-State relations*, 1999, Hampshire: Pelgrave.

⁶⁰ Tracy Kuperus, *State, Civil Society and Apartheid in South Africa. An examination of Dutch Reformed Church-State relations*, 1999, 35.

⁶¹ Reynecke, 'Gelykstelling', In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang, 1939, 35.

the fear of equalisation in Afrikaner circles.⁶² In this regard she points out that one of the unique manifestations of the DRC during this period was the notion of it being a *volkskerk* in certain circles. This meant that:

(T)he NGK, in its role as a *volkskerk*, a church of the people, was actively involved in the “poor white” problem. The church was concerned with the urban threats facing poor whites, threats which included liberalism, Anglicization (SIC), and racial mixing. The emergence of poor whites also meant that Afrikaners had become second-class citizens among the white population, coming perilously close to the low-class status of blacks.⁶³

On the basis of the fear for, and to avoid any form of equalisation, the DRC organised a number of *volkskongresse* to deal with the poor-white issue.⁶⁴ Through these *volkskongresse* the DRC would be directly involved in addressing the fear of equalisation within its context.

It can without any doubt be said that the fear of and response to *gelykstelling* had an enormous influence on the growth of/in mission. In certain circles mission was seen as the biggest tool to promote equalisation and hence was vilified. Elphick is of the opinion that this negative outlook and attitude towards mission changed substantially with the establishment of ecclesiastical segregation, as this meant that mission endeavours could not take place without having as outflow a sense of equality between ‘white’ and ‘black’. ‘Ecclesiastical segregation, henceforth the hallmark of DRC missions, helped overcome much of the anti-missionary sentiment among Afrikaners.’⁶⁵ This set the tone for the fruitful expansion of missionary endeavours in the interior of South Africa.

In short it can thus be stated that, throughout the history of the DRC it is noted that missionary work started very late and rather lethargically. Apart from the abovementioned influences that played a role in this regard the lack of capacity, the impact of the different wars and ferocious murders can also be mentioned as factors that hampered the mission programme.⁶⁶

It can without any doubt be said that the decisions regarding mission and mission involvement as taken by the DRC synod of 1824 had an enormous impact on the way mission work was done and how it expanded within the ranks of the DRC. In the church at

⁶² Kuperus, *State, Civil Society and Apartheid in South Africa*, 1999, 34.

⁶³ Tracy Kuperus, *State, Civil Society and Apartheid in South Africa*, 1999, 37.

⁶⁴ See in this regard, P du Toit, *Verslag van die Volkskongres oor die Armblankevraagstuk gehou te Kimberley*, 2-5 Okt 1934.

⁶⁵ Richard Elphick, ‘Missions and Afrikaner Nationalism: Soundings in the Prehistory of Apartheid’ in Brian Stanley (ed.), *Missions, Nationalism, and the End of the Empire*, 2003, 57.

⁶⁶ HP Blomerus, ‘Die Verlede op die Gebied van die Binnelandse Sending’, in ‘*n Eeu van Sendingwerk*. Referate gelewer by geleentheid van die Sendingkonferensie van die Gefedereerde Ned. Geref. Kerke in Suid-Afrika. Bloemfontein. 29 September-3 Oktober ‘n Eeu van Sendingwerk, 1938, 19.

the Cape this decision led to the establishment of separate church buildings for black, coloured and white members. This came into being as a result of separate ministry to coloured and black members by the missionaries. It can thus be said that this was indeed a common practice when the synods of the DRC in the Orange Free State, Transvaal and Natal came into being and this model was indeed taken over by these churches.⁶⁷

That in principle the Afrikaner people was not against mission work as such is supported by AH Murray. Showing towards events surrounding the *Groot Trek* Murray testifies to the Afrikaner's positive outlook on mission. '*Die Voortrekkers het op die trekpad reeds getoon dat, alhoewel hulle gekant was teen die optrede van sekere sendelinge en die sendingmetodes van sekere sendinggenootskappe, hulle nie teen die sending as sodanig was nie.*'⁶⁸ The question, namely what the aims of the *Voortrekkers* were with regard to mission and what rules accompanied the expansion of mission, could however be asked. That the *Trekkers* saw themselves as guardians of the Christian faith and of a "higher being" in the relation to the original inhabitants of the regions they occupied can indeed be argued. The idea of subordination had without any doubt an enormous impact on the *Trekkers* and this notion infested missionary outlook.

With regard to *gelykstelling* it can without any doubt be said that this fear had an enormous impact on every aspect of life especially in the Orange Free State, the Transvaal and Natal. By the end of the 18th century onwards, white prejudice against coloured and black people was also common at the Cape.⁶⁹ Anxiety on the side of white people concerning the loss of their cultural heritage, their "higher being", their faith and their calling, led to the absolute rejection of the horrendous idea of *gelykstelling* and racial mixing. This meant that there was no other option but total segregation in every sphere of life. Separate churches were thus an absolute necessity and a given fact. In this regard it is interesting to note that the gradual process of separation by the DRC in the Cape is in a sense contrasted to the immediate separation in the ranks of the other Dutch Reformed Churches in the interior of South Africa.

2.4 The model of church planting as followed by the Dutch Reformed Churches

With the institution of the office of the missionary by the first synod of the DRC in 1824 it became clear that missionary work would from now on take place as an enterprise on its own and that the harvest of the mission would be treated as a separate part of the congregation/congregational life and activities. The ministry of the missionary focussed on the Christianising of the "heathen" and, as noted earlier, *he* was not allowed to interfere with the ministry of the existing congregations. Crafford calls this the distinction between

⁶⁷ By this time the Dutch Reformed Mission Church as a separate church for coloured people in the Cape was already established.

⁶⁸ Hofmeyer, *Die sending*, 1973, 61.

⁶⁹ See JA Lombard, *Ontwikkeling in die Sendingbeleid en –praktyk van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk gedurende die tydperk 1932 tot 1962*, 1985, 4.

“pastoraat” (pastorate) and “apostolaat” (apostolate).⁷⁰ Both the institution of the office of the missionary and the later formulated procedural rules for the ordination of missionaries that flows from this, had a major influence on the establishment of separate mission churches by the DRC for the so-called coloured and black peoples of Southern Africa. It thus could be stated that the synodical decisions regarding mission of 1824 indeed paved the way for the establishment of separate ‘mission churches’ by the DRC. Here the missionary regulations of the synod of 1826 can indeed be regarded as a clearly formulated beacon that set the tone for separation along racial/colour lines within the DRC.⁷¹ In this regard Kleynhans even goes further and adds that the developments of the 1824 synod of the DRC would later have a far-reaching influence on the mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches.⁷²

At the synod of 1847 the first *Sinodale Sendingkommissie* (Synodical Commission for Mission) was assigned.⁷³ Kriel is of the opinion that this event was of great historical importance as, with the establishment of the *Sinodale Sendingkommissie*, would come better organisational structure with regard to the mission congregations and the *werkkringe*.⁷⁴ The work of this commission would in time lead to the establishment of the DRMC.⁷⁵

It should however be remembered that, with regard to the model of church planting, the DRC was indeed influenced by broader developments in Protestant missionary thinking at the time.⁷⁶ As such Van der Merwe notes that *‘(D)ie beleid van kerkplanting van die Ned. Geref. Kerk staan nie los van die denkrigtings in Protestantse sendingkringe nie. Trouens die*

⁷⁰ Crafford, *Aan God die dank*, 1982, 38.

⁷¹ It should however be remembered that the original decision formally called for separation between Christian and “heathen”. Later this had a racial overtone.

⁷² EPJ Kleynhans, *Die Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika. 1795-1962*, 1973, 314.

⁷³ CJ Kriel, *Die Eerste Eeu. Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika. 1881-1981*, 1981, 25.

⁷⁴ A *werkkring* was a loosely designated area in which the local Dutch Reformed congregation was doing mission work. The *Werkkring* would consist of a number of believers/converts but who, on the basis of their small numbers, could not yet constitute a congregation.

⁷⁵ Kriel, *Die Eerste Eeu*, 25.

⁷⁶ Smith, ‘Die planting van afsonderlike kerke’, 1973, 85. Smith is of the opinion that, within the ecclesial context of DRC mission, one should rather use the term church establishment as opposed to “church planting”. *‘In die offisiële (amptelike) stukke van die Ned. Geref. Kerk word die term planting van die kerk gedurende die negentiende eeu haas nêrens aangetref nie. Blykbaar het die geskifte van Voetius gedurende hierdie beslissende jare van voorbereiding vir latere konstituering van die meeste dogterkerke, in die besinning oor die teoretiese grondslag van die sendingpraktyk nie ter sprake gekom nie. Vandaar die afwesigheid van die term in die amptelike kerktaal i.v.m. die uitvoering van sy sendingtaak. Hierdie feit word bewys deur die stigting (‘n term wat i.p.v konstituering gebruik is) van die eerste Ned. Geref. Dogterkerk gedurende die negentiende eeu, waar weinig van wat Voetius met die planting van die kerk as ‘n nuwe vorm beklemtoon het, tereggekom het.’* See Smith, ‘Die planting van afsonderlike kerke’, 1973, 85. However, because of the significance of this term within the context of mission within the broader Reformed tradition, the researcher prefers to use the term ‘church planting’. A critical discussion of this unique development within the Reformed mission context will follow in the forthcoming chapters.

Ned. Geref. Kerk is in menigerlei opsig beslis deur sekere sendingdenkrigtings beïnvloed'.⁷⁷ From a theological perspective it is important to note what influenced the DRC in its missiological development(s). Here especially the English and German influence needs mention.

As mentioned earlier the mission revivals in the so-called 'West' in the nineteenth century had an enormous impact on the DRC.⁷⁸ Decisions regarding mission from 1824 onwards could directly be traced back to this unprecedented optimism regarding mission that engulfed the world and reached South Africa through the mission societies active in the region. Because of the aim of this study I will not look into the 'mission optimism' that impacted on the DRC. Of greater importance is the model of church planting as followed by the DRC and how this was impacted on by especially influences from England and Germany. From a historical perspective, influences from these spheres were instrumental in the formation of a mission outlook of the DRC. This is not to deny the vast influence of Pietism on the International Missionary movement and thus also on the DRC.⁷⁹ As the focus of this study is on the model for church planting it suffices to take note of the mission influences from the German and Anglo-Saxon worlds.⁸⁰

With regard to the basis for doing mission, and here especially regarding the planting of churches within the DRC, the thinking of individuals like Henry Venn, Rufus Anderson (Anglo-Saxon) and Gustav Warneck (Germany) should be noted as being extremely influential. These Missiologists had an enormous impact especially on church planting/the establishment of younger churches in the global protestant arena.⁸¹ As such their thoughts also had a direct impact on the DRC in a context of fast growing mission awareness. Therefore it is no surprise that the so-called 'three selves theory'⁸² of Venn and Anderson was for a long time regarded as normative and was used as justification for the Dutch Reformed model for planting younger churches.⁸³ The broader aim of the 'three selves

⁷⁷ WJ van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 39.

⁷⁸ Due to this unprecedented optimism with regard to mission, the 19th century is widely regarded as the 'mission century'.

⁷⁹ Here the influence of the Moravian missionaries active in the Cape Colony can be mentioned. See in this regard, Adonis, *Die Afgebreekte Skeidsmuur*, 1982, 61.

⁸⁰ For a good overview of especially the German and Anglo-Saxon missiological principles see Peter Beyerhaus & Henry Lefever (eds), *The responsible church and the foreign mission*, 1964.

⁸¹ For an overview of the influence of especially Venn and Anderson on the decisions of the first World Missionary conferences see JJF Durand, *Una Sancta Catholica in Sendingperspektief*, 1961, 61-66.

⁸² According to this model the characteristics of an autonomous mission church are that it should be 'self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating'.

⁸³ WJ van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 41. See also Pauw, *Anti-Apartheid Theology*, 2007, 44. With regard to the establishment of the DRMC, Prof WJ van der Merwe notes that '*Die stigting van die Ned. Geref. Sendingkerk as 'n afsonderlike kerk het die geleenthede geskep vir getuienis, Christelike diens betoon en ontluiking van leierstalent wat moeilik langs ander weë bereik sou kon word.*' WJ van die Merwe, *Godsdien*, 139, in Erika Theron, *Die Kleurlingbevolking van Suid-Afrika. 'n Verslag van 'n komitee van die Suid-Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasse-Aangeleenthede (Sabra) insake die Kleurling*, 1964.

theory' was to establish indigenous and autonomous mission churches.⁸⁴ In this regard Adonis notes that the focus of the DRC was more on Venn's understanding of the 'three selves theory'. In short, Venn was of the opinion that indigenous 'mission churches' should be assisted by the 'western churches' to grow towards autonomy.⁸⁵

Another stream of thought on mission came to the fore in Europe in the second half of the 19th century and had an enormous impact on the DRC. This stream was imbedded in the German Missiological thinking that related mission closely with the well-being of the (specific) *volk* (nation). Here the influence of especially Gustav Warneck found appeal in the South African context.⁸⁶ With regard to the autonomy of the young church, for Warneck the emphasis fell on the self-governing of the church. But the autonomy of the young church depended on religious, spiritual and moral maturity.⁸⁷ The younger church was to be established under a specific *volk* and thus this church would be imbedded in the language and practises - if not in contrast with Christianity - of the particular nation.⁸⁸ With this the Christianising of the entire nation became very important.

Regarding his view on the planting of churches, Van der Merwe is of the opinion that the DRC was more influenced by Anglo-Saxon and German mission thinking than by any other Protestant mission thinking including that of Gijsbertus Voetius and his work that impacted on the broader Reformed arena.⁸⁹ This view is echoed by Smith when he notes that, except for an indirect influence through the broader Dutch Reformed tradition on the DRC, the

⁸⁴ Durand notes that '(T)ussen die gedagtes van Venn en Anderson bestaan daar 'n merkwaardige ooreenkoms, met die verskil dat, waar Venn die selfstandigheid van die jong kerk aan die end van 'n ontwikkelingsproses plaas, dit vir Anderson 'n gegewenheid van die begin is...' See Durand, *Una Sancta*, 1961, 69 and Adonis, *Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur*, 1982, 63.

⁸⁵ See Adonis, *Die Afgebreekte skeidsmuur*, 1982, 205. 'Die kerke kan eers hul selfstandigheid bereik nadat hulle 'n periode van ontwikkeling deurgemaak het. In hierdie hele proses van ontwikkeling en selfstandigwording, speel die westerse kerk as die "moederkerk" die rol van voog (moeder) oor die Swartkerke.' And also 'in die praktyk kom dit daarop neer dat die drie Swartkerke ondergeskik is aan die blanke "moederkerk" en dat hulle nie as gelykwaardige kerke beskou en behandel word nie'. Adonis, *Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur*, 1982, 205. Regarding the opinion and outlook of Anderson, Van der Merwe notes that, as a Congregationalist, Anderson focussed on the growing into autonomy of the local congregation. See in this regard, WJ van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 41.

⁸⁶ 'Die aanhalings van die sendingkundiges van die Ned. Geref. Kerk skyn tog aan te dui dat die volkskerk, soos ons dit by Warneck vind, as ideal voorgelou moet word. Die ideaal was skynbaar een kerk vir elke etniese groep.' See Van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus wil*, 1967, 53. Adonis gives a short outline of the mission thought of Warneck and stresses the enormous impact that this had on mission thinking in the DRC. See Adonis, *Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur*, 1982, 67.

⁸⁷ Durand, *Una Sancta*, 1961, 79.

⁸⁸ Durand, *Una Sancta*, 1961, 79-80. With regard to the 'three selves theory' the term 'indigenous' was often replaced by the term 'national' with the focus on the establishment of separate churches for separate 'nations'.

⁸⁹ Van Der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus wil*, 1967, 48.

work of Voetius had no real, deep and grounding impact on the DRC and here especially on her mission thinking.⁹⁰ This of course has had a direct impact on the Church.

With this said it should be noted that Dutch Reformed missiologists, along with other international scholars, have criticized the Venn-Anderson theory over time. This being said the roots of this theory, along with the strong missional impression of Warneck, remained a strong influence on mission thinking within the ranks of the DRC over a long period.⁹¹ This coupled with a unique cultural and racial situation in the ranks of the DRC had as outcome that the impact of the abovementioned influences on the mission outlook of the DRC has remained visible until this very day.

Linking to this it needs to be mentioned that, to the mission theories of Venn, Anderson and Warneck, was added a uniquely socially-constructed model that fitted in with growing segregation within the South African context, concretised by the church in its policies.⁹² From this grew a unique model that had as aim the establishment of separate, autonomous, independent younger churches for the different cultural groups within Southern Africa under the strict guardianship of the DRC as so-called 'mother church'. This fact would find culmination in the infamous synodical decision of 1857. It is exactly on this point that the DRC strongly deviated from the general missiological thinking within the Reformed ecclesial context.

To fully grasp the contours of missionary endeavours in South Africa during the period between 1824 and 1900, one should remember that the DRC - as agent of mission - was only one of a few churches/mission organisations that were actively present in South Africa. The other mission organisations included the SAMS and the LMS. This meant that the DRC would also be influenced by the various amount of models for church planting applied to a unique mission field where both the 'planter church' and the 'planted church' shared a geographical region. As history would have it, many of the congregations established by other mission organisations would later become part of the DRC and its 'mission churches' where these already existed.⁹³ Relating specifically to the abovementioned Pauw notes the following:

⁹⁰ Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke', In *Annale*, 1973, 83-96. '*Nie alleen bestaan daar geen dokumentêre aanwysings van enige direkte beïnvloeding nie, maar vertoon die planting en konstituering van die Ned. Geref. Dogterkerke ook te weining tekens dat die beginsels van Voetius regstreeks nagevolg is.*' See Smith, 1973, 95. Smith notes further that '*die primêre verskil tussen die beginsels vir kerkplanting soos deur Voetius uitgewerk en deur die Ned. Geref. Kerk in sy planting van die dogterkerke toegepas, dit blyk dat die moederkerk die gekonstitueerde dogterkerke nie gesien en erken het as komplette kerk nie, maar eerder as afsonderlike institute waaroor die moederkerk hom geroepe geag het om as voog jurisdiksie uit te oefen.*' See Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke', In *Annale*, 1973, 89.

⁹¹ See in this regard Lombard, *Ontwikkeling in die Sendingbeleid*, 1985, 197.

⁹² See Van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus wil*, 1967, 49.

⁹³ This was especially true in the history of the DRMC and the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in the Orange Free State.

By the middle of the 19th century there were, therefore, two models of mission churches in the DRC. On the one hand there were the mission churches or *gestichte* that were established by local DRC congregations to foster separate worship for coloured members. These fell under the rule of the local DRC. On the other hand there were mission churches that were established by missionary societies, and were consequently assigned to the *Sinodale Sendingkommissie* of the DRC. They were not directly tied to neighbouring DRC congregations.⁹⁴

It can thus be stated that the model for planting separate and distinct churches by the DRC was influenced by a number of circumstances including socio-historical factors in South Africa and in Europe, the influence and impact of other mission societies and missionaries actively involved in the mission context of South Africa⁹⁵, mission thinking in the rest of Europe and here especially the influence of the missiologists Venn, Anderson and Warneck, the fear of equalisation between white and black, and the intrinsic notion of *volksplanting*.⁹⁶ The product/projected goal of this would be the establishment of autonomous daughter churches or, ‘...die stigting en uitbouing van selfstandige, inheemse dogterkerke’.⁹⁷ The notion of separation became the key for understanding the model of church planting as established and followed by the DRC. Here not only race, but also the specific cultural identity i.e. the ethnicity of the peoples of South Africa was used as a yardstick for separation. This becomes clear with the distinction between coloured and black members/congregations in the ‘mission churches’ of the Orange Free State and Transvaal. Loff points out that, with the establishment of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in Transvaal, the congregations consisting of coloured members were first convened in a separate circuit/presbytery and later Transvaal handed them over to the DRMC with its stronghold in the Cape.⁹⁸ In the same regard, ethnicity played a decisive role in the establishment of the Regional Synod of Phororo by the synod of the DRCA in 1966. This Regional Synod was to consist of Tswana members as a distinct ethnic group in line with the views of the State.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Pauw, *Anti-Apartheid Theology*, 2007, 53.

⁹⁵ With regard to church planting by other mission societies including the SAMS it needs to be mentioned that it was not always the primary aim of these organisations to establish churches. The aim was to convert, educate and uplift and that they should form part of existing congregations. For a discussion in this regard specifically relating to the SAMS, see Els, *Kerkplanting deur die Suid-Afrikaanse Sendinggenootskap*, 1971, 109-113.

⁹⁶ BW Koen states that there was interplay between these factors that led to the establishment of a model for church planting within the ranks of the DRC. See BW Koen, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerkplanting en één Kerkverband*, 1982, 26.

⁹⁷ Koen, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerkplanting*, 1982, 28.

⁹⁸ Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 170. Loff describes how these congregations originated from the mission work of the Cape DRC. See Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 170-180.

⁹⁹ For a detailed description, see Smith, ‘Die planting van afsonderlike kerke’, 1973, 57-58.

As mentioned, two streams of church planting existed in the DRC. These were the so-called *gestichte* established under the governance of the local Dutch Reformed congregation and then also the churches established by European and American mission societies that resorted under the authority of the synodical commission for mission of the different Dutch Reformed Churches. It needs to be mentioned that these two streams largely existed in isolation from each other until unification with the development/establishment of the latter mission churches into separate synods.

2.5. Dutch Reformed reasoning behind the establishment of separate churches

From the onset of missionary work at the Cape by individuals within the DRC, the christianised heathen freely formed part of existing congregations. This notion is supported in the work of Breedt as he points out that at the beginning of Dutch Reformed missionary endeavours everyone worshipped in the same church building. *‘Die gedraglyk van die Kerk in dié dae gevolg, was nie van aparte kerke nie. Almal, blank en gekleur, het in dieselfde Godshuis aanbid’*.¹⁰⁰ Although the newly converted ‘heathen’ were regarded as equal with regard to their religious status, they were still regarded as culturally inferior. This distinction found reflection within the legislation of the Company at the Cape especially with regard to citizenship. From a socio-historical point of view Giliomee notes that although legislation at the time made it clear that everyone in the colony was subjects, only Afrikaans and Dutch whites were perceived as citizens. *‘Mense ongeag kleur was nou koloniale onderdane, maar op die grondvlak is slegs Afrikaanse of Hollandse blankes as burgers beskou’*.¹⁰¹

With regard to the work of the missionary, George Schmidt, and the establishment of a separate mission church under his guidance, Kleynhans notes that one of the reasons why this endeavour was met with largely negative attitude was because the DRC, at that time, did not have a clear ‘mission outlook and action to the outside’.¹⁰² This “unclear mission outlook and action to the outside” meant that converts formed part of existing congregations, as there was just no other option available at this time. One should remember that the number of converts was very limited. However, as time passed and the number of converts grew, cultural differences and the growing fear of the ‘mixing of blood’

¹⁰⁰ JMN Breedt, ‘Die Verlede op die Gebied van die Binnelandse Sending,’ in *‘n Eeu van Sendingwerk*, 1938, 9.

¹⁰¹ Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 2004, 69. Giliomee further notes that this discrepancy was evident in everyday life on the streets of Cape Town. *‘Selfs in Kaapstad was daar maar net ‘n beperkte nie-rassigheid. Die NG Kerk in Kaapstad het nooit op grond van kleur onderskeid getref nie, maar die meeste mense wat nie wit was nie, het in die gemeentes van verskillende sendinggenootskappe aanbid. Daar het ‘n klassesamelewing ontstaan wat nie veel van die Kompanjie se statushiërargie verskil het nie: blankes was bo en swartes onder. Swart mense het ‘n veel groter gevaar geloop om van misdade beskuldig te word as wit mense. Die howe was ook geneig om hulle swaarder te straf. Huwelike oor die kleurlyn het ook afgeneem’*. See Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 2004, 74. This is with regard to the period of - and just after - the freeing of the slaves at the Cape.

¹⁰² See Kleynhans, *Die kerkregtelike ontwikkeling*, 1973, 308. My own translation. At the same time Kleynhans adds that the idea of separate congregations was present within the ranks of the SAMS even before 1819. See Kleynhans, *Die kerkregtelike ontwikkeling*, 1973, 311.

and *gelykstelling*, became clearer. This was roused through the growing contact between mostly the Dutch Settlers and the local inhabitants of not only the Cape area, but also in the other parts of South Africa as we have it today.¹⁰³ Prejudice, combined with the growing idea of *Volksplanting* (the planting of a distinct nation under white people) led to clearer social divisions between European and Native, Christian and heathen.¹⁰⁴ This in turn led to erection of separate church buildings for the coloured and black members of the DRC. Although the theological motivation for mission in the ranks of the DRC clearly pointed towards a structurally united church it soon became clear that soci-cultural developments in South Africa at the time also impacted on the church.

Van der Merwe clearly points out that this development and growing separation in turn meant that the 'younger' congregations were more and more viewed as subordinate to the congregations of the DRC. In this regard he notes that: '*Eensyds is die bekeerlinge uit die heidendom, net soos by genootskappe, al meer as afsonderlike gemeentes georganiseer; andersyds is hierdie gemeentes gesien as ondergeskik aan die moedergemeentes*'.¹⁰⁵

With this in mind it can be said that the social and cultural division in the history of the South African society was never more clearly seen and felt as in the church/congregational activities of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. Building on this perspective one could say that these growing social divisions in the mentioned context, which later expanded to official governmental policies, was a development/expansion of the cultural divisions that started earlier within the context of the church.¹⁰⁶

It is important to note that, with regard to the church at the Cape, there was a clear development from the allocation of separate church benches to the separate celebration of the Lord's Supper; from the divided celebration of the Lord's Supper to the erection of separate church buildings (*oefenhuisse*); from the erection of separate buildings to the establishment of separate *werkkringe* and congregations; from separate congregations to separate churches.¹⁰⁷ The picture looked substantially different with regard to the mission

¹⁰³ For a good discussion on the growing fear and distinction in this regard see Kleynhans, *Die kerkregtelike ontwikkeling*, 1973, 308-310. JA Lombard is of the opinion that the establishment of separate church building for the coloured members of the DRC was called for as early as the 1820s. As reasons he mention the spiritual wellbeing of the coloured converts and the growing fear for equalisation from the side of the white colonists. '*(D)ie stigting van afsonderlike gemeenskappe vir Nie-Blankes in die N.G. Kerk is dus sedert die twintigerjare van die negentiende eeu bepleit, nie alleen ter wille van die beter geestelike bearbeiding wat daardeur moontlik gemaak is nie, maar in toenemende mate omrede 'n rassemeerderwaardigheidsgevoel en 'n gevolglike vrees vir gelykstelling*'. See also Lombard, *Ontwikkeling in die Sendingbeleid*, 1985, 7

¹⁰⁴ Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke', In *Annale*, 1973, 18.

¹⁰⁵ Van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 50.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke', In *Annale*, 1973, 17.

¹⁰⁷ In a corresponding manner Smith describes this development as having had four phases. With this he makes it clear that clear developments that eventually led to the establishment of a separate church for the coloured members of the DRC can indeed be distinguished. The four phases are as follows: '*As eerste fase was daar die steeds groter gerigtheid op die geestelike bearbeiding van slawe en inboorlinge, waaruit dit*

work of the DRC in the other regions of South Africa, namely the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Natal. Here the abovementioned development was less gradual. From the onset it was presupposed that the christianised heathen should be gathered in a separate building where a missionary would minister to them. This was a product of the viewpoint that physical contact between white and black was to be avoided at all cost.

The fact of the matter is that separate churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches should shamefully and sadly be seen as a direct and necessitated outflow of a gradual development of mission practices that first led to separate worship services and later to separate congregations and churches. Kleynhans is of the opinion that, regarding the abovementioned development, the DRC followed in the Reformed tradition of church planting.¹⁰⁸ More structure and legitimisation in the form of a scriptural basis would later be given to these developments of which the peak would be the first official mission policy of the Dutch Reformed Churches (1935).

2.6 The Synod of 1857 and the 'weakness of some'

By the time of the official synod decision of 1857 the DRC were actively involved in mission work and the labour was beginning to show in numbers. In this regard Van Heerde notes that this was the case even on a congregational level when he states that *'(D)it is in 1857 moeilik om 'n gemeente te vind waarin nie op een of ander wyse praktiese sendingwerk onder die kleurlinge onderneem is nie'*.¹⁰⁹ It should however also be mentioned that since the establishment of a separate office of missionary and the separate ministry of the missionary, the process was well heading towards the establishment of separate 'mission congregations'. It seems that by the time of the 1857 synod the establishment of these 'mission congregations' or *gestichte* as they were known was already an existing practice and indeed a common one in many Dutch Reformed congregations.¹¹⁰ As mentioned, two

langsamerhand geblyk het dat dit noodsaaklik sou wees om ter wille van die beter geestelike versorging van die nie-blanke 'n spesifieke kersteningstaak onder hulle te onderneem. Dit lei tot die afsonderlike geestelike bearbeiding van die nie-blanke, waardeur die eerste spore van die afsonderlikheid van die nie-blanke in die kerk reeds aangetoon is. 'n Tweede fase in die ontwikkeling tree in deurdat afsonderlike godsdienstige byeenkomste vir die nie-blanke al meer voortvloei uit die intensiewe kersteningstaak onder die inboorlinge en slawe, totdat hierdie afsonderlike byeenkomste vir die nie-blanke in 1857 die offisiële goedkeuring van die kerk verkry. 'n Derde fase in die ontwikkeling van afsonderlike nie-blanke kerke ontstaan wanneer die afsonderlike godsdienstige byeenkomste vir nie-blankes lei tot die totstandkoming van afsonderlike nie-blanke gemeentes. 'n Vierde fase volg namate die afsonderlike nie-blanke gemeentes vermeerder en kerklik beter georganiseerd raak, en die behoefte in die kerk ontstaan om die gemeentes tot 'n afsonderlike kerk saam te voeg wat lei tot die stigting van die eerste afsonderlike Ned. Geref. nie-blanke Kerk.' See Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke', In *Annale*, 1973, 11.

¹⁰⁸ Kleynhans, *Die Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling*, 1973, 320.

¹⁰⁹ Van Heerde, *Twee Eeue van Sendingwerk*, 1951, 135.

¹¹⁰ It is interesting to note that this fact was used to justify the establishment of separate congregations on the presupposition that it would be more sufficient for mission work in general and because of the perceived fact that 'die mense meer tuis sou voel'. See Van Heerde, *Twee Eeue van Sendingwerk*, 1951, 135.

streams of church planting existed in the DRC. Van der Watt is of the opinion that after the institution of the office of the missionary a notable and deep ambivalence was found within the mission enterprise of the DRC.¹¹¹ This led to a systematic development that grew out of the growing uncertainty regarding the church's position specifically relating to her responsibility towards her so called 'non-white' members. This ambivalence prevailed until its culmination at the well-known and decisive synod decision of 1857.

After the synod of 1824 the question regarding the place of coloured and black members within the congregations of the DRC was discussed at the synods of 1829, 1834, 1837 and 1842. Uncertainty existed on this issue and at all of these synods the question was asked whether it would not be better and more desirable if white members partook in the celebration of the Eucharist and Baptism separately from black and coloured members. At all of these synods this was strongly rejected as being in contradiction to the Word of God. But a gradual separation emerged. In this regard the synod of 1837 decided that provision would be made for enough benches for the coloured and black members of the congregations. This decision was still far from a concession towards separate worship services and buildings. This development, coupled with theological motivation, is clearly discussed in a series of articles by NJ Hofmeyr in *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode* of 1853. In these articles are stipulated, amongst other things, the theological motivation behind Dutch Reformed Mission, the role of congregations and individual members of the DRC in mission, and the imperfect nature of mission, etc.¹¹² In these comprehensive articles as well as in the synodical decisions of the mentioned synods are found a strong and clear indication that the synod decision of 187 should not be read as an isolated occurrence.

What seems to be clear is that normal congregational life and practices in some instances stood in stark and painful contrast to official decisions. Smith rightly states that there was indeed a big distinction between the official (synodical) decisions of the church and the common practices within the existing congregations.¹¹³ This is in accordance with Van der Watt who notes the ambivalent practice of, on the one hand assimilation and on the other hand differentiation that characterised the ecclesiology of the DRC.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ With regard to the developments that grew out of the institution of the office of the missionary, Van der Watt states that '*(D)aar was die ou gebruik dat bekeerlinge uit die heidendom by die bestaande blanke gemeentes ingelyf is. Daarteenoor is nou voorsiening gemaak vir die afsonderlike bearbeiding van gekleurdes*'. See Van der Watt, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1824-1905*, 1988, 334.

¹¹² See in this regard NJ Hofmeyr, 'lets over het Zendingwerk', in *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode in Zuid-Afrika*, 1853, 65-73, 163-170, 193-200.

¹¹³ Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke', In *Annale*, 1973, 25

¹¹⁴ Van der Watt, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1824-1905*, 1988, 335. According to Van der Watt both these streams existed from the earliest times until the establishment of separate 'black Dutch Reformed Churches'. With regard to the Synodical decision of 1857 Van der Watt further states that indeed the DRC did not venture into a new direction with this decision but that, in essence, synod now moved closer to an already existing practice. For him this reality lies in the fact that many coloured congregations existed at this time. As

It is interesting to note that the sanctioning of these divisions/streams was at first not only based on theological argumentations but also on practical arrangements. In fact, the only theological justification present from these early discussions was *over and against* separation along racial lines in the Church.¹¹⁵ What remains a historical fact is that the synod of 1857 brought about a decisive change with regard to mission and the planting of churches that would have as eventual outflow the establishment of separate mission churches. These synodical decisions would leave its mark on ecclesiastical and social life for decades to come.

At the Dutch Reformed synod on Friday, the sixth of November 1857, the following decision was taken on the proposal of Ds. A. Murray (snr.), minister of the congregation of Graaff-Reinet:

*De Synode beschouwt het wenschlijk en schriftmatig, dat onze ledematen uit de Heidenen, in onze bestaande gemeenten opgenomen en ingelijfd worden, overal waar zulks geschieden kan; maar waar deze maatregel, ten gevolge van de zwakheid van sommigen, de bevordering van de zaak van Christus onder de Heidenen, in de weg zoude staan, de gemeente uit de Heidenen opgerigt, of nog op te rigten, hare Christelijke voorregten in een afzonderlijk gebouw of gesticht genieten zal.*¹¹⁶

Although ecclesial separation was pardoned by this synod, both the wish and the accepted biblical justification was that black, coloured, and white members should worship in the same building, sharing in the same eucharistic cup and celebrating the one baptism. As such this decision should be seen as a compromise for the church. Or as Omnikron states in an article in *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode*: 'Het komt ons voor, dat er hier een middenweg

such he states that: '(M)et hierdie uitspraak het die Ned. Geref. Kerk geen nuwe beleid neergelê nie, maar aangesluit by die praktyk van beide assimilasie en differensiasie. Want toe hierdie besluit geneem is, het 'n aansienlike getal bruin gemeentes reeds bestaan en dit ten spyte van die feit dat die bruin lidmate, volgens die kerk se beleid, nog in moedergemeentes 'n kerklike tuiste kon vind. Terwyl sommige lidmate by moedergemeentes ingeskakel was, is ander afsonderlik bearbei. Om nogeens saam te vat: enersyds staan die kerk in beginsel nog steeds op sy standpunt van 1829 dat nie-blanke lidmate hul kerklike voorregte in dieselfde gebou as blankes sou geniet. Andersyds vind die besluit aanknoping by die beginsel van afsonderlike bearbeiding, wat die sinode telkens tevore gesanksioneer het'. See Van der Watt, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1824-1905*, 1988, 336.

¹¹⁵ Koen notes that theological justification for separation was only sanctioned at the beginning of the 20th century. See Koen, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerkplanting*, 1982, 46.

¹¹⁶ *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1857, 59-60. This proposal was accepted by a majority vote of Synod after a lengthy discussion. An English translation of this synodical translation is found in GM Verstraelen-Gilhuis, 'Church conflict and Black Theology in South Africa', and reads as follows: 'It was desirable and in accord with the Holy Scripture that new black Christians be accepted and initiated into existing congregations. But where on account of the weakness of some, that is of white members, this was not possible, arrangements could be made for black Christians to meet in separate buildings'.

See FJ Verstraelen *et al.* *Missiononly. An Ecumenical Introduction. Texts and contexts of global Christianity*, 1995, 283.

bestaat; niet door het oprigten van afzonderlijke gemeenten van kleurlingen, onder eigen herders, gelijk wel eens aangewezen is; maar door het oprichten van afzonderlijke tempels waarin zij door hunne eigene leeraars worden onderwezen'.¹¹⁷ As noted, when one reads through historical documentation before this synodical decision it becomes clear that this decision should not be read or understood in isolation. In this regard the already mentioned series of articles by NJ Hofmeyr provides a clear indication of the ethos of the (ecclesial) conversations that took place at the time. Specifically relating to the relation between white and coloured members of the DRC at the time Hofmeyr points out the compromise that would later be depicted in the mentioned synod decision of 1857. He notes as follows:

1. Het is af te keuren dat de kleurlingen van de blanken gescheiden worden.
2. Het is ondoelmatig hen met de blanken in een te smelten.
3. De middenweg tusschen beide is de verkieslijkste.
4. Dat het eerste bijna algemeen is gebeurd, was een natuurlijk gevolg uit bestaande omstandighede.¹¹⁸

Critical towards synodical decisions and especially the theological argumentation against separation in the church as the only biblical interpretation with regard to the question of racial matters in the DRC, Hanekom states that synod was out of touch with the reality at the time and with its own reasoning. Hanekom is of the opinion that fifty years before the 1857 synod, the 1834 accepted that coloured converts should be administered to separately from white members. He states the following:

In die diskussie is voorstaanders van afsonderlike gemeentes beskuldig van vooroordeel teen die gekleurde, swakheid, hoogmoed en dergelike meer, terwyl met groot nadruk verklaar word dat die tot dan bestaande sisteem die enigste skriftuurlike moontlikheid is. Diegene wat so redeneer, het egter vergeet dat die beginsels reeds in 1834 aanvaar is ten opsigte van die naturelle; dat daar teen 1857 reeds vir meer as 50 jaar die beginsel van afsonderlike bearbeiding is deur alle sendinggenootskappe; dat die Sinode self deur aanmoediging van afsonderlike 'Zendinginstituten' en die aanstelling van sendelinge die beginsel gesanksioneer het, asook die weg voorberei het tot die ontstaan van afsonderlike gemeentes; en les bes, dat in vrywel alle groot gemeentes van ons kerk teen daardie tyd afsonderlike geboue, gestigte, oefeninghuise en kerksaaltjies in die dorpe en buitewyke vir

¹¹⁷ Omnikron, 'Het Zendingwezen', In *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode in Zuid-Afrika*, 1857, 142. In this article it becomes clear that, for Omnikron, this decision would lead to a successful mission endeavour under the coloured people of South Africa. See Omnikron, 'Het Zendingwezen', In *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode in Zuid-Afrika*, 1857, 143.

¹¹⁸ See in this regard, NJ Hofmeyr, 'Iets over het Zendingwezen', In *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode in Zuid-Afrika*, no 11. May 1853, 165.

*gekleurdes bestaan het, soos ons reeds aangetoon het – dit was ook die begeerte van die gekleurdes!*¹¹⁹

From his own point of view and with specific reference to the synodical decision of 1857 Gerdener is of the opinion that the synod steered the church in a steady direction in the sense that it denied biblical sanctioning of separation on the basis of the colour. However, like most of the Dutch Reformed theologians of the time Gerdener is also of the opinion that practical considerations made that the synod could not but move in the direction of separate ministering of the coloured converts. In this regard he states that *'In die Sinode van 1857 is in verband met "onze ledematen uit de heidenen" besluit dat "als gevolg van de zwakheid van sommigen" afsonderlike gemeentes uit die heidene gestig sal word. Die beginsel of ideaal van geestelike gelykheid is erken, maar die agterlike bevatting van sommige nie-blankes het aparte bearbeiding geëis.'*¹²⁰ However, history would prove that this type of justification is and remains questionable. With regard to the decision of 1857 Loff is of the opinion that synod tried to uphold two differentiating modes namely that, if it was desirable white and black was to worship together. If this was not possible or desirable a separate church building should be erected. *'Waar moontlik, moes hulle "in onze bestaande gemeenten opgenomen en ingelijfd worden". Indien "de zwakheid van sommigen" dit egter sou verhinder, moes "de gemeenten uit de Heidendom opgerigt of nog op te rigten hun voorregten in een afzonderlijk gebouw of gesticht genieten".'*¹²¹ From a socio-historical point of view Giliomee is of the opinion that the infamous phrase of 1857 as mentioned above was poorly formulated and that it thus opened the door for prejudice from the side of white people to exclude coloured and black members from their congregations without making themselves guilty of (the) 'weakness'.¹²²

In line with Giliomee, Loff rightly states that the Dutch Reformed synod of 1857 did not only sanction the establishment of separate congregations on the basis of colour it did leave enough room for this development. *'(D)ie sinodale besluit van 1857 het nie net die vorming van kleurbepaalde gemeentes gesanksioneer nie, maar ook die weg gebaan vir die uiteindelijke vestiging van 'n afsonderlike kerk'.*¹²³ With regard to the formation of separate congregations for the different cultural groups JL Jansen van Vuuren notes that the decision of 1857 did not yet have in mind the indigenisation of the coloured and black congregations

¹¹⁹ TN Hanekom, 'Ons inheemse Kerke vir die Inboorlinge. Hoe het die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk daarote gekom?' In *Grense*, Simposium oor Rasse- en ander Verhoudinge, 1961, 61.

¹²⁰ Gerdener, *Die Afrikaner en die Sending*, 1959, 78. It is very interesting to note that Gerdener further states that it is to be doubted that the 'weakness of some' refers to whites. See Gerdener, *Die Afrikaner en die Sending*, 1959, 78. However, Loff strongly contests this notion. See Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 96.

¹²¹ Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 97. Loff further states that *'(A)l is hierdie kleurvooroordeel by 'n deel van die Kerk ook eufimisties swakheid genoem, was dit nietemin baie sterk. Om die werklikheid van kleurvooroordeel te akkommodeer, moes die gekleurde gewese heidene tot aparte gemeentes gevorm word wat in afsonderlike geboue afgeskei kon word'*. See Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 98.

¹²² Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 2004, 83. My translation.

¹²³ Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 97.

of the DRC.¹²⁴ The question remains if the decision of 1857 was regarded by synod as a fixed policy or as an interim practical arrangement. However, with this the pattern was set for the establishment of different 'churches' within the DRC of which the only differentiating characteristic was that it was reserved for members of colour. This would form the model for the establishment of other mission churches by the DRC along racial and cultural lines for decades to come. In this regard EA Venter is of the opinion that the synod of 1857 took a brave step breaking with previous synodical decision and sanctioning. Like most of the theologians of the time Venter also believes that synod affirmed and strengthened an already existing practice but, for him the schism between the synod decision of 1829 and that of 1857 is of significance. He notes the following:

In verband met bostaande (the DRC synodical decision of 1857) stip ons nou net die volgende aan: (1) Hierdie Sinodale besluit het beteken 'n radikale breuk met 'n gebruik van meer as twee eeue lank. Dit moes ongetwyfeld geweldige geloofsmoed geverg het aan die kant van die lede van die Sinode om die besluit te neem. (2) Alhoewel die besluit slegs bevestig het wat prakties reeds op verskeie plekke gebeur het, het dit die Ned. Geref. Kerk tog op 'n weg geplaas waarvan dit nie weer sou kon terugkeer nie. Dit was in die goeie sin van die woord 'n grootse eksperiment wat in geloof onderneem was. (3) Tussen 1829 en 1857 moes daar 'n verbasende kentering van gevoel t.o.v die onderhawige saak ingetree het. Terwyl die sinode van 1857 kerklike apartheid goedkeur, is die blote bespreking van aparte Nagmaalsbediening in 1829 as "derogatoir aan die waardigheid van die Christelike Godsdienst" beskou.¹²⁵

It needs to be mentioned that, over the history of separation of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, the Lord's Supper has more than often been the central point of serious division. The questions with regard to the simultaneous participation at the Table of the Lord of white and black¹²⁶ members gave in many instances rise to the establishment of separate church buildings for coloured and black members apart from white members of the DRC. Till this very day the mentioned churches struggle to unite truly around the Eucharistic table. The researcher is of the opinion that this continuing struggle can be traced back to early mission history of the Dutch Reformed Churches.

¹²⁴ JL Jansen van Vuuren, *Die Inheemswording van die Kerk*, 1976, 25. As reason he explains that the formation of the DRMC cannot be seen as the establishment of a church as such, but much rather as an extension of the DRC in a new 'department'. See Jansen van Vuuren, *Die inheemswording van die kerk*, 1976, 25.

¹²⁵ EA Venter, 'Apartheid: 1829 en 1857', In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang VII, September 1945, No.3, 106.

¹²⁶ Here the term 'black members' is used inclusively to refer to the coloured, Indian and black peoples of South Africa.

It has, however, to be made clear that there is no tangible evidence to suggest that (unofficial) separation around the Eucharistic table took place before the 1820s.¹²⁷ Sadly, by the end of 1830 it became a relatively common practice in some of the Dutch Reformed congregations to allow separate celebrations of the Lord's Supper by white and 'non-white' members.¹²⁸ This meant that, although some congregations consisted of both white and 'non-white' members, when it came to the celebration of the Eucharist, the white members celebrated first, followed by the 'non-white' members. Loff notes of one instance in the congregation of Worcester where there was only one 'non-white' member present in the congregation during a celebration of the Lord's Supper. Shamefully he had to sit alone at the table of the Lord as he had to wait until the white members finished their celebrations.¹²⁹ Whilst this was a practice within some congregations, others preferred to have separate services in separate buildings for the members of European descent and the 'native members'.

Here it has to be remembered that the official decision and policy of the DRC (from the synod of 1824 till just before the synod of 1857) was that there was to be no separation on the basis of skin colour and/or cultural descent with regard to the celebration of the Eucharist. Pauw agrees with this stating that 'it seems therefore that during the first half of the 19th century the official position of the church was that all members, irrespective of ethnicity, were to worship in the same building and to share together in the one Eucharist. Various examples to the contrary show that in practice this was not always the case, but discrimination was in principle reprimanded'.¹³⁰ These separations, along with other social issues, directly led to the DRC synod decision of 1857.

2.7. Which ecclesial structure took responsibility for mission work in the DRC?

It is important to establish what part/commission of the different Dutch Reformed Churches was responsible for mission work. As noted earlier the Dutch Reformed Churches had specific synodical commissions who took control over the 'mission congregations' and eventually 'managed' the 'mission churches'. It is therefore important to note the involvement of these synodical commissions in order to revisit historical developments within the DRMC and the DRCA.

As mentioned in previous sections of this chapter the Colonial Government (VOC) alongside individuals in the Cape Church were active agents in mission. Historical documents clearly point to the fact that these agents saw it as their calling to be directly involved in mission. Later on congregations started to become more involved in mission and this led to

¹²⁷ According to a list compiled by IJ van der Walt it is clear that separate Eucharist celebrations of European and 'converted heathen' took place from as early as 1829. IJ van der Walt, *Eiesoortigheid en die Sending*, 1963, 416. Also see in this regard NJ Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke', in *Annale*, 1973, 21-23.

¹²⁸ See in this regard Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 84-90.

¹²⁹ Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 89.

¹³⁰ Pauw, *Anti-Apartheid Theology*, 2007, 51.

missionary endeavours by particular circuits/presbyteries of the Church.¹³¹ As noted, missionaries were later ordained by the Dutch Reformed Churches in a full time office dedicated to do missionary work under the 'heathen/christianised heathen' on behalf of the church/local congregations.

In a later development the Dutch Reformed Churches called special synodical commissions for mission into being; both for mission work inside its borders and abroad. This was due to the fact that the churches sought for a better organisational structure with regard to their missionary work. These synodical commissions can directly be linked to the establishment of the different mission churches of the DRC. Here the synod of 1847 is of great importance. Not only was this the first synod to be held after the Ordination of De Mist¹³² came into being, but this was also the synod that took the decision to call the first permanent commission for mission into being.¹³³ How this newly established commission will affect the structures of the DRC was however not fully established. It can however be mentioned that this commission, as early as the synod of 1852, had questions regarding its authority especially when it came to the ordination of missionaries as well as the control of funds allocated to mission work.¹³⁴ It can further be mentioned that the synod of 1857 pioneered in the direction of establishing a commission for mission outside the borders of South Africa.¹³⁵

With regard to mission activities after 1857 Smith notes that numerous ecclesial structures and institutions were involved in mission on behalf of the church. These included the Synodical Commission for Mission, various presbyterial commissions, local church councils as well as separate mission societies. He states that: '*die Sinodale Sendingkommissie het werkkringe begin: ook Ringsendingkommissies het werk onderneem, terwyl sommige plaaslike kerkrade met die taak besig was, en op sommige plekke was nog Hulpgenootskappe, in sommige gevalle ook nog Sendinggenootskappe wat plaaslik deur inisiatief van lidmate gevorm is, met sendingwerk besig.*'¹³⁶ It thus becomes clear that interplay between various institutions actively pursued the directive of mission.

¹³¹ Here it can indeed be noted that, in the case of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Orange Free State, synod decided that local missionary work should be done under the guidance of a local minister. See Odendaal, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sending*, 1970, 86.

¹³² For an overview of the impact and theological significance of Ordination No. 7 of 1843 see EPJ Kleynhans, *Die Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1973.

¹³³ See, *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1847. The members who served on this commission were Rev. Colin Fraser, Rev. GWA van der Lingen, Dr. PE Faure, Rev. SP Heyns and Elder JJJ Smuts. See in this regard, Van Heerde, *Twee eeue van sendingwerk*, 1951, 84-84. Van Heerde makes it clear that the commission placed a high premium on the direct support of local congregations in the mission effort.

¹³⁴ See in this regard, *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1852

¹³⁵ See in this regard, *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1857

¹³⁶ Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke', 1973, 36. See also PP Joubert, 'Die Behoeftes van die Ned. Ger. Sendingkerk op die Pad na Selfstandigheid'. In *Op die Horison*. Jaargang I. Julie 1939. No.3. 129.

Regarding the establishment of the Synodical Commissions for Mission, Eybers notes that congregations no longer took direct ownership with regard to mission work and that synods thus overpowered presbyteries and congregations. This, according to JH Eybers, was in contradiction to the Reformed understanding of mission and church polity.¹³⁷ In his research on mission activities in Natal, Hofmeyer, in line with Eybers, points out that these developments severely hampered mission work in Natal.¹³⁸ However it may be, these Commissions existed well into the establishment of the different mission churches and their control over these churches was hard felt.

2.8. The mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches (1935)¹³⁹

Any discussion on the planting of 'mission churches' by the DRC would not be complete if mention was not made of the infamous mission policy (1935) of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches. Due to the well-documented nature of this policy I will now attempt to make some brief remarks to this policy in as much as it relates the research theme and content of this chapter. As this is the first official mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches and because of the fact that its tenets influenced missiological thinking and documentation for decades to come, the missio-historical attention of this study will specifically focus on this policy. The extent in which this policy impacted on church juridical developments and the understanding of ecclesial autonomy in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA will be discussed in this study.

As the years passed and as mission activities within the Dutch Reformed Churches expanded, the necessity of a common and indeed theologically sanctioned mission policy for the federated Dutch Reformed Churches gradually came to the fore. As the mission enterprises of the different Dutch Reformed Churches grew, the different churches more and more moved in the direction of compiling their own separate mission policies. This was done by setting down different laws to control the Synodical Commissions for Mission in its mission endeavours. However, this contributed towards overly diverse mission enterprises that would have a very lethargic effect on Dutch Reformed mission as a whole.¹⁴⁰ Whatever the reasons behind its formulation might be, the first official mission policy of a federated

¹³⁷ JH Eybers, *Die Kerkinrigting van die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika getoets aan die Beginsels van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 1934, 198-213. The extent and practice of this development differed within the different Dutch Reformed Churches.

¹³⁸ Hofmeyer, *Die sending van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerk*, 1973, 101.

¹³⁹ Loff states that the DRC was the only Afrikaans church that formulated a clear mission policy. The mentioned aspect of equalisation and the effect of this on mission thinking played a formative role in formulating a mission policy. See Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 76-77.

¹⁴⁰ Van der Watt notes that '(B)y die planting van die jong kerke in die Ned. Geref. Kerk se sending was daar vooraf weinig prinsipiële besinning - Gereformeerde teologiese vertrekpunte oor die kerk, kerk en sending en die verhouding van die moederkerk tot die geplante dogterkerk ontbreek aanvanklik'. See Van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 65.

Dutch Reformed Churches saw the light in 1935.¹⁴¹ Van der Watt notes that, relating to evangelism, the mission policy and mission in general had as aim to win souls for the Kingdom of God.¹⁴² This had as outflow *'die stigting van gemeentes, en uiteindelik georganiseerde kerke'*.¹⁴³ The prime characteristic of the organised churches would be that they would be racial/cultural separate, indigenous, and autonomous younger churches. Or as MW Retief states: *'(M)et die oog hierop moet daar in die sendingvelde kerke gestig word wat waarlik Christelik is, en wat selfonderhoudend, selfuitbreidend en selfbesturend is, m.a.w. inboorlingkerke wat op hul eie bene kan staan en die hulp van die moederkerk nie verder nodig het nie'*.¹⁴⁴ However, according to Van der Watt it seems that the biggest emphasis later was on the planting of separate churches.¹⁴⁵ It is clear that this mode and characteristic can only be interpreted as a cultural specific development and as such as a practical outflow in dealing with racial dilemma in South Africa. As such the principal justification for the planting of separate churches was found in the apparent success of this strategy. According to Van der Watt it is clear that because of what was believed to be an effective ministry to the heathen the demands of Scripture was relativised. He notes that: *'(T)er wille van die effektiewe evangelisering van die heidene is die Skriftuurlike eis van eenheid gerelativiseer – skeiding is met die jare tot die algemeen geldende beginsel verhef'*.¹⁴⁶

The impact of this mission policy on the South African political and social spheres was hard felt and, as Kuperus notes, 'clarified the NGK's position on equalisation and introduced some of the key concepts that later crystallised into apartheid ideology'.¹⁴⁷ Regarding the impact of the mission policy on a social level, Van der Watt notes that the DRC clearly stipulated her policy on racial assimilation in the mission policy.¹⁴⁸

Adonis is of the opinion that the first official mission policy of the four Dutch Reformed Churches (1935) had a historical growth of which the workings became clear within the decisions and discussions of the Congress on Mission (1929) and the Synod of the DRC in the Orange Free State (1931).¹⁴⁹ At the Mission Congress of the DRC in die Orange Free State the need for a clearly formulated mission policy was expressed and at the Dutch Reformed synod (Orange Free State) of 1931 a commission was called into being that had to present a

¹⁴¹ Adonis, *Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur*, 1982, 74-75. This Federal Council came into being in 1905.

¹⁴² *'Die "insameling" van siele vir Gods Koninkryk'*. Van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 65.

¹⁴³ See Van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 65.

¹⁴⁴ MW Retief, 'Oor die Sendingbeleid', In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang I, Januarie 1939, No.1, 9.

¹⁴⁵ Van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 87.

¹⁴⁶ Van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 89.

¹⁴⁷ Kuperus, *State, Civil Society and Apartheid in South Africa*, 1999, 71.

¹⁴⁸ *'Wat laasgenoemde betref, verklaar die kerk hom onomwonde teen rassevermenging en alles wat dit in die hand sal werk en fundeer dit op die "tradisionele vrees by die Afrikaner vir gelykstelling"'*. See Van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 65.

¹⁴⁹ Adonis, *Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur*, 1982, 78-79. The report that served before the Ad Hoc commission of the synod of the DRC in the Orange Free State served as a basis for the mission policy of 1935.

report that would serve as a policy for education, language, social condition and religious needs of black people.¹⁵⁰ After a joint meeting in Bloemfontein in May 1934 between the Commission for the Affairs of Black People (Natuurlikesake-kommissie) and representatives of the different Dutch Reformed Churches, the 'mission churches' and the Stofberg Gedenkskool¹⁵¹ it was decided that there would be no other meeting between white, coloured and black until a mission policy was formulated.¹⁵² With this the DRC moved into a new era regarding its mission.

The mission policy was divided into four sections, namely Evangelisation: the mission fields, the relation of the Dutch Reformed Churches with other churches and to the government, Training and Education, Social issues, and Economical concerns.¹⁵³ The outlook of the DRC was that mission was part of every aspect of life. Mission would thus not only be defined as evangelisation. There would be no single aspect of life that mission would not have an effect on.¹⁵⁴ The broad spectrum covered by the mission policy makes this clear. The establishing of national churches was presupposed by the mission policy of the DRC and this would have a very negative impact on ecclesiastical unity within the broader family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

When reading the mission policy it becomes clear that mission thinking in the DRC had in mind the establishing of racially and culturally separate mission congregations/churches. It was important that these congregations should be allowed to grow to self-supporting, self-governing, and self-extending indigenous churches. Racial and cultural separation should be used for this purpose.¹⁵⁵ In the process of working towards the goal of establishing autonomous mission churches these churches/congregations would, until this goal was met, fall under the guardianship of the Synodical Commissions for Mission and/or local congregations of the DRC. Guardianship was to be upheld as an interim arrangement that should systematically promote the autonomy of coloured and black people. Regarding the interlinked value of the principles of segregation and guardianship in the mission outlook of the DRC, Murray notes this was the foundation of the mission policy. '*Die aard van*

¹⁵⁰ Koen, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerkplanting*, 1982, 87. See also Gerdener, *Reguit koers gehou*, 1951, 85-92.

¹⁵¹ This school was established for the training of black evangelists by the DRC for work in the 'mission churches'.

¹⁵² Soon hereafter a concept policy was formulated and was accepted by the synods of the four Dutch Reformed Churches as the first official mission policy of the DRC. See Koen, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerkplanting*, 1982, 87. See also in this regard Gerdener, 1951, 85-92. '*Die invloed van hierdie beleid sou sonder enige twyfel van wesenlike betekenis wees in die ontwikkelingsproses van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk se sendingpraktyk in Suidelike Afrika.*' Koen, 1982, 88.

¹⁵³ The mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches as recorded in Gerdener, *Reguit koers gehou*, 1951, 86-92.

¹⁵⁴ The mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches as recorded in Gerdener, *Reguit koers gehou*, 1951, 93.

¹⁵⁵ Because DRC mission grew to be extremely successful on the basis of separation between the different cultural groups, the church believed that its mission policy can only be built on cultural separation.

segregasie wat toegepas word, word vasgelê deur die beginsel van sorg vir die morele en sosiale welvaart van die naturel. Hierdie sturende beginsel wat agter die segregasiebeleid lê, word uiteindelik uitgedruk in die begrip van voogdy.¹⁵⁶ Murray then continues by defining guardianship stating that it should not only be seen as a governmental tenet but that it also holds an ethical, religious and anthropological value and importance. *'(W)ant die woord voogdy gaan swanger aan 'n groot betekenis. Dit bevat nie alleen 'n staatkundige beginsel nie, dit sluit in 'n etiese, 'n religieuse en 'n mensebeskouing*'.¹⁵⁷ The mentioned principle rang true for all the 'mission churches' of the DRC. Therefore the mission policy in general denied racial mixing and equalisation and with this, white supremacy was upheld.¹⁵⁸

One should keep in mind that the mission policy developed over a large period of time (from approximately 1907 to 1935). This was the period just after the Anglo Boer War where the question concerning poor whites was made an ecclesiastical issue and was largely dealt with by the church. This went hand in hand with the question of *gelykstelling* and racial mixing. It was also the time of the famous Du Plessis case¹⁵⁹ of which the outcome polarised the church and sent the church in a clear direction. These and other factors played a role in the development and outcome of the formulated mission policy of 1935. It should also be remembered that this mission policy was the policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches consisting of individual autonomous Dutch Reformed Churches. It thus formed the general principles according to which the church would do mission work. Other practical arrangements regarding mission were decided upon by the individual synods of the Dutch Reformed Churches.¹⁶⁰

The mission policy fell short of indicating comprehensive and Biblical mission strategies. Rather it had in mind the upholding of superiority of the DRC - and the Afrikaner people - over the rest of the cultural groups in especially Southern Africa. Thus it had a strong racial and discriminating overtone. In his critique towards the mission policy of the DRC, Adonis states that what was perceived to be a mission policy was indeed nothing of the sort. In fact for him this 'policy' had nothing to do with mission in the biblical sense of the word. Adonis is therefore of the opinion that the 1935 mission policy of the DRC was nothing but an instrument of apartheid thinking built on white supremacy:

¹⁵⁶ AH Murray, 'Voorwaardes vir Voogdyskap', In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang II, Maart 1940, No.1, 8.

¹⁵⁷ Murray, 'Voorwaardes vir Voogdyskap', In *Op die Horison*, 1940, 8.

¹⁵⁸ See in this regard the concept mission policy of the DRC, Appendix H, *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1936, 339-341. Also see the mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches as recorded in Gerdener, *Reguit koers gehou*, 1951, 85-92.

¹⁵⁹ For a comprehensive overview of the 'Du Plessis case' and its impact on the church, see AR Olivier, *Die Kerk en die Du Plessis-saak met besondere verwysing na die ekklesiologiese situasie*, 1990. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University.

¹⁶⁰ For an overview in this regard see JA Lombard, *Ontwikkeling in die Sendingbeleid en -praktyk van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk gedurende die tydperk 1932 tot 1962*, 1985, 53-61.

*In ons kritiek moet daar verder op gewys word dat hierdie sendingbeleid van die NGK in feite geen sendingbeleid is nie en dat dit ook niks met die sending in die bybelse sin van die woord te doen het nie. Ondanks die feit dat W.J. van der Merwe konstateer dat 'die ywer vir die koningskap van Christus en die eer van God in alles en almal is die einddoel van die sending', is hul sendingbeleid 'n onderdrukkersinstrument waar swart en blank nie as gelykes beskou en behandel word nie. Hul sendingbeleid het wel alles met die praktyk en ideologie van apartheid te maak. Die sendingbeleid van die NGK is 'n instrument vir die handhawing van blanke supremasie en swart onderdanigheid.'*¹⁶¹

Although the mission strategy of the DRC developed further after the mission policy it needs to be mentioned that the tenets found in the mission policy of 1935 can also be found in other official mission documents and policies of the DRC even after the unification of the DRC.¹⁶² As such the importance of this mission policy (1935) for this study as it specifically relates to the planting of churches and in as much as it expresses the relation between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA should not be underestimated.

2.9 Conclusion

Although the DRC started relatively late and rather tentatively with her mission work within the context of South(-ern) Africa, this church's mission enterprise grew to be an enormously fruitful endeavour. From history and from the DRC's present reality it is clear that this church sees itself as an active and called *missional church* growingly embedded within the context of Africa.

The historical outflow of Dutch Reformed mission activities remains, however, problematic as mission, and segregation along racial and cultural lines went hand in hand having a divided family of Dutch Reformed Churches as product. Converts were perceived as being of a lower class, value, status, and being in relation to white Christians, and they thus had to be ministered to separately. This was the way of thinking formally sanctioned by the DRC. With historical research Loff shows that it was indeed one of the aims of Dutch Reformed mission activities to separate people on the grounds of their race and the colour of their skin.¹⁶³ In

¹⁶¹ Adonis, *Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur*, 1982, 196. Adonis quotes Van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus wil*, 1967, 33. Adonis further mentions the unhealthy alliance of the DRC with the Afrikaner people as one the major contributing factors in the formulation of the mission policy. See Adonis, *Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur*, 1982, 195.

¹⁶² See in this regard *Human Relations and the South African scene in the light of Scripture: official translation of the report Ras, volk en nasie en volkeverhoudinge in die lig van die Skrif*. October 1974. 1976. Cape Town: Dutch Reformed Publishers.

¹⁶³ Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 79. 'Skrywers uit die kring van die NG Kerk self het aangetoon watter noue verband tussen sending en die reëling van rasseverhoudinge bestaan het. Nog lank voordat 'n formele sendingbeleid opgestel is, is daar geleidelik maatreëls getref ter bevordering van die skeiding van lidmate langs die kleurskeidslyn.' See Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 79.

fact the DRC for a very long period stood firm in the notion that her enormous and illustrious mission enterprise was the successful product of her segregation policies.¹⁶⁴ However, historical data and the present reality prove otherwise. In line with this it can undoubtedly be said that the later state-instituted policy of apartheid grew from church proclaimed and practised segregation that in turn grew from the mission activities of especially the DRC. Here the formulated mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches (1935) stands as a beacon. Elphick states that 'in the 1940s and 1950s advocates and enemies of apartheid agreed that the ideology (apartheid) was somehow rooted in Afrikaner religion, particularly in their "Calvinism"'.¹⁶⁵ Here it becomes clear that the DRC stood in a deep and unhealthy solidarity with the Afrikaner people.

The official position of the Cape Church until 1857 was that all the converts would not only become part of the existing congregations through the one baptism, but that they would also be able to share in the same eucharistic meal, in the same church building as the Christians of European decent.¹⁶⁶ As time passed and as more and more converts formed part of congregations this changed to the extent that division became the accepted norm. With regard to the positions within the congregations at the Cape, one could speak of a gradual movement away from integrated services to the establishment of separate church buildings and separate worship services to the establishment of separate churches. Pauw expresses abovementioned as follows:

The idea of a separate church for separate ethnic groups was therefore not part of the original mindset at the Cape, and it was accepted that all people could worship in the same church. During the 19th century this changed, partly due to the missionary practices and the establishment of the Afrikaner identity. Initially, black members where seated towards the back or sides of the churches. Later special worship services where arranged for them in separate buildings.¹⁶⁷

It is therefore interesting to note the following in the work of EA Venter: '*Hoewel ons seker tereg sou kon beweer dat die beleid van die Ned. Geref. Kerk teenoor die gekleurde rasse al hier van die begin af aan gebaseer was op die gedagtes van Christelike voorgedyskap, moet dit tog ook toegegee word dat hierdie beginsel nie steeds aan die metode van apartheid verbind is nie. Inteendeel, dit was eers eeue ná die stigting van die volksplanting aan die*

¹⁶⁴ See Lombard, *Ontwikkeling in die Sendingbeleid*, 1985, 179-182.

¹⁶⁵ Elphick, 'Missions and Afrikaner Nationalism' in Stanley (ed), *Missions, Nationalism, and the End of the Empire*, 2003, 75. Here it should be noted that the situation as it unfolded in the South African context and here especially the influence of the DRC on it, should be viewed as an unique contextual development and not as a purely and general Calvinistic tendency.

¹⁶⁶ History makes it clear that quite a few congregations deviated away from this official decision.

¹⁶⁷ Pauw, *Anti-Apartheid Theology*, 2007, 45. Although not separated within the ecclesial sphere history shows that coloured- and black members were not regarded as equal to the Christians of European descent particularly with regard to their social status.

Kaap, dat die idee van kerklike apartheid amptelik goedgekeur is'.¹⁶⁸ In his research Venter focuses on the period between 1829 and 1857. In this regard he uses historical documentation to verify his assumptions.

The gradual movement away from integrated congregations was not present within the ranks of the other Dutch Reformed Churches in the interior of South Africa, as, from the onset, their position was that the 'christianised heathen' should worship separately and thus form their own distinct congregation under the resort of the 'mother church'. Here the fear of *gelykstelling* - often regarded as one of the main reasons why the *Trekkers* left the Cape in the first instance - and other mentioned socio-historical developments should be attributed as being direct reasons. As it was the case in the Cape church, the members of these 'mission congregations' would however still be regarded as members of the DRC until the establishment of separate 'mission churches'.¹⁶⁹

In general it can be said that the model for the planting of churches by the Dutch Reformed Churches was one based on racial and cultural division with the aim of establishing separate, self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending indigenous 'daughter churches' whilst at the same time governing these churches on different levels.¹⁷⁰ In this regard it becomes clear that, when it comes to the planting of churches, the DRC was largely influenced by the so-called 'three selves theory' of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson - and especially Venn's particular understanding of the formula - whilst at the same time adapting this model to fit social thinking. This was clearly formulated within the mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches. In this regard Gerdener states exactly this: *'Algaande word die jonge Christelike Kerk ook geroep om homself te regeer en uit te brei. Die gevoel van verantwoordelikheid en leierskap moet ontwikkel word'*.

Although the DRC was influenced by European missiological models like the so-called 'three selves theory' of Venn and Anderson, it is clear that the largest influences on the model for the planting of 'mission' churches as created and followed by the DRC was of a social nature.¹⁷¹ This is seen in historical data regarding the history of South Africa. It was only from the 1900s onwards that it would become important that these erected structures should be theologically motivated, sanctioned and defended by the DRC. This is clear from

¹⁶⁸ Venter, 'Apartheid: 1829 en 1857', In *Op die Horison*, 1945, 105.

¹⁶⁹ Although officially regarded as members of the DRC, converts were regarded as the product of mission and they were not in any way equal in status with the white members of the DRC.

¹⁷⁰ All the mission churches would for the largest part of their history be subordinate to the Dutch Reformed congregations and were for a very long time governed by either the Synodical Commission for Mission of the DRC under which they resorted or by the local Dutch Reformed congregation.

¹⁷¹ There has always been a degree of interplay between the influence of the church on society and the influence of society on the church throughout the history of the DRC and of the Republic of South Africa. This interplay was so intertwined that it is often difficult to distinguish between who influenced who the most. As time passed and as the government and society of South Africa become more and more secular - especially from the 1990s onwards - this changed dramatically.

the compilation of the first official mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches in 1935 and other influential documents regarding church-instituted segregation.¹⁷²

In all of the Dutch Reformed Churches these separate 'mission congregations' were later organised into 'mission churches' that formed their own separate synods. The manner in which these churches were established differs to a certain extent pending on the different contextual situations of both the younger church and the planting church. However, these different churches were direct replicas of the DRC, as so-called 'mother church', especially with regard to their confessional basis, dogma, church polity, and structure. Not even this fact could perpetuate an equal denominational relation with the broader DRC¹⁷³ and the family of Dutch Reformed Churches as the DRC treated the DRMC and the DRCA as having an inferior status in relation to itself.¹⁷⁴ One can therefore come to no other conclusion but to assume that the only reason for division within the broader family of Dutch Reformed Churches was due to a strong racial prejudice in line with the South African Apartheid context. As mentioned, this fact finds a direct expression in the mission policy of the DRC.

Other churches and mission societies active in the South African mission sphere also organised the churches that grew from their mission activities in separate congregations for (mostly) white, coloured and black members. However this was never forced down on the different congregations and, although separated, this separation never meant a schism in the unity of the particular church. This kind of disunity was uniquely present in the ranks of the DRC and the other two so-called Afrikaans churches, namely the *Nederduitse Hervormde* and the *Gereformeerde Kerke*.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² See in this regard *Ras, volk en nasie en volkereverhoudinge in die lig van die Skrif*. Goedgekeur en aanvaardeur die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, Oktober 1974. 1975. Kaapstad: NG Kerk-Uitgewers.

¹⁷³ This term refers to the different 'white' Dutch Reformed Churches.

¹⁷⁴ Koen states that: '*As vrug van die Ned. Geref. Sendingpraktyk het kerke vir die blanke en nie-blanke, wat dieselfde gereformeerde geloof bely, dieselfde belydenisskrifte aanvaar en op dieselfde grondslae van kerkregering bou, afsonderlik van mekaar tot stand gekom sonder die gebruiklik gereformeerde kerkverband*'. See Koen, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerkplanting*, 1982, 29.

¹⁷⁵ See Adonis, *Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur*, 1982, 194-195.

| Chapter 3 |

From Mission Churches to the formation of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. A church juridical outline of the DRMC and the DRCA, 1881-1994.

We believe that this true church ought to be governed according to the spiritual order that our Lord has taught us in His word. There should be ministers or pastors to preach the word of God and administer the sacraments. There should also be elders and deacons, along with the pastors, to make up the council of the church. By this means true religion is preserved; the doctrine is able to take its course; and evil men are corrected spiritually and held in check, so that also the poor and the afflicted may be helped and comforted according to their need.¹⁷⁶

3.1 Introduction

That the different ‘mission churches’ of the DRC underwent different relational developments is definite.¹⁷⁷ These developments could be placed between two poles namely total dependence and direct control under the guardianship of the DRC, and a more autonomous stance with the coming into being of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). The historical developments between these two poles form the basis for an understanding of the relation between the DRC and her so-called ‘daughter churches’ over a period of more than 100 years. Therefore it is important to understand these developments in order to make sense of the history of the URCSA and to comprehend the current relation between the URCSA and the DRC.¹⁷⁸

Within this chapter I look into these historical developments dividing them into different periods on the basis of church juridical developments that had a direct impact on the relationship between the DRMC and the DRCA in relation to the DRC. The different documents on which the government and the broader relation between the DRC and the

¹⁷⁶ The Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 30, *the government of the church*. In Pelikan & Hotchkiss (eds), *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, 2003, 420-421.

¹⁷⁷ It is important to remember that since 1862 until 1962 the DRC as a (structurally united) church per se did not exist. As such one should rightly speak of four different Dutch Reformed Churches, namely the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (Cape Church), the Dutch Reformed Church in the Orange Free State, the Dutch Reformed Church in Transvaal, and the Dutch Reformed Church in Natal. Today these churches are united in the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church consisting of different regional synods partitioned on the geographical location of these former Dutch Reformed Churches.

¹⁷⁸ These two churches are involved in a broader process of re-unification with the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) and the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA). Together these churches form part of what is generally known as the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. Although this term does not refer to an organisational structure between these churches it does express the deep relatedness and shared heritage of these churches.

DRMC and DRCA were based and expressed form the basis of my research. In essence these documents represent different developmental stages within the history of the DRMC and the DRCA. Furthermore they present developments in church polity and the growth towards autonomy within the mentioned churches. It is therefore possible to use these documents as markers in the developmental history of the DRMC and the DRCA on their way to unification in the URCSA.

As such I will attempt to critically re-read these historical documents whilst taking into account the historical context that led to their birth (and termination).

The formation of the URCSA can historically be seen as the first step towards re-unification between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. As such the process followed by the DRMC and the DRCA in forming the URCSA is of great importance within the current and ongoing process of church re-unification within the broader family of Dutch Reformed Churches. Both the model for church unity and the first church order on which the new church (URCSA) came into existence is therefore of great importance. It is thus important to look into the process as it played itself out in the journey leading to the establishment of the URCSA in 1994.

3.2. The first constitution for the establishment of the DRMC (1881)

With the establishment of the different 'mission churches' by the Dutch Reformed Churches each church was constituted on the basis of a Constitution. This constitution defined the structure and inner workings of the particular church and could well be seen as the document through which these churches were governed. In this regard the constitution given to the DRMC by the DRC in SA is of great importance, as it was both the first constitution compiled for a 'mission church' and also because it acted as blueprint for other constitutions that followed. The constitution that led to the establishment of the DRMC by the DRC in SA can be seen as the primary foundation on which the constitutions for the other four 'mission churches', within the borders of South Africa, were constructed.¹⁷⁹ The guiding principles of this document are found in all the other constitutions and as such this document is of immense importance concerning the (mission) history of especially the DRC, DRMC, and the DRCA. From a church juridical perspective these constitutions can be seen as the basis for the government of the mentioned churches.

Because of the immense importance of the constitution(s) the primary focus of this section will be on it. I look into the framework and body of this historical document discussing its essence and outflow within the history of these churches.

¹⁷⁹ See NJ Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke', In *Annale*, 1973, 40-41.

3.2.1 The contents of the Constitution for the DRMC

The constitution drafted for the establishment of the DRMC consisted of 10 Articles. In these articles are broadly discussed which congregations would form part of the to be formed DRMC, the confessional basis and governance of the church, as well as financial matters directly related to the ministry and governance of the church.¹⁸⁰

Concerning the structure of this constitution, Loff is of the opinion that one can distinguish between four different sections. The content of these sections show towards the relation between the DRMC and the DRC, the governance of the DRMC, the administration of the DRMC, and the binding nature of the constitution coupled with the right of veto of the DRC.

*In die eerste drie artikels word die hegte band tussen die “Zendingkerk” en die “Moederkerk” uitgedruk. In die volgende drie artikels word die samestelling en pligte van die “Bestuur” van hierdie Kerk aangedui. Hierop volg drie artikels wat op die administrasie van die Kerk betrekking het. En dan sluit dit af met die artikel waarkragtens besluite “door enige Bestuur” geneem deur die Sendingkommissie goedgekeur moes word alvorens dit uitgevoer kan word.*¹⁸¹

This document would form the governing basis of the DRMC during the recess between the constituting synod of 1881 and the next synod of 1891.

Five articles of this *schema* are striking and of importance holding special significance for church polity. I believe that an understanding of these five articles will present a hermeneutical key to understand the nature of the relationship between the DRMC and the DRC in SA in this early stage. In the following section there is a discussion on what I believe to be the most important articles with direct relevance to this study. The articles are: Article I: on membership, Article II: on the governance of the new church, Article III: on the confessional basis and teaching of the new church, Article V: on the membership of the governing board, and Article X: on amendments/*vetoreg*.

Article I stipulates which congregations would form part of the (to be) formed DRMC. In this regard the *schema* is quite clear stating that all congregations that came into being through the work of the DRC and her Inland Commission for mission would form part of this to be established church.¹⁸² Membership to the DRMC would thus be restricted to existing congregations that stood in direct relation to the DRC. For Kriel this shows that the DRC focussed its attention on congregations that was established through its missionary work. This had clear implications for the self propagation of the DRMC. He states the following:

¹⁸⁰ Proposed *Schema* for the establishment of the DRMC by the Inland Commission for Mission, In the *Acta Synodi*, DRC of SA, 1880, 7-8.

¹⁸¹ CJA Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording. Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika. 1881-1994*, 1998, 128-129.

¹⁸² ‘Alle Gemeenten door de Nederd. Geref. Kerk en hare Binnenlandsche Zending-werksaamheid gesticht of anders met haar in verband staande...’ Proposed *Schema*, Article I. In *Acta Synodi*, DRC of SA, 1880, 8.

*‘Hieruit blyk duidelik dat die Moederkerk haar slegs toegespits het op die gemeentes en werkkringe wat vanweë die Kerk se eie sendingaksie tot stand gekom het. Van die jong kerk se vermoë tot selfontplooiing en selfuitbreiding was daar geen sprake nie. Die vernaamste oogmerk was die samesnoering van losstaande ondernemings’.*¹⁸³ It should be noted that to the *‘Gemeenten door de Nederd. Geref. Kerk en hare Binnenlandsche Zending-werksaamheid gesticht’* could be counted quite a number of congregations.¹⁸⁴ However, only four congregations were represented at the constituting meeting of the DRMC on the 5th of October 1881.¹⁸⁵ The outcome of this stipulation would have as effect that the synod of the DRMC would not have the authority to self-propagate.

Article II has to do with the ecclesial administration of the newly formed institution. In this regard the new church would make use of the *‘Wette en Bepalinge’* of the DRC in SA as far as these were applicable to the *‘behoeften der Zendingskerk’* (needs for of the ‘mission church’).¹⁸⁶ There is no mention of a church order for the new church or a document similar to this and for a very long time the juridical matters of the DRMC formed part of regulations concerning the ‘mission church’ as a short section in the laws and regulations of the DRC in SA.¹⁸⁷

With Article III the basis of the (to be) found church was determined. This church would be an ‘offspring’ of the Reformed Church and would thus have as her confessional basis the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt.¹⁸⁸ In relation to the ecumenical church, the confessional basis of the DRMC would also include the Nicene Creed and the Apostles’ Creed. With this the confessional basis, the church polity and the structure of this church would be identical to that of the DRC in SA.¹⁸⁹ As mentioned, the same could be said of the other ‘mission churches’ that would later be established.

Article V stipulates how the governing body of the DRC would be compiled. In this article it is clear that this church would be governed by a board (commission) consisting mostly of ordained missionaries of the DRC working in the ‘mission congregations’. The place and role that the missionaries of the DRC would take were affirmed by this article. However, this was not the case with regard to elders of the congregations that would form part of the new

¹⁸³ CJ Kriel. *Die geskiedenis van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika. 1881-1956.* (‘n Historiese Studie van Sendingwerk onder die Kleurlingbevolking van Kaapland). 1963. 68.

¹⁸⁴ See CJ Kriel, *Die Eerste Eeu. 1881-1981*, 1981, 26-27.

¹⁸⁵ See Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 125-127.

¹⁸⁶ Proposed *Schema*, Article II, *Acta Synodi*, DRC of SA, 1880, 7

¹⁸⁷ See as example in this regard *Wette en Bepalings vir die bestuur van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1953, 91-96.

¹⁸⁸ Proposed *Schema*, Article III, *Acta Synodi*, DRC of SA, 1880, 8

¹⁸⁹ See in this regard Kriel, *Die geskiedenis van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1963, 68-69.

church, as their presence on the board would be determined by clear regulations.¹⁹⁰ This article makes no mention of a synodical structure as such. It seems that the governing body took in the position of a moderation.

Article X would form the key that would 'lock' this constitution and keep it from being amended on a regular basis by the DRMC. In this regard the consented schema of the Inland Commission for Mission for the DRMC could not be changed '*dan na bekomen goedkeuring van de Synodale Binnelandsche Zendingcommissie*' (but through the consent of the Inland Commission for Mission).¹⁹¹ Although one could indeed say that the well-known and coherently journaled objection of Rev Paulus Teske - and with his that of elder Damon Titus - was directed to the whole being of this constitution, it has to be said that his strong and justified criticism was aimed specifically towards the content of this article.¹⁹² The iron grip of this article would remain for decades to come.¹⁹³

The abovementioned articles would form the basis of the relation between the DRMC and the DRC in SA. As such the importance of especially these articles in the constitution of 1881 in the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches should not be underestimated. As will be discussed in the following section, it is clear that the content of the mentioned articles in the constitution for the DRMC would also form the basis of other historical documents that constituted the other 'mission churches'.

In this regard Smith notes that, regarding the establishment of a 'mission church' in the Orange Free State (1910) it is clear that the commission burdened with the drafting of (a) concept church orderly regulation(s), used the constitution of the DRMC as foundation for the drafting of a constitution for the 'mission church' in the Orange Free State.¹⁹⁴ The same could be said of the 'mission churches' in Transvaal, the Cape and Natal.¹⁹⁵ The essence of all five these constitutions were the same, namely (1) that these churches would be formed on the basis of racial and cultural separation, that (2) these churches would be governed by the respected Commissions for Mission (DRC), and (3) that they were subordinate in relation to the Dutch Reformed Churches and treated as such. It is of further importance to note that in the formation of all these churches the final decisions were taken by the different Commissions for Mission of the different Dutch Reformed Churches and not by the churches themselves. It is thus reasonable to conclude that these churches were pressed into a mould

¹⁹⁰ See the Proposed *Schema*, Article II, *Acta Synodi*, DRC of SA, 1880, 8. It should also be noted that even the congregations that could form part of this new church were determined by certain criteria.

¹⁹¹ Proposed *Schema*, Article X. *Acta Synodi*, DRC of SA, 1880, 8.

¹⁹² See Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 127. Article X is opgeteken in the '*Wette en Bepalinge*' van die NGK van SA as art 226.

¹⁹³ See Kriel, *Die geskiedenis van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*. 1963, 70.

¹⁹⁴ Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke', In *Annale*, 1973, 42.

¹⁹⁵ See Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke'. In *Annale*, 1973, 46, 50, 53. It is important to note that the same is true for most churches established by the Dutch Reformed Churches. Because of the scope of this study I will focus on the DRMC and the churches that later (1963) united to form the DRCA.

that took on the form of a separately formed church under the jurisdiction of the particular Commission for Mission of the Dutch Reformed Churches.

The establishment of a separate mission church in the Cape could be seen as an outflow of a series of decisions that led to a gradual process of separation on the grounds of race and culture. Therefore it can be argued that the establishment of separate congregations was a 'practical arrangement' based on the better structural organisation of the growing amount of baptised believers that formed part of *werkkring*e rather than a necessary arrangement on the basis of socio-geographical factors.¹⁹⁶ The more the membership of these churches grew, the more it became important, to put structures in place to organise *werkkring*e and existing congregations better. The gradual racial and cultural separation, specifically relating to mission, would later find an absolute expression within the mission policies of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches. Once again it should be mentioned that with regard to Dutch Reformed mission work in the interior of South Africa, things progressed differently. Separate *werkkring*e and congregations were seen as the aim of mission work right from the start and this led to the establishment of separate 'mission churches' in these areas.

Kriel is of the opinion that the constituting meeting of the synod of the DRMC paved the way for these church juridical developments.¹⁹⁷ In this regard he (Kriel) mentions the aspects of church visitation, the split of the young church into two presbyteries, specific regulations regarding ministers of the word and missionaries, the election of members onto the church board, and specific issues regarding church discipline, etc. as examples of decisions taken that without any doubt steered the DRMC in a particular direction. Although it is not clearly stated by Kriel, it can indeed be argued that historians like Kriel and Loff would agree that it was precisely these and other issues relating to the core of the constitution *for* the DRMC that would set the tone for years to come. The abovementioned markers had an unmistakable effect on what was to follow.

To put the abovementioned in context, I believe that it is important to look into the now almost renowned proposals of Rev Paulus Teske once again, as I believe that his argument carries in itself the essence of questions that were still raised long after this synod.¹⁹⁸ It should be made clear that the fundamental nature of his proposals/concerns was of a

¹⁹⁶ In line with my argument, Smith is of the opinion that the establishment of separate churches took place on the basis of the social location of the different cultural communities. See NJ Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke', In *Annale*, 1973, 38.

¹⁹⁷ See in this regard, Kriel, *Die Eerste Eeu*, 1981, 31. However, it needs to be made clear that the abovementioned aspects were done in accordance with the '*Wette en Bepalinge*' of the DRC of SA.

¹⁹⁸ It should be made clear that Teske was in fact not the first and only person to ask questions regarding the principles underlying the establishment of the DRMC. Already in 1880 Rev. JC Pauw wrote a letter to the Synodical Commission for Mission of the DRC in SA asking questions relating to certain principles of Reformed church polity specifically relating to Reformed concept(s) of what a church is. See in this regard the letter of JC Pauw to the Synodical Commission for Mission of the DRC in SA, 15 Nov 1880. See also Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 197-201.

(church) juridical nature. As such he points out that this decision of the DRC is in contradiction to Reformed church polity and ecclesiology. Furthermore, Teske believed that this decision would hamper the relation between the white and coloured Christians. His argument was as follows:

*(D)at deze vergadering van gevoele is, dat art 226¹⁹⁹ en het besluit van de HE Synode van 1880 geheel in stryd is met het begrip eener kerk, die zich vry en onafhanklik kan bewegen en ontwikkelen; dat dit artikel mede een middel is of kan zyn, om het wantrouwen, dat reeds zoo diep by de gekleurde bevolking bestaat, te doen toenemen, en eindelyk, dat artikel alzo een middel kan zyn, om andere gemeenten of ligchamen (sic), die zich anders met deze te stichten kerk zouden Vereeniging, te vervreemden.*²⁰⁰

In this regard MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel is of the opinion that Teske's remarkable insight indeed showed his deep rootedness in Reformed church polity. She states the following: *'(T)eenoor die besluit van die Sinode van die Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Zendingkerk van Zuid-Afrika (1881) het Teske sy eie gewortelheid in die Gereformeerde Kerkreg en kerkregering beklemtoon'*.²⁰¹

This much is clear: If this synod (DRMC) - and here also the synod of the DRC in SA - seriously dealt with the argument/concerns of Teske and if indeed it had made changes according to his proposals, the (relational) history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches might have looked differently. However, it can be said that the transcending social and historical setting surrounding the establishing synod of the DRMC, would not allow for any other outcome than that which history tells.

I concur with Loff when he states that the establishment of the DRMC was initiated by the DRC.²⁰² To a larger or lesser extent this is also true for the other 'mission churches'. As noted in this section one of the main reasons for this was to be able to organise the so-called mission church(es) better. This fact finds particular expression in the content of the different constitutions given to 'mission churches' for their governance/structural

¹⁹⁹ In 1881 the Constitution for the DRMC was published in the *'Wette en Bepalinge'* of the DRC in SA under art 217-226. Art 226 is in essence Art X of the Constitution and read as follows: *'Voor als nog zal geene Bepaling, door eenig Bestuur bovengenoemd gemaakt, kracht van wet hebben en uitgevoerd kunnen worden, dan na bekomen goedkeuring van de Synodale Binnenlandsche Zendingcommissie.'* See in this regard Art X of the DRMC Constitution, *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1880, 8.

²⁰⁰ *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1881, 10. See also in this regard Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 127, 198. Own italicisation.

²⁰¹ MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg en die kerkreg en kerkregering van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingerke en die Verenigende Gereformeerde kerk in Suider-Afrika*, 2008, 255. *'Paulus Teske gaan van die veronderstelling uit dat 'n sinode die regsbevoegdheid behoort te hê om besluite te kan verander en dat sodanige bevoegdheid nie aan 'n sukkommissie van 'n ander kerk gesekondeer kan word nie'*. See Plaatjies van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 255-256.

²⁰² Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 129.

organisation. The way in which this was done, however, tends to be problematic and as such it is in direct contrast to aspects of Reformed church polity.

In reading the constitution *for* the DRMC, it becomes clear that this church fell under the direct governance of the DRC in SA. The DRMC would therefore be governed and indeed controlled by the Inland Commission for Mission. This would have been done in relation to the local Dutch Reformed congregation. MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel is of the opinion that this is in contradiction with Reformed church polity that takes seriously the role and place of the local congregation. In this regard she notes that *'(D)ie Konstitusie van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Zendingkerk gaan nie van die primordiale reg van die plaaslike gemeente uit nie, aangesien groter mag aan die NGK se Binnelandse Sending-subkommissie verleen is as die plaaslike gemeente'*.²⁰³ Regarding the specific place and role of the mentioned commission, Plaatjies-Van Huffel further notes that this commission had a higher status and that it functioned as an enhanced church council. Or as she states: *'n (K)ommissie van die NGK, te wete die Binnelandse Sending-subkommissie het as 'n soort hoër bestuur, 'n senatus ecclesiasticus of super-kerkraad, gefunksioneer wat onderwerping vra'*.²⁰⁴

The manipulative control of a church consisting mostly of white members over a church consisting of mostly coloured members cannot be traced back to principles of the Reformed church polity and as such it should be read against the backdrop of ecclesial and social developments within the broader context of South Africa. It should further be made clear that these social developments within the context of Southern Africa can not be separated from structural developments within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. In this regard it should be noted that the core of the different *Constitutions* was *separation* along racial and cultural lines imbedded in ecclesial formulas. This along with the strong anti-equalisation feeling would later form the central (structural) feature of the mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches (1935) and, as discussed in Chapter 2, would strengthen the social stance - characterised by separation - expressed in Afrikaner nationalism.

3.2.2. The first amendments to the original constitution

Until 1915 the DRMC had to follow the guidelines concerning church polity as stipulated in the Laws and Stipulations (*Wette en Bepalinge*) of the DRC of SA as far as it was applicable to the situation within the DRMC.²⁰⁵ Over a period of more than 20 years (1881-1915) the question regarding the composition of a unique 'order' in and for the DRMC was repeatedly discussed in official meetings of this church, but because of the fact that only the DRC in SA could grant permission for any changes and/or extensions and because this church did not

²⁰³ Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 263.

²⁰⁴ Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 266.

²⁰⁵ Proposed *Schema*, Second article. *Acta Synodi*, DRC of SA, 1880, 7.

see the immediate necessity for amendments to the constitution, not much came of it.²⁰⁶ However, because of the fact that the DRMC continuously developed in a distinct manner within its unique context, growing in numbers, real questions were asked from within the cadres of this church specifically relating to a re-definition of the relation between the DRC in SA and the DRMC. The main argument in this regard was the fact that the DRMC struggled to organise itself on the basis (of the content) of the constitution. It was important for the DRMC to be able to organise itself freely and therefore it asked for an amendment of the original constitution. Over a period of time, the DRC in SA came to realise that the growth of the DRMC in a real sense depended on its organisation and structure and that the refusal to modify the constitution would indeed hamper the growth of the DRMC.²⁰⁷ This eventually led to the drafting of a constitution for the DRMC and in 1916 the DRMC got a specific '*Wetten en Bepalingen*' for internal organisation.²⁰⁸ It needs to be mentioned that this '*Wetten en Bepalingen*' stood firm in accordance with the stipulations expressed in the Constitution of 1880. The only - and insignificant by any standard - difference was that the synod of the DRMC was now given the freedom to amend this document. However, every stipulation should be in accordance with the directive of the Synod. As such the DRMC could only amend the constitution '*met dien verstaande echter, dat iedere Wet en Bepaling van de gezegde Algemeene Kerkvergadering of Synode, strijdig of onbestaanbaar met eenige van de voorzieniging dezer Grondwet, nul en van gene kracht zijn*'.²⁰⁹

Regarding the content of this document it can unequivocally be said that the basis and framework of this constitution can be found in the first constitution of 1880 - only in a more nuanced, better structured and broadened way.²¹⁰ The regulations regarding the

²⁰⁶ Representatives at the DRMC synods of 1891 (only the second official synod of the DRMC), 1908, 1912, called for the amending of the DRMC and for the formulation of a '*Wetten en Bepalingen*' for the DRMC. For an overview in this regard see Kriel, *Die geskiedenis van die NGSK*, 1963, 106-109 & Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 205-208.

²⁰⁷ Here one should remember the strong influence of the so-called 'three selves theory' of Venn and Anderson as discussed in Chapter 2. One of the 'selves' was in fact that the new church should be self-propagating. As seen in the content of the 1916 constitution as well as in other historical documents of the time, it is clear that this was indeed very important for both the DRC in SA as the DRMC. In this regard Kriel notes that '*(N)amate die kerk (DRMC) sterker geword het, is daar ook groter ywer aan die dag gelê en ernstige pogings aangewend om verder uit te brei en die kerk in staat te stel om haar roeping te vervul. Op die vergadering (the DRMC Synod of 1896) het die kerk sy roeping tot selfuitbreiding besef en was gewillig om dit te aanvaar*'. See in this regard Kriel, *Die Eerste Eeu*, 1981, 37. However, what is also clearly built into this constitution is that self-propagation should take place within clearly stated boundaries decreed by the DRC in SA.

²⁰⁸ See in this regard *Wetten en Bepalingen voor het bestuur van de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika*, 1916, 97-102.

²⁰⁹ *Wetten en Bepalingen voor het bestuur van de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika*, 1916, 100.

²¹⁰ See also Kriel, *Die geskiedenis van die NGSK*, 1963, 70.

governance of the DRMC made out art 254-266 of the '*Wetten en Bepalingen*' of the DRC in SA and with this the close-knit relation of the DRC in SA over the DRMC is clear.²¹¹

Art 254 was similar to art 1 of the old constitution as it proclaimed who would form part of the *Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Zendingkerk*. As the DRMC grew, it became more important to formulate this article clearly so that all the new congregations that grew from the mission work of the DRC or congregations that were established as extensions of existing congregations of the DRMC would in a sense automatically form part of the DRMC. As the amount of mission organisations within South Africa grew and as this aspect had a growing impact on the DRC and her 'mission churches' it also became important to make it clear that these churches cannot unite with any other churches without the consent of the DRC. According to this stipulation '*(de) gezegde Zending Kerk zich met geen ander Kerkgenootschap of gezindte zal mogen vereeniging, of zich zal mogen uitbreiden buiten het Kerkdorp van de Moeder Kerk, anders dan met toestemming van de Synode der Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika of hare wettige opvolgers.*'²¹² As such the borders of the DRC in SA still formed the borders of the DRMC.²¹³

In art 258-260 we find the first official tenets of the workings of the presbyterial-synodical church government system in the DRMC. This strongly deviates from the regulations in the first constitution where it was stated that the congregations of the DRMC would form a joint administration.²¹⁴ In art 258 the compilation, structure and workings of a church council are stipulated. In art 259 regulations regarding the presbyteries are discussed with specific reference to presbytery meetings and discipline performed by the presbyteries.²¹⁵ This is a new development from the first constitution and can be ascribed to the growing amount of congregations that became part of the DRMC. In his research Kriel showed that with the establishment of the DRMC two presbyteries were formed but were not constituted. This meant that, in the 10 years between the first (1881) and second synod of the DRMC (1891) no presbytery meetings took place.²¹⁶ This changed in 1892 when there was a regrouping of the two existing presbyteries into a broader '*Westelike Ring*' and a '*Middelandsse Ring*' with the first meetings held in 1893 in both these presbyteries.²¹⁷

²¹¹ *Wetten en Bepalingen*, DRC in SA, 1916, 97-102. This particular section consists of arrangements regarding *De Zendingkerk*.

²¹² *Wetten en Bepalingen*, DRC in SA, 1916, 98. Art 265 should be read with this article.

²¹³ Kriel, *Die geskiedenis van die NGSK*, 1963, 68. Kriel is of the opinion that the changes in this article can be attributed to the acknowledgement of the internal growth and expansion of the DRMC. See Kriel, *Die geskiedenis van die NGSK*, 1963, 68.

²¹⁴ '*(D)e onderscheidene Gemeenten dezer Zendingkerk vormen te zamen een Bestuur...*'. See the Proposed Schema, Article IV. *Acta Synodi*, DRC of SA, 1880, 8.

²¹⁵ *Wetten en Bepalingen*, DRC in SA, 1916, 99. See also art 262 in *Wetten en Bepalingen*, DRC in SA, 1916, 100.

²¹⁶ Kriel, *Die Eerste Eeu*, 1981, 35 & 39.

²¹⁷ Kriel, *Die Eerste Eeu*, 1981, 40.

Art 260 & 261 are of great importance in this constitution. In these articles are discussed the ‘*algemeene Kerkvergadering of Synode*’ and who will form part of a synod.²¹⁸ In line with the first constitution of 1880 this constitution clearly states members of the Inland Sub-commission for Mission would have a right to be present at all the meetings of the DRMC. Or as the stipulation notes: ‘*dat in al hare eigene vergaderingen, en in de vergaderingen der Synodale Commissie, die haar gedurende het reces vertegenwoordigen zal, de leden van de Binnenlandsche Zending Sub-Commissie van de Moeder Kerk, te allen tijde recht van sitting en stemmen zullen hebben*’.²¹⁹ The control and governance of the Inland Sub-commission for Mission (the previous Synodical Commission for Mission) over the young church is clear. As was the case with the first constitution, this regulation had direct implications for the role and place of missionaries on the official meetings of the DRMC. However, what is interesting is that, with the ordinances of art 261, a new development occurred. In this article the DRMC is given a small window through which this church could compose her own/new ordinances and make away with the old ones when circumstances permitted. The article reads as follows:

*Het zal der Algemeene Kerkvergadering of Synode van de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Zending Kerk, van tijd tot tijd behoorlijk vergadert zijnde, en te werk gaande overeenkomstig de Wetten en Bepalingen in der tijd voor gezegde Kerk van kracht, vrijstaan om hare eigene Wetten en Bepalingen te vermeerderen, te vernietigen, te veranderen, uit te breiden of te verbeteren, met dien verstande echter, dat iedere Wet en Bepaling van de gezegde Algemeene Kerkvergadering of Synode, strijdig of onbestaanbaar met eenige van de voorzieningen dezer Grondwet, nul en van geene kracht zijn.*²²⁰

It should, however, be added that this could not be done without the final consent of the DRC in SA.²²¹

Art 263 & 264 concern the training and calling of ministers of the Word to the local DRMC congregations. The ‘principles’ found in especially art 264 remind strongly of art V (b) in the first constitution - here of course in a more developed way. In this article it becomes clear that the relation between the ‘mother church’ (and here also the Inland Sub-Commission for Mission) and the ‘daughter church’ would be determined by the financial position (and contribution) of the particular congregation(s). This becomes painfully clear when it comes to the calling of a minister. The more the mission congregation could contribute towards the salary of the minister, the more freedom it had to call a minister of its choice. However, even in cases where the particular mission congregations could fully contribute towards the salary of the minister, i.e. when a congregation was regarded as financially autonomous, the

²¹⁸ *Wetten en Bepalingen*, DRC in SA, 1916, 100.

²¹⁹ *Wetten en Bepalingen*, DRC in SA, 1916, 100.

²²⁰ *Wetten en Bepalingen*, DRC in SA, 1916, 100

²²¹ See in this regard Art 266 in the *Wetten en Bepalingen*, DRC in SA, 1916, 102.

particular congregation could still not call a minister without the consent of the Inland Sub-Commission for Mission.²²² This situation would plague the DRMC for years to come.

As was the case with the first constitution, the constitution of 1916 concludes with art 266 that states that *'Deze Grondwet mag veranderd, verbeterd, uitgebreid of vernietigd worden, alleen door de Algemeene Vergadering of Synode van de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika, of hare wettige opvolgers'*.²²³ The DRMC would be bound to these regulations for decades to come thus not having the freedom and authority to make its own church juridical regulations - freedom that would gradually be allowed over the decades to come.²²⁴ Kriel is of the opinion that this amendment to the constitution was the first step in the new phase in the being of the DRMC. This is expressed in his interpretation of the mentioned article namely that *'hiermee het die Moederkerk die riglyne aangetoon vir die opstel van 'n eie kerkwet om in die behoeftes en omstandighede te voorsien, solank dit binne die raamwerk en gees van die grondwet geskied. Dit was prakties uitvoerbaar soos die toekoms sou bewys'*.²²⁵

In summary it can be said that the inner workings of the constitution of 1916 correspond with that (the content) of the first constitution of 1880/1881. This becomes clear when comparing the structure and content of these two documents with each other. As example can be mentioned the clear fact that, although the DRMC received smaller liberties with regard to amending and adding to the constitution, the final say in amending the constitution was in the hands of the DRC in SA. Regarding the role the constitution fulfilled as well as its impact on the autonomy of the DRMC MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel is of the opinion that, amongst others, the legislative authority of the DRMC was encapsulated in the workings of the constitution.²²⁶

As mentioned in the previous section, the influence of the Inland Sub-Commission for Mission on all the 'mission churches' was immense. It played an enormous role especially

²²² The last paragraph of Art 264 reads as follows: *'In gevallen waar een gemeente afhankelijk is van geldelijken steun door de Binnenlandsche Zending Sub-Commissie, zal de Kerkeraad niet tot het beroepen van een leeraar mogen overgaan, tenzij daartoe eerst verkregen is de toestemming van de Binnelandsche Zending Sub-Commissie, en deze Commissie zal hare toestemming niet kunnen geven, tenzij zij genoegzame waarborg heeft dat en minimum salaries van £150 door den kerkeraad betaald kan worden'*. See *Wetten en Bepalingen*, DRC in SA, 1916, 101.

²²³ *Wetten en Bepalingen*, DRC in SA, 1914, 102.

²²⁴ *'Tot en met 1945 kon die NGK die Grondwet verander sonder om die NGSK daarin te ken. Op die Sinode van die NGK (1945) is daar besluit dat die NGSK van alle voorgenome wetswysigings van die Grondwet vooraf kennis moet kry en vooraf daaroor geraadpleeg moet word'*. See Plaatjies van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 282.

²²⁵ Kriel, *Die geskiedenis van die NGSK*, 1963, 112.

²²⁶ *'Die wetgewende, uitvoerende en regsprekende gesag van die NGSK was egter onderhewig aan die beperkte voorwaardes van die Grondwet'*. See Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 274.

with regard to the structuring and governance of the DRMC.²²⁷ As example it can be mentioned that in the recess between the constituent synod of 1881 and that of 1891 this Commission governed the DRMC. This was true especially with regard to the administration and ministry within this church. This function of the role of the Inland Commission for Mission in the ranks of the DRMC would continue until 1962.²²⁸

Of further importance to note here is the position taken by the missionary in the 'mission churches'. From the very beginning the missionary, called by the DRC, was fully regarded as the minister of the Word in all the 'mission churches' whilst at the same time maintaining membership in the DRC. From a church juridical point of view it should be noted that missionaries (ministers of the Word) active in the different 'mission congregations' could not be disciplined by the presbytery of the particular (mission) church but only by the presbyteries and synods of the different Dutch Reformed Churches.

What is clear is that certain developments especially stemming from the continuing growth in the number of congregations that made out the DRMC had an impact on the final decision to work towards a new constitution in (and for) the DRMC and on the final formulation of this document. Here it needs to be mentioned that the DRMC grew from only four congregations in 1881 (its constituent synod) to 48 congregations in 1916.²²⁹ This finds direct expression in articles relating to membership to the DRMC, the governance of the church - and here especially with regard to the presbyterial-synodical system of church

²²⁷ '(A)an die Binnelandse Sending-subkommissie was volledige leer-, regeer- en tugmag wat volgens die Gereformeerde kerkreg uiteindelik by die kerkraad tuis hoort, toegeken'. See Plaatjies van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 281.

²²⁸ 'In 1962 het die Sinode van die NGSK kennis geneem dat die sittingsreg van die lede van die Binnelandse Sending-subkommissie op meerdere vergaderings van die NGSK op die sinode van die NGK (1961) beëindig was'. See Plaatjies van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 283.

²²⁹ The number of congregations that formed part of the DRMC: 1904: 30, 1908: 40, 1912: 44, 1916: 48. When looking at reasons to explain the 'growth' of the number of congregations that formed part of the DRMC one should take into account the fact that most of the congregations that joined the DRMC in the period between 1881 & 1916 were existing congregations that found themselves within the resort of the DRMC. The congregations were either formed through the mission work of the DRC in SA or by the mission activities of other mission organisations including the London Missionary Society (LMS) that, at certain stages, asked the DRC to take over mission stations of individual congregations. For a good overview of this relation between the LMS and the DRC, see D Roy Briggs & Joseph Wing (eds). *The Harvest and the Hope. The Story of Congregationalism in Southern Africa*, 1970. Pretoria: Craft Press (Pty.) Ltd. With regard to the fact that there were quite a number of congregations formed through the mission activities of the DRC that did not form part of the DRMC, Kriel notes the following: 'Die meeste gemeentes waarop die Sendingkerk gewag het om in te skakel, was die troetelkinders van die plaaslike moedergemeentes, wat in 'n groot mate die deurslag kon gee.' See in this regard Kriel, *Die Eerste Eeu*, 1981, 35. Although the exact reasons for this are not certain, it seems that this feeling of belonging was found both on the side of the 'white' and the 'coloured' congregations. For a good overview of the church historical documentation of especially the activities of local DRMC congregations, see JA Breytenbach, *Bewuswording en motief: 'n Ekklesiologiese ondersoek en tipering van die Kerkgeskiedskrywing oor die Ned. Geref. Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. 1991. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University.

governance - and regulations regarding the calling of ministers to the 'mission congregations'.

The clear development from 1881 to 1916 regarding the putting in place of structures in accordance with the presbyterial-synodical system of church governance is clear and the formulations in the constitution of 1916 should be read in line with this. With this the foundation of especially the DRMC was firmly established. However, a long way was still to go until the DRMC would be acknowledged as an autonomous church.

It needs however to be emphasised that, except for smaller amendments to the constitution of 1880, the ethos of the 1916 constitution did not differ from that of the first constitution for the DRMC. In fact, the underpinnings of these two constitutions stayed in tact until the position and place of the constitutions of the DRMC and the DRCA were ended. This notion is supported by PP Joubert. In this regard he notes that *'(W)eliswaar het daar by vier sinodes veranderinge aangekom, maar dit is nie van ingrypende aard nie. Eintlik staan die oorspronklike grondwet nog'*.²³⁰

3.3. A concise overview of the different constitutions for the governance of the DRMC in the OFS, the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in South Africa and the DRMC in Natal.

As mentioned in the previous section, the first constitution for the DRMC can be regarded as the basis on which all the other constitutions where built. As such, most of the elements that were described with regard to this constitution ring true for the other constitutions of the mentioned 'mission churches'. In this section I will highlight important differences as well as other significant elements in the constitutions. With this I hope to present a clear picture of the content of the different constitutions as well as the effect of these constitutions on developments with regard to church polity within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. In my discussion I focus on the constitution for the DRMC in the OFS, the constitution for the Bantu DRC in South Africa (the Cape church) and the constitution for the DRMC in Natal.

3.3.1 The DRMC in the OFS (1910)

As pointed out in the previous paragraph the first constitution for the DRMC in the OFS was built on the constitution of the DRMC.²³¹

²³⁰ PP Joubert, 'Die Behoeftes van die Ned. Ger. Sendingkerk op die Pad na Selfstandighied', In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang I, July 1939, No.3, 129.

²³¹ 'Volgens opdrag van de laatste Synode heft uwe Commissie de vraag of een Zendingkerk zou gevormd worde, overwegen. Uwe Commissie geeft het weer ter overwegen van uw Hoof Eerw. Vergadering of het niet dienen zal tot doeltreffender behartiging van onze Binnelandsche Zendinggemeentes. Hieraan word gehecht een concept reglement voor een Zendingkerk, dat hetzelfde is als dat van de Kerk in de Kaapkolonie, gewijzigd

The 'Concept Reglement van de voorgestelde Zending Kerk' would consist of 13 articles with the first article qualifying that membership to the 'mission church' would be limited to 'mission congregations' that stood in direct relation to the DRC in the OFS (*Nederduitsch Gereformeerde Kerk in de Oranje Rivier Kolonie*).²³² Membership to the DRMC in the OFS did however not come without certain pre-requisitions. In this regard Art V states that the congregations had to have a functioning church council, they had to contribute a certain amount of annual revenue, and their properties had to be transported to the 'Ned. Ger. Zending Kerk der O.R.K.'. ²³³

As is the case in all the constitutions for the different 'mission churches' Art III stipulates that the DRMC in the OFS would, regarding its church polity and more specifically its confession basis, stand in direct relation to the 'moederkerk' by adopting the formulas of unity, by names the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Canons of Dordt and the Heidelberg Catechism.²³⁴ Art IV shows towards the structure of the, to be, established church. In this regard the DRMC in the OFS would be structured in Synods and Presbyteries. The workings of the Presbyterian system of church governance would clearly play out in the constituting synodical meeting of the DRMC in the OFS where a synodical commission was chosen and where this church was divided into three presbyteries.²³⁵

In this it is clear that the missionaries would play a prominent role within the ranks of the 'mission church'.²³⁶ In line with the other constitutions the role, place, and rights of the members of the Inland Commission for Mission specifically relation to official meetings of the 'mission church' stayed the same. Art VII therefore stipulates that '*De leden der Synodale Zending Commissie voor het Binnenland hebben recht van sitting en stemming in de Synode der Zending Kerk; en vormen samen met de Moderatuur dezer Kerk, benevens drie ander leden door de Vergadering te worden gekozen, eene Synodale Commissie der Zending Kerk*'.²³⁷

Art X specifies, amongst others, procedures relating to the calling of ministers for service in the DRMC in the OFS. In this regard the prominent role and place of the 'mother church' in this process is clearly indicated. The church council of the 'mother church' had the authority to compile a short list of possible candidates and, in accordance with the relating article, if the local 'mission congregation' could not decide on one of the candidates, the advice of the Inland Commission for Mission would be called in. '*Bij het beroepen van een leeraar, blank of gekleurd, of aanstellen van een catecheet of evangelist, word de kerkeraad der blanke*

naar onze behoeften'. See *Acta Synodi*, DRC in the OFS (*Nederduitsch Gereformeerde Kerk in de Oranje Rivier Kolonie*), 1909, 81.

²³² Concept Church Orderly Regulations for the DRMC in the OFS, In *Acta Synodi*, DRC in the OFS, 1909, 88.

²³³ Concept Church Orderly Regulations for the DRMC in the OFS, In *Acta Synodi*, DRC in the OFS, 1909, 90.

²³⁴ Concept Church Orderly Regulations for the DRMC in the OFS, In *Acta Synodi*, DRC in the OFS, 1909, 89.

²³⁵ See *Acta Synodi* of the DRMC in the OFS (*Ned. Geref. Zendingkerk in de Oranje Rivier Kolonie*), 1910, 6-7.

²³⁶ Concept Church Orderly Regulations for the DRMC in the OFS, In *Acta Synodi*, DRC in the OFS, 1909, 89.

²³⁷ Concept Church Orderly Regulations for the DRMC in the OFS, In *Acta Synodi*, DRC in the OFS, 1909, 90.

*gemeente op de volgende wijze erkend: De kerkeraad der Zending gemeente levere een groslijst van candidate aan den kerkeraad der Moedergemeente, waaruit deze een keus doet. Indien deze kerkeraad geen der voorgestelde personen goedkeurt, kan de tusschenkomst en beslissing der Synodale Commissie der Zendingkerk gevraagd worden’.*²³⁸

Relating to the calling of missionaries this article further states that, concerning the role and jurisdiction of the to be called missionary, this was decided on by the ‘mother church’ in consultation with the church council of the ‘mission congregation’.²³⁹ Both the local congregation of the DRC as well as the particular congregation of the DRMC would take responsibility for the salary of the called minister/missionary.²⁴⁰

The last article (XIII) of the draft constitution would end off the document by stating that *‘(A)lle besluiten van de Synode der Zendingkerk zijn finaal tenzij binnen dertig dagen een of ander punt special gereserveerd wordt door de Synodale Zending Commissie voor ‘t Binnenland, ter goedkeuring of anderszijns van de Synoda der Moederkerk’.*²⁴¹ Once again the authority to amend this draft constitution was in the hands of the DRC in the OFS.

3.3.2 The Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in South Africa (1951)

The constitution of this church consists of 20 articles. Of note are the articles that relate to the governance and discipline within the church. Art IV positions the General Commission for Mission of the DRC in SA as the highest structure of appeal for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in South Africa. This means that, if there are differences in opinion in the different meetings of this church that specifically deal with discipline, this church or the members involved may appeal to this Commission and it will make a decision in this regard.²⁴² As was the case with all the other Constitutions Art XV of this constitution states that white ministers will be disciplined by the ‘moederkerk’. The article goes further stating that black ministers and serving church council members falls under the oversight and discipline of the DRC in SA.²⁴³ Art IX gives authority to the synod of the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church to compile its own *Wette en Bepalings* with the understanding that it is in line with the thrust of the constitution.²⁴⁴ Art XIV is built on the premise of the so-called ‘three

²³⁸ Concept Church Orderly Regulations for the DRMC in the OFS, In *Acta Synodi*, DRC in the OFS, 1909, 91.

²³⁹ *‘(D)e kerkeraad der Blanke gemeente bepale in overleg met den Kerkeraad der Zending gemeente, welke de voorrechten en werkzaamheden van den zendeling zullen zijn’.* See the Concept Church Orderly Regulations for the DRMC in the OFS, In *Acta Synodi*, DRC in the OFS, 1909, 91.

²⁴⁰ See art XI. Concept Church Orderly Regulations for the DRMC in the OFS, In *Acta Synodi*, DRC in the OFS, 1909, 91.

²⁴¹ Concept Church Orderly Regulations for the DRMC in the OFS, In *Acta Synodi*, DRC in the OFS, 1909, 91.

²⁴² The Concept Constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA. In the *Acta Synodi* of the DRC in SA, 1945, 122.

²⁴³ *‘(B)antoeleraars, dienende kerkraadslede en evangeliste staan onder toesig en tug van die Bantoe Ned. Geref. Kerk in Suid-Afrika.’* See the Concept Constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA. In the *Acta Synodi* of the DRC in SA, 1945, 123.

²⁴⁴ The Concept Constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA. In the *Acta Synodi* of the DRC in SA, 1945, 122.

selves theory' when it states that the DRC in SA will appoint ministers for the Bantu DRC until such time as this church is self supporting, self governing and self propagating.²⁴⁵ Art XX ends of this constitution with the now almost famous phrase that only the synod of the DRC in SA (the 'moederkerk') can change or add to this constitution.²⁴⁶

3.3.3 The DRMC in Natal (1953)

The constitution of this church consisted of 10 articles. The structure of this constitution is the same as that of the DRMC and the other 'mission churches'. Of importance in this constitution is the fact that the DRMC in Natal could, from the very beginning compile its own *Wette en Bepalings*. For as long as this was not in place, the *Wette en Bepalings* of the DRC in Natal would however be followed in so far as it is applicable to the DRMC in Natal.²⁴⁷ With regard to the membership of the moderation it is interesting to note that it was clearly stipulated that the moderator and the actuaries would be chosen from the white ministers or missionaries actively working in the church.²⁴⁸ The properties used by the DRMC in Natal would be registered in the name of the DRC in Natal until such time as the DRC decided that the time was indeed ripe to transport the property to the name of the DRMC in Natal. The same was true for the financial administration of this DRMC in Natal. Here the local commission for mission would take responsibility for it.²⁴⁹ With regard to church discipline the same trend was followed as in the other 'mission churches'. White ministers could only be disciplined by the DRC in Natal whilst all indigenous ministers stood under the discipline of the local DRMC.²⁵⁰ It is also interesting to note that every congregation of the DRMC in Natal had to have a white minister who presided in it. A system of first and second minister functioned in this church where the first minister had to be a white minister.²⁵¹ In practice this meant that white ministers took responsibility of more than one congregation at a time.

As stipulated in this subdivision, it is clear that the constitutions for the DRMC in the OFS, the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in South Africa (the Cape church) and the DRMC in Natal broadly followed the structure and content of the 1881 constitution for the DRMC. As pointed out, there is however slight variations on the constitutions for the so-called 'black

²⁴⁵ '(T)ot tyd en wyl die Bantoe Ned. Geref. Kerk in Suid-Afrika tot selfbestuur, selfonderhoud, en selfuitbreiding gekom het...'. See The Concept Constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA. In the *Acta Synodi* of the DRC in SA, 1945, 123. With regard to the salaries of the black ministers in this church it is interesting to note that there were big differences between the salary requirements for the ministers in the Bantu DRC (married £150; unmarried £120) and ministers of the DRMC (married £400; unmarried £300). This data dates back to 1945 and 1946 respectively and is found in the constitutions of the churches in the particular year.

²⁴⁶ The Concept Constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA. In the *Acta Synodi* of the DRC in SA, 1945, 124.

²⁴⁷ See in this regard Art 111, Concept Constitution for the DRMC in Natal, In the *Acta Synodi*, DRC in Natal, 1948, 66.

²⁴⁸ Art IV, Concept Constitution of the DRMC in Natal, in the *Acta Synodi*, DRC in Natal, 1948, 66.

²⁴⁹ Art VI, Concept Constitution of the DRMC in Natal, in the *Acta Synodi*, DRC in Natal, 1948, 66-67.

²⁵⁰ Art VIII, Concept Constitution of the DRMC in Natal, in the *Acta Synodi*, DRC in Natal, 1948, 67.

²⁵¹ Art IX, Concept Constitution of the DRMC in Natal, in the *Acta Synodi*, DRC in Natal, 1948, 66.

mission churches' and these can be explained due to contextual differences in the context of these churches as well as slight differences in the mission strategies of the three other Dutch Reformed Churches. Further differences between the constitutions of the DRMC in the OFS and e.g. the constitution for the DRMC in Natal can be ascribed to the fact that the constitution for the DRMC in Natal was formulated much later than that of the DRMC in the OFS. Another reason could be that, in terms of numbers, the DRMC in the OFS was much bigger in comparison with the DRMC in Natal. However this may be, it is clear that the different mission churches of the DRC fell under the governance of the DRC and its organs. In this regard I agree with MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel when she states that this is especially true for the 'black mission churches'. She continues stating that for the 'mission churches' in general the autonomy of the local congregations was denied.²⁵²

3.4 A new phase in the relational history of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches

Between 1916 and 1975 a number of changes were made to the content of the constitution of the DRMC. This was true for most of the constitutions of the other 'mission churches' from 1910 to 1963 in South Africa depending on the specific stipulations of the constitution(s). As mentioned in the previous section, constitutions for the governance of the 'mission churches' were in place for the DRMC in the Orange Free State (1910-1963), the DRMC in Transvaal (1932-1963), the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in South Africa (1951-1963)²⁵³, and the DRMC in Natal (1952-1963) during this period. Changes/amendments to the constitutions could mainly be ascribed to the growing and changing context within the DRMC. Due to the essence of the documents, changes to them had a direct influence on the relation between the different 'mission churches' and the Dutch Reformed Churches. In the following section I look into these document changes pointing out to what extent the changes impacted on the relation between the Dutch Reformed Churches and the different 'mission churches'. In this regard I make special mention of the coming into being of liaison committees between the DRC and the mentioned churches.

3.4.1 The role and function of a liaison committee in the ranks of the DRMC

It needs to be noted that, in its basic form, the constitution of 1915 was left unchanged until 1961. Minor revisions were made in between, which included a revision in the constitution of the DRMC as it can be found in the '*Wette en Bepalinge*' of the DRC in SA in 1946. Here

²⁵² '(K)erkregtelik het die sendingkerke onder die swartmense geheel en al onder die jurisdiksie van die NGK gestaan. Van selfstandigheid van die plaaslike gemeente was daar geen sprake nie. Eie regering en gesag het in al bogenoemde gekonstitueerde sendingkerke ontbreek'. See Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 331.

²⁵³ It is important to take note of the fact that although the Bantu Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa was only established in 1951, the concept Constitution for the governance of this church was already found in the *Acta Synodi* of the DRC in SA in 1945.

mention is made of the role of what can only be described as a 'liaison committee' or *Skakelkommissie* consisting of the Sub-commission for Inland Mission and the moderation of the DRMC. In this, one finds the original aims of what would later be the objectives of the different – and better structured – liaison committees between the Dutch Reformed Churches and the 'mission churches'. Art 324 states as follows:

*Met die oog op die onderlinge voorligting sowel as die bevordering en die instandhouding van 'n voortdurend goeie gesindheid tussen die Moeder- en die Sendingkerk, vorm die Subkommissie vir die Binnelandse Sending en die Moderatuur van die Sendingkerk gesamentlik 'n skakelkommissie wat gereeld elke ses maande vergader ten einde sake te oorweeg waarmee hulle van tyd tot tyd in die beoefening van hul onderskeie werksaamhede in aanraking kom, of wat na die eis van omstandighede bespreking wenslik maak.*²⁵⁴

In essence this article shows towards a structured relationality between the DRC and the particular 'mission church' in the form of a liaison committee. This committee would meet every six months and would, amongst others, discuss issues of commonality between the churches.

Regarding the content of the DRMC constitution of 1961, Smit notes that the autonomy of the DRMC takes in a more central position.²⁵⁵ I am in agreement with Smit particularly in the sense that I believe that the biggest difference between this constitution and the constitutions of 1881 & 1916 was that this constitution (1961) gave more authority to the synod of the DRMC. In the 'self propagation' of the DRMC as well as the relation between the DRMC and other churches, the stipulations in the constitution shows towards a more acknowledging stance as it allows that congregations that was formed through the structures of the DRMC could indeed form part of this church. Or as the constitution states: '*alle gemeentes wat deur die Sendingkerk self ooreenkomstig kerklike bepalings gestig is of nog gestig sal word*'.²⁵⁶ In line with this art 3 states that the self-propagation of the DRMC would take place on the basis of its own regulations.²⁵⁷

It is however clear that the strenuous stronghold of the original constitution was still visible in the content of the 1961 constitution. This becomes apparent with regard to the discipline

²⁵⁴ Constitution of the DRMC in the '*Wette en Bepalinge*' of the DRC in SA, 1946, 95.

²⁵⁵ '*In hierdie grondwet kom die selfstandigheid van die Sendingkerk veel meer tot sy reg*'. See JH Smit, *Die amp van die sendingleraar in die jongere Kerk*, 1974, 112.

²⁵⁶ Art 2, Constitution for the DRMC, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 158.

²⁵⁷ '*Die Sendingkerk brei hom uit ooreenkomstig die bepalinge wat sy Sinode daaromtrent neerlê*'. '*Die opheffing van die gemeentes geskied eweneens volgens die bepalinge van die Sinode*'. See the constitution for the DRMC, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 158.

of the white ministers of the DRMC, the calling of white ministers to congregations²⁵⁸, as well as the content of the article relating to procedures to change the content of the constitution.²⁵⁹ Or as Smit notes: *‘(S)o het die Moederkerk teen 1961 die Selfstandigheid van die Sendingkerk vir ‘n groot mate erken, behalwe in twee opsigte: die opleiding van leraars (Kleurlinge) en die opsig en tug van die sendingleraars.’*²⁶⁰

Art 6 states that the discipline of white ministers would be administered by the ‘Gefedereerde Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke’.²⁶¹ The process to be followed in this regard gives the authority to the presbytery of the DRMC to investigate concerns raised by members of the DRMC relating to the white ministers. This report as well as the preliminary findings were then handed over to the particular structure of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches for a decision to be taken. Or as the article states: *‘Die kerkvergadering ondersoek die klagte en beswaar, en as dit blyk dat daar genoegsame gronde vir die verdere behandeling is, word die klagte tesame met voorlopige bevindinge van die Sendingkerk aan die verantwoordelike kerkvergadering van die Gefedereerde Ned. Geref. Kerke voorgelê.’*²⁶²

Art 13 stipulates the composition of the liaison committee between the DRMC and the DRC in SA. According to this art this particular liaison committee would consist of the Inland Sub-Commission for Mission of the DRC and the Moderature of the DRMC. *‘Met die oog op onderlinge voorligting, sowel as die bevordering en instandhouding van ‘n voortdurende goeie gesindheid tussen die Moeder- en Sendingkerk, vorm die Subkommissie vir die Binnelandse Sending van die Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika en die Moderatuur van die Sinode van die Sendingkerk, gesamentlik ‘n Skakelkommissie...’*²⁶³ It should be noted that mention of this liaison committee is already made in art 16 of the 1950 version of the constitution for the DRCM.²⁶⁴

3.4.2 The role and function of a liaison committee in the ranks of the DRCA.

The position of the DRMC in the OFS, Transvaal, Natal and the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in relation to the DRC matched up to the relationship between the DRC and the DRMC. In relation to the closest sister church of the DRMC falling within the same regional

²⁵⁸ It seems that the stipulations of art 11 only apply to the calling of white ministers to the congregations of the DRMC. See in this regard, art 11 of the Constitution for the DRMC, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 160.

²⁵⁹ See art 14 of the Constitution for the DRMC, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 162.

²⁶⁰ JH Smit, *Die amp van die sendingleraar in die jongere Kerk*, 1974, 114.

²⁶¹ The Federated Dutch Reformed Churches. See the constitution for the DRMC, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 159.

²⁶² Constitution for the DRMC, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 160.

²⁶³ Constitution for the DRMC, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 161.

²⁶⁴ See *Wette en Bepalinge van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1950, 5.

boundaries, the constitution of the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA of 1961 points out that, although this church had more 'freedom' to self-governance in comparison to the content of the earlier constitution of the other 'black mission churches', the DRC - and here especially the DRC in SA - saw it as her task to guide the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church to autonomy. In short this meant that, on the basis of core church juridical matters, the DRC would govern over the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church. This is clearly expressed in the content of the mentioned constitution. It is also interesting to note that regarding the propagation and growth of the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church, the local congregations of the DRC were directly involved in the affairs of the newly formed congregations and *werkkringe*. In this regard art 7 dealing with the composition of the presbyteries of the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church, the presbyteries of the DRC whose congregations were involved in the presbyteries of the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church could have a member, holding an advising vote, present in the presbytery of the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church.²⁶⁵

Regarding the composition of the synod of the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church, art 8 points out that members of the Inland Sub-commission for the mission affairs of black people²⁶⁶ of the *Moederkerk* as well as the missionaries of the *werkkringe* would form part of the synod of the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church as they would have an advising vote at the synod.

Regarding the institution of stipulations relating to the governance of the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church art 9 notes that the synod of this church had the authority to make and change its own church juridical regulations. Or as the article notes: '*Synode van die Ned. Geref. Bantoekerk in Suid-Afrika mag sy eie bepalinge vir sy regering maak, wysig en vernietig in ooreenstemming met die Grondwet*'.²⁶⁷ This article should however be read with the infamous last article present in all the constitutions for the 'mission churches' namely that the final authority for amending this constitution resides with the DRC in SA.²⁶⁸ Whereas the 1961 constitution of the DRMC emphasised the position of the liason committee relating to the procedure in changing the content of that constitution, the constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church leaves this authority to the General Commission for

²⁶⁵ Constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 163-164.

²⁶⁶ Here I translate the *Binnelandse Naturelle-subkommissie* from Afrikaans to English as the Inland Sub commission for the mission affairs of black people. According to art 10 this commission would also have the final authority in deciding whether or not to start a new *werkkring*. See art 10 of the Constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 164-165.

²⁶⁷ Constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 164.

²⁶⁸ '*Die uitsluitende reg om hierdie Grondwet te wysig, uit te brei of te herroep, berus by die Sinode van die Ned. Geref. Kerk in Suid-Afrika of sy wettige opvolgers*'. See Art 20 of the Constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 168.

mission.²⁶⁹ In short this means that the synod of the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church would have little or no say in amendments made to this constitution.

Regarding the composition of the Synodical Commission, art 11 notes that the Commission would consist of the moderamen of the Dutch Reformed Church, members of the Inland Sub-commission for the mission affairs of black people and a minister of missionary or an elder of each of the presbyteries of the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church.²⁷⁰

Art 12 notes that the DRC and the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church would join hands in the training of ministers. As was the aim in the other 'mission churches', the constitution had as aim that the training of ministers would eventually be entrusted to the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church.²⁷¹ Regulations regarding the calling of missionaries would be done by the Inland Sub-commission for the mission affairs of black people and, if necessary, the church councils of the DRC and the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church would be consulted.²⁷² Regarding the calling of ministers to the congregations of the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church, however, art 14 states that a commission compiled by the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church, would have the authority to deal with affairs relating to the calling of ministers in accordance with the implicated presbyterial commission of the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church.²⁷³ This unique distinction was found regarding the disciplining of ministers and missionaries. Art 15 states that missionaries are to be disciplined by the *Moederkerk* whilst ministers, serving members of the church council and evangelists are to be disciplined by the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church.²⁷⁴

Only in art 19 a liaison committee between the DRC and the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church is mentioned. In essence this article does not differ from that found in the mentioned constitution of the DRMC stating as main aim a better working and structural relation between the DRC in SA and the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church. Or as the article notes: '*(M)et die oog op onderlinge voorligting, sowel as bevordering en instandhouding van 'n voortdurende goeie gesindheid tussen die Moeder- en die Bantoekerk, vorm die Binnelandse*

²⁶⁹ See Art 20 of the constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 164.

²⁷⁰ See art 11 of the constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 165.

²⁷¹ Art 12 of the constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 165.

²⁷² '*Tot tyd en wyl die Ned. Geref. Bantoekerk in Suid-Afrika tot selfregering, algehele selfonderhoud, en selfuitbreiding gekom het, sal die beroeping, aanstelling, verplasing, bevestiging en demmisie van sendelinge altyd uitgaan van die Binnelandse Naturelle-subkommissie...*'. See Art 13 of the constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 165.

²⁷³ See art 14 of the constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 166.

²⁷⁴ Art 15 of the constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 166.

Naturelle-subkommissie en die Moderatuur van die Bantoekerk gesamentlik 'n Skakelkommissie wat na eis van omstandighede gereeld vergader ten einde sake te oorweeg waarmee hulle van tyd tot tyd in die beoefening van hul onderskeie werksaamhede in aanraking kom, of wat wesenlik is of deur die Sinode na hulle verwys word'.²⁷⁵ From this formulation in which the role and place of the liaison committee is described in very vague terms it is not clear what the role of the liaison committee will be between the DRC and the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church.

In summary it can be mentioned that one of the most important changes that took place with regard to the relation between the DRC and the different 'mission churches' was the implementation of *Skakelkommissies* (liaison committees) consisting of the moderation of the particular 'mission church' and members of the Inland Sub-commission for mission of the specific DRC.²⁷⁶ As pointed out in the abovementioned the role and place of the liaison committee is clearly described in the constitution for the DRMC whilst only a vague description is found in the constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church. However this may be, it is clear from the composition of these liaison committees that their being would ring in a new phase in the relational history of the so-called 'mission churches' and the DRC.

One of the most significant changes brought about by this new phase was the fact that the DRC would no longer be able to amend the different constitutions without consulting with the different 'mission churches'. Or as Kriel notes: '*(D)ie Moederkerk sou voortaan nie langer die grondwet in eie diskresie kon wysig nie*'.²⁷⁷ This meant that the constitutions, although still in place, could no longer be used as tools to govern over the 'mission churches' and that amendments to the constitutions could no longer be done by the DRC but that 'mission churches' had full say with regard to changes. Once again, my documentation in the abovementioned sections points out that the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church struggled to obtain this 'freedom' in its early history.

With the bringing about of a liaison committee the stage was set for the formulation of specific *Deeds of Agreement* between the DRC, the DRMC, the DRCA, and the RCA. The implementation of the Deeds of Agreement would signify a new phase in the church juridical history of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

3.5. From the Constitutions to the implementing of Deeds of Agreement

The specific relationship between the Dutch Reformed Churches and the different 'mission churches' under their governance had to be re-evaluated after the re-unification of the Dutch Reformed Churches forming the Dutch Reformed Church (1962). This of course had direct repercussions for the missional agenda of the church and as such its direct impact on

²⁷⁵ See art 19 of the Constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 167.

²⁷⁶ Kriel, *Die Eerste Eeu*, 1981, 161.

²⁷⁷ Kriel, *Die Eerste Eeu*, 1981, 161.

the 'mission churches'.²⁷⁸ The relationship between the 'mission churches' and the DRC had to be evaluated further on the basis of the fact that the 'younger churches' grew more and more autonomous in relation to the so-called 'mother church'. Or as Van der Merwe notes: *'(N)amate die dogterkerke meer selfstandig deur hul eie kerkbesture begin optree het, het dit noodsaaklik geword dat die verskillende vergaderinge van die kerkverband (kerkraad, ring en sinode) van moeder- en dogterkerke met mekaar in konsultasie tree en oorleg pleeg oor sake van gemeenskaplike belang'*.²⁷⁹ These reasons led to the formation of contractual agreements between most of the regional synods of the DRC in relation to the synod of the RCA, the regional synods of the DRCA and the synod of the DRMC. These agreements stipulated the relation between the specific regional synod of the DRC and these churches/the regional synods of these churches specifically with regard to the governance of and the government within these churches. Here it is important to remember that the ecclesial borders of the DRC, the RCA, the DRMC and the DRCA crossed each other on different levels. In this regard one would find that there were numerous congregations of these different churches in close vicinity to each other, but that these congregations formed part of the different presbyteries of the DRC, the RCA, the DRMC and the DRCA respectively.²⁸⁰ As the DRC had to act as guardian over the different 'mission churches' the different synods had to stand in a relationship with a specific 'mission church'/regional synod in the case of the DRCA. As such the Deeds were agreements between e.g. the DRC in SA and the DRMC in SA which would fall into the same geographical border in South Africa.

The different regional synods of the DRC had to draft documents in agreement with the local synods/regional synods of the 'mission churches' that in essence were still regarded as churches under the governance of the 'mother church'. These contractual agreements became known as the Deeds of Agreement.²⁸¹ With these documents the relations between the now united DRC and the different 'mission churches' were thus reformulated. As such it signalled the next phase in the history - especially with regard to church juridical matters - of the DRCA, the DRMC and the RCA in relation to the DRC. One of the primary motives behind these contractual agreements was to bestow a greater amount of autonomy to the different 'mission churches' to take their own (synodical) decisions and for the churches to self-

²⁷⁸ The unification of the Dutch Reformed Churches took place a year after the coming into being of the Republic of South Africa in 1961. It is also interesting to note that, although it was the aim of the different 'black mission churches' to unite since the early days of existence, these churches finally united a year after the unification between the different Dutch Reformed Churches in 1962 and thus formed the DRC in Africa. I am of the opinion that the coming into being of the DRC in Africa should be read in direct relation to the unification of the Dutch Reformed Churches.

²⁷⁹ WJ van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 66.

²⁸⁰ Numerous examples of this can still be found in South Africa until this very day.

²⁸¹ See in this regard JW Brooks, *'n Teologiese-Missiologiese beoordeling van die Aktes van Ooreenkoms tussen die Ned. Geref. Kerkverbande in Suid-Afrika*. 1982, 97-99. Brooks is of the opinion that the Deeds of Agreement showed strong similarities with the 'Regionaal Accoorden' of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands with the churches in Java. See Brooks, *Aktes van Ooreenkoms*, 1982, 97.

regulate from within. The question remains whether indeed the Deeds allowed for a more autonomous developing within the churches.²⁸²

When looking at the content of the Deeds it is interesting to note that the different Deeds of Agreement (Deeds) were formulated along similar lines for the different churches.²⁸³ This could be ascribed to the fact that the essential elements of these documents correspond. This should be read against the backdrop of the old constitutions which had the same basis. Brooks agrees with this stating that only if the essential elements of the constitutions came to an end could the new relational reality of the DRC and the different 'mission churches' begin.²⁸⁴ When the fact that the old constitutions were nullified by these documents is taken into account it could well be said that the Deeds of Agreement signalled a new phase in the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. This however does not mean that the history of almost one hundred years was just left behind. It is striking to note that certain essential elements of these constitutions, especially with regard to guardianship, would stay imbedded within the Deeds in the years after their implementation.

It is important to note that the Deeds were formulated against the backdrop of the general regulations for mission in the DRC. The mode within which these documents were drafted was mission and this finds clear expression in the contents of the Deeds. It is no surprise that one of the main points where the different synods discussed their co-operation was with regard to mission work.²⁸⁵ Here the emphasis is on joint mission activities as well as the position of missionaries in the so-called *werkkring*.²⁸⁶ The details of these arrangements

²⁸² In this regard it is interesting to take note of a letter by Hannes Adonis as published in the *Ligdraer*, the official mouthpiece of the DRMC, in 1976 on the issue of autonomy and the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the DRMC. Adonis notes that there is in his view no acknowledgment of the autonomy of the DRMC found in the full implementation of the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the DRMC. '*In die Ligdraer van 1 Januarie (1976) staan daar iets wat, na my beskeie mening, nie waar is nie en dit is: "Die Sendingkerk is deur hierdie stap op pad na volle kerkregtelike selfstandigheid geplaas." Bogenoemde is nie waar nie omdat die Sendingkerk op hierdie oomblik nog nie selfstandig kan besluit oor al haar sake nie*'. In this regard Adonis mentions a couple of reasons. Adonis builds his argument on Willie Jonker's definition of ecclesial autonomy as published in the *Sendingbepalinge van die N.G. Kerk van Transvaal*. See Adonis, Akte van Ooreenkoms tussen die N.G. Kerk en die N.G. Sendingkerk. *Die Ligdraer*: 12, Maart 1.

²⁸³ Brooks notes that '(D)ie verskillende streeksinodes van die moederkerk in Transvaal het nie duidelik omlynde aktes van ooreenkoms met die verskillende jongkerke soos dit die geval met ander provinsies is nie'. See Brooks, 1982, 108-109.

²⁸⁴ '(M)et die aangaan van die aktes van ooreenkoms tussen die verskillende streeksinodes van die moeder- en jongkerke is daar basies 'n eenvormige ontwikkelingspatroon gevolg. Om die nuwe verhouding tot die werklikheid te bring, moes die ou grondwette wat by die oorspronklike konstituerende gegeld het, opgehef word'. See Brooks, Aktes van Ooreenkoms, 1982, 99.

²⁸⁵ See as an example in this regard the Deed of Agreement between the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and the Cape regional Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in the *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1965, 178.

²⁸⁶ See in this regard the Deed between the DRC in SA and the Cape Regional Synod of the DRCA in the Church Order of the DRC in SA, 1965, 179.

differ from the one Deed to the other.²⁸⁷ Other aspects discussed in the Deeds included issues around finances and the transport of assets (properties) onto the name of the different synods of the 'mission churches'.²⁸⁸

3.5.1 The Deed of Agreement between the DRC in South Africa (Cape Church) and the DRMC.

In the following section I will discuss in detail the Deed of Agreement in draft form as compiled and accepted by the DRC in SA and the DRMC in 1975.

In relation to the DRCA it is interesting to note that the Deed between the DRC in SA and the DRMC came into being much later than those between the DRC and the synods of the DRCA. It was not until 1969 that the DRC ordered the liaison committee or *Skakelkommissie* to draft a concept Deed of Agreement between the DRC and the DRMC.²⁸⁹ With a first read of this document it also becomes apparent that certain aspects are discussed with more detail and others with much less emphasis when compared to some of the other Deeds. I believe that the reasons for detailed discussions of certain matters can be found in the fact that some matters as found in the constitution plagued the relational history of the DRC and the DRMC.

The discussed Deed came into effect on 27 November 1975.²⁹⁰ Three very important aspects in the Deed that had historical significance were discussed, namely that of the position of white and coloured ministers in the DRMC, the theological school for the DRMC in SA, and the financial relation between the DRC in SA and the DRMC.²⁹¹ Kriel is of the opinion that it was exactly because of issues surrounding these matters that acted as stumbling blocks that prohibited an earlier signing of the Deed.²⁹² It is important to note that it was exactly these issues that were contested over a long period of time by different organs within the DRMC and by individual ministers of the DRMC. With the drafting of the Deed it again led to in-depth discussions.

Regarding the position of white ministers active in the DRMC, the Deed made provision for dual membership. This entailed that white ministers in the DRMC would be members of

²⁸⁷ Brooks, *Aktes van Ooreenkoms*, 1982, 103-104.

²⁸⁸ Brooks is of the opinion that stipulations regarding finances and properties had as aim to lead the younger churches towards greater responsibility and autonomy. See Brooks, *Aktes van Ooreenkoms*, 1982, 111. In most cases property was transported on the name of the 'mission church'. This was however not the case with the church in the Orange Free State. The property was put in a trust for the DRCA in the Orange Free State unless these assets were situated in the homelands. See Brooks, *Aktes van Ooreenkoms*, 1982, 111-112.

²⁸⁹ *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1969, 602.

²⁹⁰ Botha, 'Kerkregtelike Selfverwesening', in Kriel, *Die eerste eeu*, 1981, 163.

²⁹¹ See in this regard the Deed of Agreement between the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa in the *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1975, 194-197.

²⁹² Botha, 'Kerkregtelike Selfverwesening', in Kriel, *Die eerste eeu*, 1981, 163.

both the DRC in SA and the DRMC. Issues regarding discipline would be dealt with by both the DRC in SA and the DRMC.²⁹³ It should be noted that this is indeed a shift from the position that made it clear that white ministers would only be members of the DRC and as such would serve as missionaries in the 'mission churches'. However it still meant the white ministers would not only be members of the DRMC. This issue was subsequently discussed in synodical meetings of the DRMC and as such it impacted on the role and place of the Deed in the DRMC in the years that followed.²⁹⁴ Regarding the training of coloured ministers coming from the ranks of the DRMC it was stipulated that the DRC and the DRMC would jointly decide on the regulations for the training of these ministers. Or, as the Deed states: '*(H)ierdie opleiding (of coloured ministers) geskied volgens 'n reglement waaroor die Ned. Geref. Kerk in S.A. en die Ned. Geref. Sendingkerk in S.A. ooreenkom*'.²⁹⁵ This meant that white ministers (missionaries) could be called to the DRMC, and, for the immediate period, stay members of the DRC and as such this was in line with the position taken in by the constitution. It further meant that, although white ministers could minister within the DRMC, coloured ministers could not be called to congregations of the DRC.²⁹⁶

With regard to the theological school for the DRMC the Deed of 1975 stated that the DRC in SA would hand over the property to the DRMC when this church could afford to maintain and further develop the property.²⁹⁷ It needs however to be mentioned that no time frame was set for the eventual transporting of the Theological School on the name of the DRMC.²⁹⁸

It is interesting to note that Daniëls is of the opinion that with the coming into being of the Deed between the DRC in SA and the DRMC the way was paved for the drafting of a church order for the DRMC. As such he notes that: '*(M)et die opheffing van die Grondwet van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in 1975 en die opstelling en aanvaarding van 'n Akte van Ooreenkoms tussen die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk en die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk onder datum 27 November 1975, is die weg gebaan vir die aanvaarding van 'n eie Kerkorde vir die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in 1978*'.²⁹⁹ From this can be concluded that Daniëls was of the opinion that with the signing of the Deed of Agreement, which signalled the end of the constitution, the subsequent next step

²⁹³ Deed between the DRC in SA and the DRMC, 1975, 195.

²⁹⁴ Botha, 'Kerkregtelike Selfverwesenliking', In Kriel, *Die eerste eeu*, 1981, 163.

²⁹⁵ Deed between the DRC in SA and the DRMC, 1975, 196.

²⁹⁶ Deed between the DRC in SA and the DRMC, 1975, 195-196. Also see Brooks, *Aktes van Ooreenkoms*, 1982, 113-114.

²⁹⁷ '*Die Ned. Geref. Kerk in S.A. sal die grond en geboue van die Teologiese Skool aan die Ned.Geref. Sendingkerk in S.A. oordra wanneer die Ned. Geref. Sendingkerk in S.A. self die instandhouding en uitbreiding daarvan kan onderneem en daarom versoek.*' See the Deed between the DRC in SA and the DRMC, 1975, 196.

²⁹⁸ For a detailed overview of the history of the Theological School for the DRMC, see CJ Kriel, *Seuns in Sy Wingerd. Die Teologiese Skool vir die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika. Fakulteit Teologie, Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland. 2 Februarie 1929 – 2 Februarie 1979*, 1978. Paarl: Paarl Drukkers MPY. BPK.

²⁹⁹ WJ Daniëls, *Van Sendingkerk tot Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika (1960-1997)*, 1998, 137.

would be the drafting of a church order by the DRMC. Daniëls was right in his observation as in 1978 the first church order of the DRMC was signed into being.³⁰⁰

3.5.2 The Deeds of Agreement between the regional synods of the DRC and the regional synods of the DRCA

In this section I will look into certain elements of the Deeds of Agreement between the different regional synods of the DRC and the regional synods of the DRCA.

As was the case with the DRMC, the Deeds of agreement between the regional synods of the DRC and the regional synods of the DRCA would replace and nullify the constitutions for the different 'black mission churches'. As the Deeds of Agreement were signed into being at the first general synod of the DRCA in 1963, it should indeed be mentioned that, at as early as 1963, the DRCA was freed of the rule and control of the DRC by the constitution.³⁰¹ As such there are clear similarities between the Deeds between the DRC in SA and the DRMC and those between the regional synods of the DRC and the regional synods of the DRCA. As will be pointed out one does find differences between the mentioned Deeds as one also finds differences between the different Deeds of the DRCA when compared.

Any discussion on the Deeds should make it clear that the Deeds between the DRC and the DRCA were built on the basis of (joint) mission.

A first read of the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the Cape Regional Synod of the DRCA points out that there is indeed an immense difference between the discussed constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church and this newly formulated agreement. Here the most prominent difference would be the role and place of the liaison committee. According to art 6 of the Deed the liaison committee would consist of members of the Inland Sub-commission for the mission affairs of black people of the DRC and the moderation (including questor) of the DRCA (Cape Regional Synod).³⁰² In accordance with this the clear aims and functions of the liaison committee are described in art 22.³⁰³ Regarding changes made to this Agreement art 7 states that the Deed could only be amended with the endorsement of the DRC in SA and the particular regional synod of the DRCA.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ See in this regard *Kerkorde Reglemente en Bepalinge van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk*, 1978. Paarl: Paarl Drukkers

³⁰¹ 'n *Grondwet* is op die stigtingsinode opgehef en in die plek daarvan is 'n *Akte van Ooreenkoms* opgestel'. See Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 349.

³⁰² See art 6 of the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the Cape Regional Synod of the DRCA, 1965, in *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1965, 179.

³⁰³ See art 6 of the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the Cape Regional Synod of the DRCA, 1965, in *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1965, 180.

³⁰⁴ 'Veranderinge in hierdie ooreenkoms sal alleen gemaak kan word met goedkeuring van die N.G. Kerk (DRC in SA) en die streeksinode (DRCA Cape Regional Synod) op aanbeveling van die Skakelkommissie'. See Art 7 of

With regard to the membership of white ministers being ordained in the DRCA, the synods of the Orange Free State and Natal of this church took in different positions. The Deed between the DRC in the OFS and the DRCA in the OFS clearly stated that white ministers who serve in the DRCA became members of the DRCA. Or as the article states: *'Bedienaars van die Woord wat deur die NGK aan die NGK-OVS beskikbaar gestel word, word deur hulle bevestiging in die NGKA-OVS, lidmate van die NGKA-OVS.'*³⁰⁵ This regulation applied to ministers who started their services in the DRCA-OFS on or after 1 January 1980. This was not the case in Natal. Here the Deed between the DRC in Natal and the DRCA-Natal stated that the white ministers were borrowed to the DRCA. *'Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Natal stel bedienaars van die Woord tot beskikking van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerk in Afria, Streeksinode Natal, solank nodig. Sodanige bedienaars van die Woord uit die geledere van die Moederkerk sal as geleendes aan die Dogterkerk deur die Moederkerk-instansies beroep en bevestig word in die betrokke Dogtergemeente.'*³⁰⁶ With regard to the agreements between the DRC in SA and the DRCA's regional synods in the Cape and Phororo the situation was a bit different. In the Cape Regional Synod of the DRCA, the DRC made ministers available for service in the DRCA. The DRC took responsibility for the salaries and housing of these ministers.³⁰⁷ When it came to the discipline of these ministers they would fall under both the jurisdiction of both the DRC and the DRCA.³⁰⁸ More or less the same was applicable to the situation in the DRCA's Phororo Regional Synod. The DRC in SA would make ministers available in service of the DRCA and would take responsibility for the salaries and housing of these ministers. These ministers would become members of the DRCA and would be disciplined by both the DRC in SA and the DRCA (Phororo).³⁰⁹ It should however be made clear that in both these circumstances it is clear that, with regard to the disciplining of white ministers or missionaries in the ranks of the DRCA, the DRC would have the final say. This would only apply to the position of missionaries. As such it is clear that, from a church juridical perspective, the Deeds still did not acknowledge the authority of the

the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the Cape Regional Synod of the DRCA, 1965, in *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1965, 180.

³⁰⁵ See in this regard the Deed of Agreement between the DRC-OFS and the DRCA-OFS in Brooks, *Aktes van Ooreenkoms*, 1982, 132.

³⁰⁶ See in this regard the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in Natal and the DRCA-Natal in Brooks, *Aktes van Ooreenkoms*, 1982, 173.

³⁰⁷ Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the DRCA, Cape Regional Synod, 1975. In *Die Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1975, 179.

³⁰⁸ Art 5 reads as follows: *'Sendingleraars en hulpkrigte uit die N.G. Kerk staan onder toesig en tug van die N.G. Kerk, maar ook onder toesig van die streeksinode wat volgens sy kerkorde enige klag teen sodanige werkkrag kan ondersoek. In geval daar gronde vir die verdere behandeling van die klag is, sal dit met die nodige bewysstukke na die betrokke vergadering van die N.G. Kerk vir finale afhandeling verwys word'*. See in this regard art 5 of the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the Cape Regional Synod of the DRCA, 1965, in *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1965, 179; Deed between the DRC in SA and the DRCA (Phororo). In *Die kerkorde van die NGK in SA*, 1975, 179.

³⁰⁹ Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the DRCA, Phororo Regional Synod, 1975. In *Die Kerkorde van die NGK in SA*, 1975, 201-202.

DRCA and as such the central line of argument of the constitutions lived on in the Deeds to a certain extent.

It is clear that agreements regarding the calling and membership of ministers would have an effect on the jurisdiction that the local church councils within the DRCA would have over the Minister of the Word especially when it came to church-discipline.

With regard to properties it seems that most of the properties used by the DRCA were either given to the particular local congregation - insofar as it was legally possible³¹⁰ - or were put in a trust for the local DRCA by the DRC. Financial administration was also more and more left to the local congregations of the DRCA. However, in most instances it was stipulated that the joint Commission of the two churches (*skakelkommissie*) would receive an annual report on how the funds allocated by the DRC to the synods of the DRCA were spend.³¹¹ In this regard Brooks notes that this stipulation was to be found in most of the other Deeds.³¹²

Due to its immense importance and relation to this section of this dissertation I give a short overview of the theological training in the ranks of the DRCA with specific reference to the Stofberg Memorial School.³¹³

Crafford points out that in the early history of the DRCA missionaries took responsibility for the training of evangelists and teachers for service in the mentioned church. This almost ad hoc training of especially evangelists continued until 1908 when the Stofberg Memorial School was established.³¹⁴ The theological training of ministers and missionaries from and for the DRCA would take place at this institution from 1908-1959.³¹⁵ Regarding the value of establishing an institution like the Stofberg Memorial School in the context of Dutch Reformed mission and to promote the success of mission by using trained black missionaries, Hofmeyr notes the following: '(D)ie gebruik van inboorlingwerkkragte is 'n

³¹⁰ Here one should remember that it was not legally possible under the laws of Apartheid for congregations consisting of black members to own property in a 'whites-only' area.

³¹¹ See as example in this regard the Deed between the DRC in SA and the DRCA, Phororo Regional Synod. 1975. In *Die kerkorde van die NGK in SA*, 1975, 200.

³¹² 'In al die ooreenkomste is bepalinge ingesluit ten opsigte van finansies en eiendomme met die doel om die jongkerke tot groter verantwoordelikheid en selfstandigheid te lei.' See Brooks, *Aktes van Ooreenkoms*, 1982, 111.

³¹³ For a concise overview with regard to theological training in the ranks of the DRCA, see DR de Villiers, *Die agtergrond en Ontwikkeling van Teologiese Opleiding deur die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika. 'n Prinsipieel-historiese ondersoek met besondere verwysing na die Stofberg Gedenkskool*. Ongepubliseerde Doktorale Proefskrif, Fakulteit Godgeleerdheid (Afdeling B), Universiteit van Pretoria, 1972.

³¹⁴ D Crafford, *Aan God die Dank. Geskiedenis van die sending van die Ned. Geref. Kerk binne die Republiek van Suid-Afrika en enkele aangrensende Buurstate*. Deel 1. 1982, 503.

³¹⁵ PR du Toit, 'Die NG Kerk streef toepaslike teologiese opleiding na – 1952-2002'. In Coertzen (ed), *350 Years Reformed. 1652-2002*. 213. This theological school was situated at Viljoensdrif outside Vereeniging.

onmiskenaar vereiste in die werk van die Sending'.³¹⁶ This historical institution was opened as a joint venture between the federated Dutch Reformed Churches and would also be controlled by the mentioned body. Crafford noted that the Stofberg School would consist of five departments namely '*primêre, sekondêre, normaal-, Bybel- en teologiese skool*'.³¹⁷ As such Stofberg would be the first official training institution for evangelists and black ministers in the ranks of the DRCA.

In line with the infamous Group Areas Act of South Africa the Stofberg Institution had to be moved to one of the declared black homelands. This period in the political history of South Africa went hand in hand with the unification of the different 'black mission churches'. This made the federated Dutch Reformed Churches take a firm decision relating the training of black ministers and evangelists. In line with the mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches it was decided to have a specific training facility for the different cultural groups represented in the DRCA. Or as Crafford notes: '*Die NG Kerk het besluit om die opleiding in aparte inrigtings vir die verskillende etniese groepe voort te sit, maar dat hierdie inrigtings almal onder een sentrale bestuur sal ressorteer, terwyl elke inrigting ook sy eie plaaslike bestuur sal hê*'.³¹⁸ This had as outflow the end of the Stofberg Memorial School in 1959.³¹⁹ In its place four theological institutions for the DRCA came into being, namely institutions at Dingaanstat, Decoligny, Turfloop (near Polokwane) and Witsieshoek. All these institutions would later form part of South African universities.³²⁰

With the unifications of the four Dutch Reformed Churches in 1962 the general synod of the DRC took control over these institutions and also of theological training for the DRCA. Crafford points out that, with the establishment of the DRCA a year later, the DRCA was also represented on the governing bodies of Stofberg and the other institutions on both a local level and on the central committee.³²¹

The role and importance of black ministers in the DRCA (as well as in the DRMC) are pointed out by Cronje when he states that the value of black ministers in the mission endeavours of the DRC in South Africa and beyond should indeed not be estimated: In this regard he notes that: '*(M)its hy die geskikte persoon is vir sy amp en mits daar op die regte wyse met hom te werk gegaan word, sien ons in hom 'n magtige faktor tot stabilisering en uitbreiding van die jong, wordende sendingkerke in die binne- en buiteland. Ons hou vol dat ons kerk reg gedoen*

³¹⁶ HM Hofmeyr, 'Die Plek van die Stofberg Gedenkskool in ons Sendingwese', In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang I, Oktober 1939, No.4, 187.

³¹⁷ Crafford, *Aan God die Dank*, Deel 1. 1982, 503.

³¹⁸ Crafford, *Aan God die Dank*, Deel 1. 1982, 505-506.

³¹⁹ Du Toit, 'Die NG Kerk streef toepaslike teologiese opleiding na - 1952-2002'. In Coertzen (ed), *350 Years Reformed*. 213.

³²⁰ Crafford, *Aan God die Dank*, Deel 1. 1982, 506-507.

³²¹ Crafford, *Aan God die Dank*, Deel 1. 1982, 506.

het om hierdie manne op te lei en te gebruik in sy sendingakker'.³²² Cronje is however quick to point out what the relation between the black minister/missionary and his white colleague should be when he notes that this relation should be characterised by guardianship.³²³ He continues pointing out that it should indeed be remembered that there should be a gradual end to guardianship. Or as he states: *'(M)aar nooit mag ons blankes vergeet dat daar ook 'n end kom aan voogdyskap nie en dat ons geleidelik in die rigting moet stuur! Die gevaar bestaan dat ons as blankes ons voogdyskap sal oordryf en die inboorlingwerker altyd ondergeskik en in die skemerlig laat*'.³²⁴

As such it is clear that it was indeed perceived that the Stofberg Memorial School played a pivotal role in not only training black ministers and teachers (amongst others) but, from the side of the DRC, it played an immense role in promoting a better relation between the DRC and especially the DRCA. Hofmeyr agrees with this when he states the following: *'Stofberg het reeds veel gedoen om die wantroue en agterdog waarmee baie naturelle ons Kerk bejeën, teë te werk deur die tasbare bewys te lewer dat ons hul volksgenote die geleentheid wil gee om mede-arbeiders te word in die heerlike taak om hul volk uit die duisternis van 'n woeste heidendom na die lig van die Christelike beskawing te lei*'.³²⁵

In concluding this section it can indeed be said that there are certain characteristics within the different Deeds that correspond. Here the issue of joint missionary activities by the particular Dutch Reformed Church and the particular synod of the DRCA or the DRMC stand out. This is in relation to the fact that the basis of the Deeds can be found in a certain understanding of mission. Here one should remember that the history of the different 'mission churches' should be read and interpreted against the paradigm of mission. In this regard the whole evolvment in the relation between the DRC and the DRCA, the DRMC, and for that matter the RCA, should be understood as a shift in the missional paradigm of the DRC. As was discussed in previous sections in this chapter and as I will further discuss in the chapters that follow, it is clear that the DRC had different outlooks on mission including how mission should be done, who (what organ of the church) would take responsibility in mission, what the outcomes of mission should be and also what the relationship between the DRC and the (newly) formed 'mission churches' should be.

The Deeds wanted to emphasise the relatedness of the DRC in relation to the DRCA and the DRMC. Here the fact that the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches shared much more than what actually separated them is clearly expressed in the Deeds.

³²² JM Cronje, 'Die Blanke Sendeling en sy Inboorlingmedewerker', In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang IV. Maart 1942. No. 1, 38. *'Daar moet 'n tyd kom wanneer die blanke hom meer en meer en uiteindelik totaal kan onttrek en die inheemse sy plek kan inneem*'. Sien Cronje, 'Die Blanke Sendeling', In *Op die Horison*, IV, 1942, no.1, 39.

³²³ *'(D)ie regte verhouding hier skyn ons ook een van blanke voogdyskap te wees*'. See Cronje, 'Die Blanke Sendeling', In *Op die Horison*, IV, 1942, no.1, 41.

³²⁴ See Cronje, 'Die Blanke Sendeling', In *Op die Horison*, IV, 1942, no.1, 41.

³²⁵ Hofmeyr, 'Die Plek van die Stofberg Gedenkskool in ons Sendingwese', In *Op die Horison*, 1939, 191.

However, it is clear that there are differences in how this 'relatedness' should be expressed/come to fuller expression. Here the aspect of mission was in most instances found to be 'neutral grounds' and therefore the strong emphasis on mission.

With regard to the calling of ministers it is interesting to note that one finds a clear movement towards a position where the local congregations in die 'mission churches' could call their own ministers. The financial position of these churches made it very difficult for them to fully contribute towards the housing and salaries of the ministers. Regarding regulations on church discipline and the membership of white ministers serving in the local 'mission congregations' one finds variations within the Deeds. In some instances the ministers would be full members of the churches they served in (e.g. DRCA in the OFS), and in other instances they would be both members of the DRC and of the DRMC or the DRCA. The variations in it self had a direct impact on regulations regarding church discipline and here too one finds different policies. In some instances ministers fell under both the jurisdiction of the DRC and of the DRMC or the DRCA. In other cases the local DRC took charge of disciplining the minister of the local 'mission congregation'. The 'mission congregation' was however responsible for looking into acquisitions within its own ranks and to send findings to the DRC for evaluation. With regard to the position of black ministers it needs to be mentioned that, although white ministers could be called to service in black congregations, black ministers could not be called to service in the congregations of the DRC. This issue was greatly disputed especially within the ranks of the DRMC.

Property would mostly be transported onto the name of the DRCA and the DRMC insofar as the law allowed this.³²⁶ The congregations of the DRCA and the DRMC were still to a larger or lesser extent financially supported by the DRC. This in itself had an impact on the relation between the DRC and the DRCA/DRMC.

3.6. The termination of the Deeds of Agreement

It is important to note that during the span of the different Deeds, these agreements were amended and eventually nullified. The processes developed differently within the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA.

As mentioned earlier the DRMC went into agreement with the DRC in SA through the *Deed* at a very late stage in this church's history. This was different in the ranks of the synods of the DRCA, as this church went into contractual agreement with the different synods of the DRC in an earlier stage of its history. After the first Deed was signed into power in 1975, the synod of the DRMC in 1978 asked for the modification of the Deed. At this synod the question regarding 'double membership' (being a member of both the DRMC and the DRCA) of missionaries/ministers was discussed. Daniëls notes that the Deed continued on the path

³²⁶ Here the stronghold of the Natives Land Act van 1931 was still in tact and as such property could not necessarily be transported on the name of the DRCA.

of promoting double membership.³²⁷ In this regard Mettler and Jacobs³²⁸ championed against this clause in the Deed and specifically against stipulations in the Deed relating to double membership. They asked that all ministers from the rank of the DRC who served in the DRMC should be members of the particular congregations that they served in. Or as their remonstrance read: '*(A)lle leraars uit die NG Kerk wat op enige tydstip in die NG Sendingkerk diens doen, 'n lidmaat (is) van die betrokke gemeente van die NG Sendingkerk met indiening van sy attestaat*'.³²⁹ Loff states that although this was heavily debated, the synod passed this notion as in agreement.³³⁰ The question regarding the position of congregations of the DRMC that fell outside the borders of the Cape Region(-al Synod) also came under discussion. The Deed of 1975 only applied to congregations within the borders of the Cape Province/congregation that fell under the resort of the DRC in SA or the so-called Cape Church. Here one should remember that the *Deed* was between the DRMC and the DRC in SA and as such it could not apply to congregations of the DRMC in other ecclesial regions of the DRC.

In 1982 James Buys³³¹ proposed that, on the basis of difficulties regarding the position of white ministers in the DRMC, the DRMC should no longer bind itself through the Deed and that it should no longer accept this agreement as in power. Buys' request to synod was prompt namely that the DRMC: '*as kontrakterende party uit die Akte van Ooreenkoms (moet) tree*'.³³² After a discussion by the synod on this issue it was indeed accepted.³³³ In the years following this synod the DRMC went into negotiations with the DRC in SA and at the DRMC Synod of 1986 it was finally decided that no Deed of Agreement between the DRMC and the DRCA would be valid.³³⁴ Loff states that only with this decision a break was made with the binding tenets of the first constitution for the DRMC. Or as Loff states: '*(D)aarmee is die verknegtende band wat sedert die Constitutie van 1880 tussen die NG Kerk en die Sendingkerk bestaan het, finaal beëindig en het die Sendingkerk uiteindelik kerkregtelik volwasse geword met 'n kerkorde sonder 'n Akte van Ooreenkoms*'.³³⁵

³²⁷ '(D)ie Akte van Ooreenkoms het sake rondom dubbele lidmaatskap van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerkpredikante in die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk nie kon beredder nie. See Daniëls, *Van Sendingkerk tot Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika (1960-1997)*, 144.

³²⁸ Both Mettler and Jacobs were ministers of the DRMC.

³²⁹ *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1978, 489.

³³⁰ *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1978, 489. See also Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 228-229, Point 3.1.8. of The Deed between the DRC in SA and the DRMC, 1978. In *Kerkorde van die NGK in SA*, 1979, 166.

³³¹ James Buys was a minister in the DRMC.

³³² *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1982, 621.

³³³ *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1982, 621.

³³⁴ '*(g)een Akte van Ooreenkoms met die NG Kerk aanvaar, opgestel of verder geldig geag word nie*'. See *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1986, 645. It is also important to note that it was decided at this very Synod that the DRMC would no longer form part of the federated Dutch Reformed churches. See *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1986, 649.

³³⁵ Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 229.

In conclusion it has been mentioned that the *Deeds* were formulated after the unification of the DRC as a general synod. This went along with the fact that missional intension of the DRC shifted more to a joint missional strategy between the DRC and the DRMC and the DRCA meant that the relation between these churches had to be re-evaluated. In short this brought about the beginning of the end of the old constitutions through which the strict guardianship of the DRC over the so-called 'daughter churches' came to an end. This was done through the coming into being of the different Deeds of Agreement. Brooks agrees that this was indeed the aim of the different Deeds of Agreement and he states that: '*(D)ie Aktes van Ooreenkoms was dan juis aangegaan om enige sweem van heerskappy deur die moederkerk oor die jongkerke te verwyder (sic) en die kerk te oortuig van sy erns, eerlikheid en opregtheid*'.³³⁶

It can without any doubt be said that the formulation and implementation of the different Deeds of Agreement signified a new phase in the relational history of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. This phase brought about the gradual end of the right of veto of the DRC over the DRMC and the DRCA. However, as pointed out certain elements of the earlier Deeds showed tenets relating to patterns of a type of guardianship characteristic of the content of the constitutions. These issues especially raised questions on a church juridical level. This meant that the DRMC and the DRCA were to a larger or lesser extend still subjected to the guardianship of the DRC on different levels. Therefore the phase that was characterised by the implementation of the Deeds of Agreement had to be followed of by a phase where the 'mission churches' worked towards the drafting and implementation of their own church orders. The juridical importance of this becomes clear when one takes into account the role and place of church orders within Reformed Churches. In fact, to think that the 'mission churches' did not have their own church orders for more than 100 years shows the skew tendencies with regard to church polity and ecclesiology within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

3.7. The first church orders of the DRMC and the DRCA

As mentioned in the previous section the implementation of the different Deeds of agreement between die different synods of the DRC and the synod(s) of the DRMC and the DRCA showed towards a shifted relation between these churches. With these Deeds historical patterns as was found in the Constitutions were, to certain extend, made undone. As such it led in a new phase in the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches specifically relating to church juridical matters paving the way for the compiling of church orders for the DRMC and the DRCA.³³⁷

³³⁶ Brooks, *Aktes van Ooreenkoms*, 1982, 112.

³³⁷ As discussed in previous sections it is important to not that the unification between the four so called 'black mission churches' took place on the basis of a church order. However this may be, I maintain my view that his church order functioned in a unique way as it did not have the full authority given to a church order in the Reformed ecclesial tradition.

However I also pointed out that the notion of guardianship of the DRC over the so called 'daughter churches' was, in a very real sense, still present on different levels. As such the DRMC and the DRCA struggled to be viewed as equal or as sister churches of the DRC.³³⁸ In essence they were still regarded as inferior 'black churches' that could do nothing without the 'mother church' as guardian. In fact, to a certain extent it was expected of them to abide by the status quo. Certain elements such as the financial position of the 'younger churches' played a pivotal role in maintaining this perception.

This had a deep impact on the relations between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. Never is this more clearly expressed than on a church juridical level pointing towards the internal organisation of the church as well as to relations outside the structures of the church. It should indeed be noted that the church orders in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA fulfilled a unique role. In an historical overview it becomes clear that the church orders functioned as minor documents with which the internal governance of the mentioned churches was regulated. As minor documents the church orders were coupled with the Deeds and other 'agreements' between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA. This being said the question can indeed be asked how the church orders of the DRMC and the DRCA were used and how these orders functioned within the ranks of the mentioned churches. To answer these questions I will discuss the content of the first church orders of the DRMC and the DRCA.

3.7.1 The unification of the so-called 'black mission churches' to form the DRCA

Before a discussion on the church orders of the DRCA can begin one needs to look into the process that eventually led to the unification of the DRMC in the OFS, the DRMC in Transvaal, the DRMC in Natal and the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in the Cape to form the DRCA. In the following section I discuss this process of unification followed by a section on the relevance of a church order in the ranks of the newly formed DRCA. Thereafter I will make some remarks on the church order of the DRMC.

The unification of the so-called 'black mission churches', established by the Dutch Reformed Churches, to constitute the DRCA, took place in 1963 '*...na 'n besluit van die afsonderlike sinodes en met goedkeuring van die NGK...*'³³⁹ - about a year after the re-unification of the four Dutch Reformed Churches in 1962. It is interesting to note that, with this unification, it was thought that this church reached full ecclesial autonomy. Or as Crafford notes: '*(D)ie tydvak van voogdyskap was nou vir goed verby en die era van gesamentlike sendingwerk het aangebreek*'.³⁴⁰ It however needs to be mentioned that the process of unification (DRCA) was initiated within the 'black mission churches' themselves and that the process started long before 1963. In this regard Lebone notes that the DRCA came into existence on the

³³⁸ Here the financial position of the DRMC and the DRCA in relation to the DRC played a role.

³³⁹ Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 348.

³⁴⁰ Crafford, *Aan God die Dank*. Deel 1 1982, 563. It is of worth to note that the aspect of mission is once again mentioned as one of the outflows of the new relation between the DRC and the DRCA.

basis of a decision made by the DRMC in 1925 to link with the DRMC in the OFS.³⁴¹ On 27 May 1929 the moderamen of the two churches met and here it was recommended that an advising *Commission of Mission Churches* be established.³⁴² After their establishment, 'black mission churches' (Transvaal, Natal and Cape), also became part of this Commission. In 1950 the DRMC took the decision to no longer form part of this Commission, thus leaving the four 'black mission churches' to constitute the *Commission of Mission Churches*. In 1955 the different (representing) synods of the Commission called for the transformation of the *Commission for Mission Churches* into the *Federal Commission of the Dutch Reformed Mission Churches*.³⁴³ In 1955 the synod of the DRMC in the OFS requested that the Commission look into the possibility of unification between the four 'black mission churches'. This eventually led to the establishment of the DRCA on 7 May 1963 thus signalling the end of the *Federal Commission of the Dutch Reformed Mission Churches*.³⁴⁴

The question could indeed be asked, namely why it took so long for the abovementioned churches to unite in the DRCA and why this event finally took place less than a year after unification within the DRC itself. With regard to the specific timeframe of the eventual unification of the so-called 'black mission churches', one should keep in mind that it not only took place a year after the unification of the Dutch Reformed Churches, but that this was also two years after South Africa became a Republic. The reasons why the DRMC decided to give up its membership of the original *Commission of Mission Churches* also need to be looked into.

This much is clear: the unity between the so-called 'black mission churches' brought about a new phase in the (relational) history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

³⁴¹ '(a)s gevolg van 'n besluit van die NG Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika (Kaapland) wat in 1925 geneem is om met die NG Sendingkerk in die Oranje-Vrystaat te skakel'. See M Lebone. 'Die totstandkoming van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika: hoogtepunte en laagtepunte van die afgelope vyftig jaar.' In P Coertzen (ed), *350 Years Reformed*, 2002, 277. An article by JH Frier pleading for the formation of a separate black mission church for the Cape Province makes some interesting reading. In this article he points out that it is indeed of value – specifically on a missional value – to establish a black mission church separated from the so-called coloured mission church. In this regard the, in some way, forced separation of the cultural groups as it manifested in the histories of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches becomes clear. See JH Frier. 'n Aparte Bantoekerk in Kaapland. 'n Pleidooi vir afstigting'. In *Op die Horison*. Jaargang III. Junie 1951. No. 2. 76-79. In an article written by EH Holzapfel it seems that the idea of having a separate black mission church apart from the so-called coloured mission church was also entertained from within the ranks of the DRMC. See in this regard EH Holzapfel, 'Die Dogter word Groot', In *Op die Horison*. Jaargang IV. Desember 1942. No.4. 187; F Blignault, 'Die Uiteindelike Groepering van die Naturelle en die Kleurlinge in Kaapland in Aparte Sendingkerke'. In *Op die Horison*. Jaargang II. March 1940. No.1 29-35.

³⁴² Crafford, *Aan God die Dank*, 1982, 563.

³⁴³ Crafford, *Aan God die Dank*, 1982, 563.

³⁴⁴ For a more detailed overview with regard to the developments that eventually led to the establishment of the DRCA, see Crafford, *Aan God die Dank*, 1982, 563-564.

3.7.2 The church order of the General Synod of the DRCA of 1963

The unification of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in the Orange Free State, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in the Transvaal, the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in South Africa, and the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in Natal, to form the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa took place on the basis of a church order which consisted of 64 articles.³⁴⁵ When looking at the content of this church order one comes to the conclusion that it was used for the internal order of the DRCA. MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel points out that, in line with Reformed church polity the church order of the DRCA placed great emphasis on the autonomy of the local congregations as well as on the importance of a synodical structure.³⁴⁶

Of specific relevance for this study is the content of some of the articles in the earliest church orders of the DRCA namely that of 1963 and 1967. These include art 1 (1963). As is the case in the opening articles of the existing Reformed church orders at the time as well as later church orders within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, these church orders clearly show towards their Reformed characteristics by pointing out the DRCA's relation to the three formularies of unity. What is of interest to note is that the DRCA was the only church within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches at the time that included and acknowledged its relation to the ecumenical creeds namely the '*Apostoliese Geloofsbelydenis, die belydenis van Nicea en die Belydenis van Athanasius*'.³⁴⁷ In art 3 (1963) it is indicated that the offices of the evangelist and the missionary are acknowledged as temporary services whilst that of teaching and governing elder, deacon and lecturer are seen as permanent services.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ Concept church order of the DRCA (*Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk onder die Bantoe*), 1963. In the *Handelinge van die Eerste Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika*, 1963, 24-41. It is interesting to note that the temporary Law Commission proposed that the name for the new church would be the Dutch Reformed Church under the Bantu. See the Concept church order of the DRCA, 1963. In the *Acta Synodi of the DRCA*, 1963, 24. The name, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika*, however, appears on the church order of 1967. See 'Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika', 1967. In the *Skema en Werksaamhede van die Tweede Algemene Sinode van die Ned. Geref. Kerk in Afrika*, 1967, 289. On evaluation one should take into account that the DRCA formed a general synod. The general synod consisted of different regional synods. These synods were each organised on the basis of its own regional regulations and stipulations regarding order and discipline. Of further note is the Deeds of Agreement that existed between the regional synods of the DRCA and the regional synods of the DRC.

³⁴⁶ '*Die NGKA se kerkorde toon 'n noue aansluiting by die Doleansiekerkreg met die sterk aksentuering van die selfstandigheid van die plaaslike gemeente, die konfederatiewe karakter van die kerkverband en die belydenis as akkoord van kerklike gemeenskap*'. See Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 349.

³⁴⁷ Concept church order of the DRCA (*Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk onder die Bantoe*), *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1963, 24. It is interesting to note that the revised church order of the DRCA following the synod of 1967 states that it is expected of ministers of the word serving in the DRCA to sign the formularies of unity as well as the ecumenical confessions. See the church order of the DRCA, In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1967, 290.

³⁴⁸ Concept church order of the DRCA, 1963. In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1963, 25.

With regard to the office or position of evangelist the revised church order of 1967 falls back on the earliest descriptions of the role of a missionary namely '*besondere diens met die oog op die heidinne (sic)*'.³⁴⁹ Art 18 of the 1967 church order notes that evangelists can be members of a local church council after their induction, only in the regional synods that allow this.³⁵⁰ Articles 53 on Discipline (1967) clearly aligns with regulations as stipulated in the Deeds of Agreement between the regional synods of the DRCA and the regional synods of the DRCA. In this regard art 53 (1967) indicates that, regarding the disciplining of missionaries that served in the 'mission churches', regulations as stipulated in the different Deeds of Agreement would be adhered to.³⁵¹

Article 3 (1967) continues on the role and place of the offices in the DRCA and follows in the line of Emden and other Reformed church orders by stipulating that all the offices are equal to one another and that they stand under the governance of Christ. Or as the article states: '*by the uitoefening van sy roeping mag geen ampsdraer oor ander ampsdraers heerskappy voer nie, aangesien Christus die enigste hoof, Koning en Meester van Sy kerk is*'.³⁵²

Of further note is the content of art 4 of the concept church order (1963). This article relates to the position of ministers in the DRCA. Art 4 remarks that the legitimisation of ministers from both the DRC and the DRMC is acknowledged by the DRCA.³⁵³ It is of interest to note that art 32 (1963) leaves room for the unification of the DRCA with other churches springing from the mission work of either the DRC or the DRCA.³⁵⁴ As noted in previous sections the DRCA would form a general synod. According to art 33 (1963) both the DRC and the DRMC would send advising representatives to the general synod of the DRCA.³⁵⁵ The dominating and paternalistic relationship of the DRC with the DRCA becomes once more apparent in art 43 (1963). Regarding the amendment of the confessions of the DRCA this article notes that this could only happen after a majority of three thirds of every regional synod has given

³⁴⁹ The church order of the DRCA, In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1967, 290.

³⁵⁰ The church order of the DRCA, In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1967, 292.

³⁵¹ '*Ten opsigte van sendelinge wat in die dogterkerke dienswerk verrig, sal wat opsig en tug betref, gehandel word volgens die verskillende ooreenkomste wat bestaan tussen die streeksinodes en hulle onderskeie Moederkerke*'. See the church order of the DRCA, In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1967, 297.

³⁵² The church order of the DRCA, In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1967, 290. '*Tot die taak van die evangelis behoort (a) die verkondiging van die Woord, veral aan heidinne (sic) en buitekerklikes, (b) die behartiging van kategetiese onderrig veral aan bekeerlinge uit die heidendom, (c) die uitvoering van die opdragte van die kerkraad hetsy binne of buite die gemeente*'. The church order of the DRCA, In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1967, 291.

³⁵³ Concept church order of the DRCA, 1963. In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1963, 26.

³⁵⁴ '*Ander Bantoekerke wat deur die sendingarbeid van die N.G. Kerk of die N.G. Bantoekerk (DRCA) binne of buite die grense van die Republiek tot stand gekom het, mag na goedkeuring deur die algemene sinode en op voorwaarde dat hulle hierdie kerkorde aanvaar, ook ingeskakel word as streeksinodes van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk onder die Bantoe*'. See Concept church order of the DRCA (Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk onder die Bantoe), *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1963, 31.

³⁵⁵ Concept church order of the DRCA, 1963. In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1963, 32.

consent and after the DRC gave permission.³⁵⁶ The 1967 church order broadens this notion in that it includes that the general synods of all the regional synods of the DRC should be consulted.³⁵⁷

Relating to the deep rooted relationship between the DRCA and the other churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches art 58 (1967) states that *'(D)ie Ned. Geref. Kerk in Afrika is op grond van die gemeenskaplike geloof in en verbondenheid aan dieselfde Here en Sy Woord, en kragtens die erkenning van dieselfde Gereformeerde Belydenis en kerkregering, in wese een met die Ned. Geref. Kerk en met alle kerke van die Ned. Geref. verband in Afrika en begeer 'n ware eenheidsband met hierdie kerk en verstewiging daarvan'*.³⁵⁸ Here the intrinsic unity amongst the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches is expressed.

Whether indeed this church order took in its rightful place as the church juridical backbone of the DRCA, can however be questioned. It is of church juridical importance to note that, regarding the authority of this church order, art 64 (1963) states that this church order was subordinate to the different constitutions. The mentioned article states that: *'(H)ierdie kerkorde is onderhewig aan die verskillende grondwette, wat deur die verskillende streeksinodes van die N.G. Kerk vasgestel is en sal aangepas word by die veranderinge van die grondwette wat die verantwoordelikheid van die verskillende Streeksinodes van die NG Kerk is.'*³⁵⁹ When reading this particular article it indeed becomes clear that this church order was secondary to other documents relating to the governance of the DRCA, including the constitution, and thus not the primary juridical source relating to the governance of, or the church political backbone of the DRCA in general. The final authority with regard to the organisation of this church would be found in the constitutions of the regional synods of the DRC. In this regard an introduction to the church order of the DRCA as found in the Acta Synodi of the DRCA (1963) notes that *'(D)aar moet voortdurend rekening gehou word met die feit dat die grondwette die verskillende kerke bind en dat derhalwe niks opgestel kan word wat hiermee in stryd is nie'*.³⁶⁰ As such it can be argued that in the case of the DRCA, the compiling and acceptance of a church order did not bring about an end to the power and authority of the enslaving and binding constitution.

³⁵⁶ *'Die wysiging van die belydenis kan alleen geskied nadat elke Streeksinode afsonderlik met 'n tweederde meerderheid ten gunste daarvan besluit het en nadat goedkeuring van die algemene sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk verkry is'*. See the Concept church order of the DRCA, 1963. In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1963, 34. The General Synod of the DRCA had full authority to revise the DRCA. See Concept church order of the DRCA, 1963. In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1963, 25.

³⁵⁷ It is not clear to which this refers to other than to all the other churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. See the church order of the DRCA, In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1967, 294.

³⁵⁸ The church order of the DRCA, In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1967, 298. Ecumenical ties and relations with other churches are expressed in art 59. See the church order of the DRCA, In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1967, 298.

³⁵⁹ Concept church order of the DRCA, 1963. In *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1963, 41.

³⁶⁰ See *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1963, 23.

One can thus conclude that although the DRCA was unified on the basis of a church order, the role and place of the church order cannot be compared to that of a church order in the Reformed ecclesial tradition. This, coupled with the authoritative position of the Deed of Agreement between the DRC and the DRCA, the question can indeed be asked whether the authority and autonomy of the synod of the DRCA was acknowledged despite the fact that a church order was in place.

3.7.3 The first church orders of the DRMC

It is interesting to note that only after the signing of the Deed between the DRMC and the DRC in SA (1975) the permanent commission for law of the DRMC was asked to draft a concept church order for this church.³⁶¹ It could thus be said that even with the signing of the Deed between the mentioned churches, the DRMC was of the opinion that the process of growing towards autonomy would not be complete if this church did not reach a phase where she would also be autonomous with regard to church juridical matters. A church order by which the DRMC could be organised internally was thus necessary. At the very next synod of the DRMC in 1978 the first church order of the DRMC was accepted by synod.³⁶² Showing towards the church juridical developments in the ranks of the DRMC and specifically in relation to the autonomous position taken in by the DRMC through the church order of 1978 MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel notes that: '*(M)et die aanvaarding van die kerkorde van 1978 het die NGSK die eerste tree na selfstandigwording gegee*'.³⁶³ I am in agreement with Plaatjies-Van Huffel insofar as she acknowledges that the drafting and implementation of the first church order of the DRMC was *a step* towards the acknowledgement of the autonomy of the DRMC by the DRC.³⁶⁴ The Deed was however still maintained (with amendments) and this meant that the church order could not take in its position as active juridical backbone of the DRMC.³⁶⁵ This church order consisted of 244 articles and 26 regulations.³⁶⁶ Here one should take note of the fact that, in the context of the DRMC, implementation of a church order would indeed go hand in hand with the ending of the stronghold of the Deed of Agreement between the DRMC and the DRC in SA.³⁶⁷ The Deed

³⁶¹ Kriel, *Die eerste eeu*, 1981, 163. It should also be noted that voices in favour of the drafting of a church order by the DRMC went up in as early as 1966 – well before the signing and implementation of the Deed of Agreement. See in this regard *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 289.

³⁶² See in this regard *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1978. Paarl: Paarl Drukkers.

³⁶³ Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 289.

³⁶⁴ Own Italicisation

³⁶⁵ See in this regard *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1978, 490. Also see Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 229.

³⁶⁶ See *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1978. Paarl: Paarl Drukkers.

³⁶⁷ At the Synod of 1978 the presbytery of Wynberg asked the synod to end the Deed once a church order came to being. See in this regard *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1978, 382. At the previous synod of the DRMC Adonis and Jacobs pleaded for the drafting of a church order. '*Dit sal die grondwet en die beoogde Akte van Ooreenkoms vervang*'. *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1974, 360.

would be acknowledged until 30 September 1986 and until this time the position of the church order would be uncertain.³⁶⁸ After this period the church order would indeed take in its rightful position within the DRMC guiding the way toward eventual unification between the DRMC and the DRCA.³⁶⁹

In summary it can be said that growing tensions within the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA in relation to the DRC saw the importance of drafting a church order (in the case of the DRMC) and making full use of the existing church order (in the case of the DRCA). This led to a further development namely the active strife towards the drafting of a church order by the DRMC and the amendment of the church order of the DRCA to the extent that it would form the legal and structural backbone of these churches. This ushered in a new phase in the church juridical history of the DRMC and the DRCA. This phase should be understood against the backdrop of the unification process(-es) within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, as with this process came a strong strive towards full ecclesial autonomy especially with regard to church juridical matters. This process had two distinct phases namely the unification of the different 'black mission churches' to form the DRCA (1963) as discussed in previous sections of this chapter and the unification between the DRMC and the biggest part of the DRCA to form the URCSA (1994). In the next section there is a discussion on the process of unification between the DRCA and the DRMC.

Regarding the content of the church orders of the DRMC and the DRCA it is interesting to note that they follow the outline of the church order of the DRC in structure. As such the influence of the Belgic Confession of Faith is apparent in the content of the church orders. It therefore becomes clear that with regard to the process of unification between the DRMC and the DRCA in forming the URCSA the drafting of a new church order had to embody the theological reality and confessional basis of the church, thus breaking away from a stream of church orders that embodied the reality of brokenness and subordination. In this regard Smit notes that a new church order was the only possible direction that the new church could take in as the old church orders embodied the problematic realities of the preceding decades. As such he points out that: *'die bestaande kerkordes het immers self kerkvisies gereël wat vir die nuwe kerk problematies was, onaanvaarbaar, teologies onhoudbaar. Dit was nodig om in die eerste plek te vra watter soort visie die nuwe kerk vir homself het.'*³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ See in this regard *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1982, 621 and *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1986, 945.

³⁶⁹ See in this regard *Die kerkorde en Aanvullende Bepalinge vir gebruik in die Ned. Geref. Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1986, Goodwood: Nasionale Boekdrukkery.

³⁷⁰ Smit, 'Bely en Beliggaam'. In Coertzen (red), *350 Years Reformed*, 2002, 366. When comparing the current church order of the URCSA with the previous church orders of the DRMC and the DRC it indeed becomes clear that the church order of the URCSA led in a new phase in the church juridical history of not only the URCSA itself, but also for the family of Dutch Reformed Churches in own right. See in this regard the *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1978, *Die Kerkorde en Aanvullende Bepalinge vir gebruik in die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1990; *Kerkorde van die NG Kerk in Afrika*, *Acta Synodi*, NGKA, 1991, 426-440.

3.8 The unification of the DRMC and the DRCA and the formation of the URCSA on the basis of a new church order

The process of unification of the DRMC and the DRCA went hand in hand with the explicit condemnation of State and ecclesial apartheid by these churches and the condemnation of biblical sanctioning of Apartheid as heretical. At her General Synod in Worcester (1975) the DRCA set the tone for what was to follow in the other 'mission churches' when this church took in a strong position against the Biblical sanctioning of apartheid. With regard to the decisions taken at this synod where he was present, Adonis notes that it was indeed a privilege for him to experience the intense commitment of the members of synod in taking decisions. He states the following: '*Dit was my voorreg om teenwoordig te wees tydens hierdie belangrike debat in die sinode. Wat my veral opgeval het, was die erns, die oortuiging en die vrymoedigheid waarmee die saak deur 'n groot groep lede bespreek is.*'³⁷¹ In the light of decisions taken at this very important synod a document on the *Bible and the relationships between races and people* was compiled.³⁷² Decisions taken at this General Synod of the DRCA paved the way for following discussions on unity within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. A similar position with regard to the condemnation of apartheid - and especially the Biblical sanctioning of apartheid - and church unity was taken in by the DRMC at her synod of 1978 and this was followed by the declaration of a *status confessionis* at her subsequent synod. The DRMC took the decision that she cannot but strive towards (re-)unification with the DRC, DRCA, and the RCA. However, the period following these and other water shedding synodical decisions was characterised by a very slow movement towards this intended goal. As not much had changed the old ecclesial structures, characterised by separation along racial lines in the family of Dutch Reformed Churches persisted. However, I am of opinion that the momentum created within this very critical period carried the DRMC and the DRCA to eventual unification in 1994.³⁷³

At the following synod of the DRMC in 1982, following the General Meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Ottawa, this church declared a *status confessionis* against church sanctioned apartheid as a heresy. Hereby a commission that had as instruction the drafting of a new confession was called into being. This commission drafted a confession

³⁷¹ Adonis, 'Bevryding tot eenwording en getuienis'. In Coertzen (red), *350 Years Reformed. 1652-2002*, 2002. 18-19.

³⁷² See in this regard, *The Bible and the relationships between races and people*. A report by the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, 1975. The content of this report includes Scriptural studies on race and nation, ethical norms and human relations, human relations in the South African context, and the role of the church and the state with regard to human relations in South Africa. See the *Acta Synodi*, DRCA, 1975.

³⁷³ One should not underestimate the role the *Belydende Kring* (BK) played in creating the theological setting and atmosphere for greater unity especially between the DRMC and the DRCA. See in this regard Leslie van Rooi, 'To Obey or Disobey? The Relationship between Church and State during the days of Apartheid: Historical lessons from the activities of the *Belydende Kring* (1974-1990)', In *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. July. 2008 Vol. XXXIV. No. 1. 173-191; SP Govender. *Unity and justice. The Witness of the belydende kring*. 1984. Braamfontein: Belydende Kring.

that would be known as the Confession of Belhar (Belhar) and would officially be accepted by the DRMC as fourth official confession at her synod of 1986.³⁷⁴ Regarding the church juridical impact of Belhar on the DRMC Daniëls notes that the acceptance of this confession by the 1986 synod of the DRMC was indeed a church juridical milestone for the DRMC as, with the acceptance of this confession, the DRMC rejected disunity and preached the gospel of reconciliation. He states that:

*(D)ie uiteindelijke goedkeuring van die Belydenis van Belhar in 1986 was 'n kerkregtelike mylpaal wat deur die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk behaal is want die belydenis kom in opstand teen: die verskeuring van die kerk op grond van ras en kleur; die feit dat die evangeliese boodskap van versoening in die gedrang kom; die uitbuiting van die magtelose deur die maghebber.*³⁷⁵

The ecclesiological impact of Belhar as well as its nature and content further expressed this church's strive in the light of her understanding of God's Word, towards church re-unification.³⁷⁶ As such Belhar moved the DRMC into discussions on church re-unification with the other churches in the family of Dutch Reformed Churches and Belhar would from then on form the basis of discussion on unity from the side of the DRMC and later also for the URCSA. However as it became clear in the later stages that the DRC and the RCA was to a large extent not ready to join in formal discussions and negotiations regarding church re-unification with the other two churches, this process was limited to the scope of the DRMC and the DRCA.³⁷⁷ After 1986 negotiations between the DRMC and the DRCA gathered new momentum and on the 9th September 1987 the first meeting took place between the dialogue commissions of the DRMC and the DRCA.³⁷⁸ Hereafter things moved at a rapid pace, so much so that a concept church order was compiled by 1990. Hereafter revisions were to be made to the church orders of the DRMC and the DRCA in order for these churches to disband their synod and General Synod respectively and (re-)unite as a new church. After this process the road was clear for these churches to unite. At her synod of 1990 the DRCA declared that it was indeed ready to adhere to the biblical calling to unite with the DRMC in the URCSA. In this regard synod states the following:

³⁷⁴ For a historical overview with regard to the Confession of Belhar see Johan Botha en Piet Naude (eds), *Op pad met Belhar: goeie nuus vir gister, vandag en more!*, 1998. Pretoria: Van Schaik; Douglas Lawrie, *Die Belydenis van Belhar, 1986: 'n eenvoudige uitleg*. 1988. Belhar: NG Sendingkerk; GD Cloete and DJ Smit (eds), *A Moment of Truth: The Confession of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church*, 1984, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

³⁷⁵ Daniëls, *Van Sendingkerk tot Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika (1960-1997)*, 1998, 132.

³⁷⁶ See in this regard, RS Tshaka, *Confessional Theology? A critical analysis of the Theology of Karl Barth and its significance for the Belhar Confession*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, 2006, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University.

³⁷⁷ Both these churches had at this stage renounced Apartheid as in contradiction with the Gospel. See in this regard Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 268.

³⁷⁸ Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 268.

*(l)n gehoorsaamheid aan die bybelse opdrag omtrent die eenheid van die kerk en in gehoorsaamheid met die Gereformeerde opvatting dat die sigbare eenheid van die kerk gestalte moet vind in een kerkverband het die sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika op sy vergadering gehou te Mitchells Plain op 1 Oktober 1990 besluit om te verenig in een nuwe kerkverband met die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika wat bekend sal staan as die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika’.*³⁷⁹

On the 14th of April 1994 the URCSA came into being.³⁸⁰ This church had as confessional basis the Canons of Dordt, the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Confession of Belhar.³⁸¹ It can indeed be said that the first church order of the URCSA was influenced by Belhar in the sense that this church order practically expressed this confession within the structures of this church.³⁸²

The unification of the DRMC and the DRCA in the URCSA is built on the confessional basis of this church namely the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Canons of Dordt, the Heidelberg Catechisms, and Belhar. This finds direct expression in the church order of the URCSA, a church order that in its essence tries to embody Belhar. Regarding the relation between a church order and confession(s) Daniëls shows towards the reality in the URCSA noting that a confession has as aim to serve the ecclesial community. He pleads for a direct relation between confession(s) and church order(s) and states that: *“n (B)elydenis het dus as doel om die kerk te dien – dit gaan dus om die organisatoriese verband tussen belydenis en kerklike orde met ander woorde die wese van die kerk en die organisasie van die kerk’.*³⁸³

It is interesting to note that, when specifically looking at the structure of the church order of the URCSA it becomes clear that it is relatively short in comparison with other Reformed church orders as it consists of 12 only articles.³⁸⁴ With regard to the length of the church order I have elsewhere argued that this is in line with the notion that a church order should speak from basic biblical truths - a view held by the Reformed ecclesial tradition.³⁸⁵ These 12

³⁷⁹ *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1990, 360.

³⁸⁰ JC Adonis. ‘Bevryding tot eenwording en getuienis. Die geskiedenis van die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika 1950-2001’. In P Coertzen (ed), *350 Years Reformed. 1652-2002*, 2002, 22-23. For a concise version of the discussion regarding the name of the new church see Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 271-272.

³⁸¹ See in this regard the church order and Regulations of the URCSA, 1994,

³⁸² LB van Rooi, ‘Bevry om te bely en te beliggaam. ’n Ekklesiologiese besinning oor die Kerkorde van die VGKSA’, In the *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal (NGTT)*, 48 no. 3&4, Sept & Dec 2007, 808.

³⁸³ Daniëls, *Van Sendingkerk tot Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika (1960-1997)*, 1998, 133.

³⁸⁴ For a concise overview with regard to the structure of this church order, see Van Rooi, ‘Bevry om te bely en te beliggaam’ In the *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal (NGTT)*, 48 no. 3&4, Sept & Dec 2007, 799-810.

³⁸⁵ ‘Dit val natuurlik saam met die gedagte dat hierdie kerkorde van basiese Bybelsverantwoordbare beginsels moes uitgaan, in lyn met die gereformeerde tradisie, om sodoende ruimte te laat vir praktiese reëlins spesifiek tot die streeksinodes van hierdie kerk.’ See Van Rooi, ‘Bevry om te bely en te beliggaam’, In *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal (NGTT)*, 48 no. 3&4, Sept & Dec 2007, 805.

articles, the essence of the ecclesial identity of the URCSA are complemented by a range of stipulations.

The question can indeed be asked, namely what the relation is between this church order and the earlier church orders of the DRCA and the DRMC. As I have pointed out in a previous section it was just not possible for the URCSA to 'merge' the existing DRMC and DRCA church orders to form a new document. This church order, and the strong ecclesiology behind it, broke away with a history characterised by suppression, an 'inferior theology', and a hierarchical relation with the DRC as 'mother church' where church orders were sidelined due to a strong guardianship by the DRC. I have elsewhere noted the most important reasons why this new direction was taken in by the URCSA specifically regarding the tenets of her church order and that this 'direction' can indeed be ascribed to her ecclesiological identity:

(E)erstens kan genoem word dat dit vir die VGKSA belangrik en skriftuurlik is dat haar kerkorde 'n sterk bevrydende karakter moet dra in lyn met Belhar. Hiervan getuig haar beoefening van kerkreg en dan spesifiek die wyse waarop dit gestalte vind in haar kerkorde. Die klem val dus sterk op die beliggaming van haar belydenis deur die kerkorde in elke unieke konteks. Tweedens is dit belangrik om te verstaan dat die kerkorde 'n nuwe oorgang was waarop 'n nuwe kerk gebou is. Dit is dus uiters noodsaaklik om binne haar kerkorde genoeg ruimte te laat vir kontekstuele ontwikkelinge in die groei van 'n verenigende kerk. Op 'n besondere manier gee dit weer uitdrukking aan haar ekklesiologiese opbou in lyn met die strewe na groter kerklike hereniging binne die familie van NG Kerke. Verder is dit in lyn met 'n verstaan van 'n bevrydende kerkorde wat slegs breër riglyne vir organisering bied.³⁸⁶

One can therefore conclude that this church order rang in a new era in the juridical history of the DRMC and the DRCA now united in the URCSA - the end of an era starting in 1881. Relating the impact of this unification process on the Reformed churches in Namibia and in the process showing towards the end of an era characterised by a paternalistic relation from the side of the DRC in relation to her 'mission churches' as it was imbedded in her mission policy, Daniëls notes the following: *'Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerk wat deur die jare – sedert 1935 – daarvan oortuig was dat sy sendingbeleid die enigste wegwysers en ware norm was vir die stigting van aparte kerke vir die inheemse volke moes uiteindelik aanskou hoe die hele sendingbeleid ten opsigte van die ander Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerke in duie stort. Die mondigwording van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk en die Nederduits [sic] Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika en die bewuswording dat die eenheid tussen die N.G. Kerke in Namibië een moes word, het lank geneem om te realiseer'.³⁸⁷*

³⁸⁶ Van Rooi, 'Bevry om te bely en te beliggaam', In the *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal (NGTT)*, 48 no. 3&4, Sept & Dec 2007, 809.

³⁸⁷ See Daniëls, *Van Sendingkerk tot Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika (1960-1997)*, 1998, 149.

3.9. Conclusion

Is his historical study commemorating the centennial of the DRMC (1881-1981) Kriel divides the history of this church into three periods namely 1881-1916 - the period of full subordination to the 'mother church', 1916-1958 - the period of limited autonomy under the constitution, and 1958-1975 - the period of growth from the constitution to the Deed of Agreement.³⁸⁸ By doing this Kriel wants to point out that there was indeed a development from full subordination to what he determines to be ecclesial autonomy within this period. In this regard he states that the day the Deed of Agreement between the DRC and the DRMC was signed, i.e. the day the constitution was ended, can indeed be commemorated as the day of *kerkregtelike selfverwesenliking* (church juridical self-realisation).³⁸⁹ I am in agreement with Kriel regarding the notion that there was a clear development from a position of total governance over the DRMC to a more autonomous position taken in by the DRMC insofar as this was permitted by the DRC. However, to say that the DRMC reached a position of church juridical self-realisation and with this ecclesial autonomy with the signing of the Deed of Agreement is debatable. It can indeed be argued that the same rings true for the DRCA. The fact that the strong hold-fast of the DRC over the DRMC - as was the case with the other 'mission churches' - with the constitution was ended with the implementation of the Deed(s) of Agreement did not mean that the DRC gave up its firm hand over the DRMC and the DRCA. In fact, as pointed out, certain tenets found in the contents of the Deeds of Agreement remind strongly of that within the old constitutions.

Therefore I conclude that it was only with the establishment of the URCSA on the basis of a church order expressing the Belhar Confession that one can begin to speak of the tenets of ecclesial autonomy in a church juridical sense i.e. that this church could make and take its own decisions regarding its governance in accordance with the church order developed and formulated in and by the URCSA itself.³⁹⁰ I need to once again point out that this is not to deny that there were indeed strong developments toward church autonomy and 'church juridical self-realisation' by the DRMC and the DRCA. This comes to expression in this study. However, I believe that the pinnacle of this 'self-realisation' was only fully reached in the formation of the URCSA.

³⁸⁸ Botha, 'Kerkregtelike Selfverwesenliking', In Kriel, *Die eerste eeu*, 1981, 158-164. It is interesting to note that Plaatjies-Van Huffel is of the opinion that there was indeed four stages relating to church juridical developments in the DRMC's strive towards canonical self-realisation. In this regards she notes that '(D)rie fases kan in die NGKS se strewe na kerkregtelike selfverwesenliking onderskei word, naamlik Ondergeskiktheid aan die NGK (1881-1915), Beperkte outonomie onder die Grondwet (1915-1956) en Kerkregtelike selfverwesenliking (1956-1981)'. See Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 250-251. Interestingly enough Plaatjies-Van Huffel later notes that '(D)ie tydperk 1982-1994 was volle kerkregtelike outonomie in die NGSK bereik'. See Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 298.

³⁸⁹ Kriel, *Die eerste eeu*, 1981, 163.

³⁹⁰ See Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 298.

Exactly the same could be said of the other so-called 'mission churches'. If anything the picture looked even bleaker with regard to the situation within the 'black churches'. Because of the great financial dependence of these churches and because of the fact that the training of indigenous ministers lagged behind that of their white colleagues, these churches were dependent on the support of the DRC. As pointed out the financial position of the 'mission churches' determined to a large extent the position of these churches and as such also the measured autonomy of the mentioned churches. This had as outflow the fact that black ministers would be in an inferior position especially with regard to their training and financial position compared to the other ministers in the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

Regarding the impact of the constitutions of the DRMC and the DRCA on these churches Smit notes that through these documents the DRC had a right of veto over the 'younger churches' and that, through strong paternalistic governance, the DRC wanted to guide the mentioned churches to maturity.³⁹¹ In his exposition and academic biography for GBA Gerdener, Van der Watt points out that through the history of the DRC it is clear that this church exercised a strict supervision over the different 'mission churches'. He notes that Gerdener voiced critique at the 1951 Missionary Conference in Wellington, South Africa specifically with regard to the apparent position of the DRC criticising the constitutions, the position of the white office bearers, a specific understanding of guardianship as implemented by the DRC, and also on an administrative level.³⁹² The paternalistic position taken in by the DRC in relation to the DRMC and the DRCA gradually had as effect the striving towards autonomy from the side of the mission churches and the gradual shift towards autonomy as prescribed by the DRC. Over time a mounting resistance of this paternalistic attitude of the DRC commenced from the side of the DRMC and the DRCA as was experienced from the 1970s onwards.³⁹³ However, as pointed out I do not think that, in their separate histories, the DRMC or the DRCA reached a position of ecclesial autonomy.

³⁹¹ 'Die 'Moeder'-kerk het deur grondwette wat hy aan die Jongere Kerk gegee het en deur 'n vetoreg op besluite van die vergaderinge van die Jongere Kerk, die "onvolwasse" kind wou lei tot wasdom. Die Jongere Kerke het hierdie paternalisme ook so aanvaar.' See JH Smit, *Die amp van die sendingleraar in die jongere Kerk*, 1974, 349.

³⁹² In this regard Van der Watt quotes Gerdener saying: '(Hy) [Gerdener] onderskei vier kanale waardeur die Ned. Geref. Kerk sy voogdyskap reserveer: a) Deur die grondwette word 'n soort vetoreg verskans, veral oor leer, kerkregering, reg om wette te maak en administrasie van eiendom. b) deur sy blanke ampsdraers verseker hy ook toesig oor die Jongkerk. Dit word versterk deurdat die opleiding van die inheemse leraars die verantwoordelikheid van die Moederkerk bly en deurdat die Jongkerk se reg by die beroeping van inheemse leraars beperk word. c) 'n derde kanaal waardeur die Moederkerk sy "voogdyskap" verskans, is deur die vetoreg wat die verteenwoordigers van die Ned. Geref. Kerk op kerklike vergaderings van die Jongkerk het. Inheemse leraars mag self nie leiding neem in sekere kerkvergaderings van sy kerk nie. d) "n vierde kanaal waardeur die toesig behou word, is op administratiewe gebied – die besitreg van geboue en beskikking oor fondse'. See in this regard, Gideon van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 103.

³⁹³ This went hand in hand with a growing sense of biblical rejection of the theological motivation for state apartheid in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA.

As noted one cannot fully understand the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches without taking the socio-political context of the broader South Africa into account. Due to its immense significance and impact on the social context of South Africa one should further take into account historical developments of the African continent over the years focused on in this study. As such Smit notes that the amendments to the different constitutions for the 'mission churches' as well as the general change in relation between the DRC and the DRMC can only be understood when one takes into account the broader social context. He notes that the general strive toward independence on the African continent as well as the growing endeavor for cultural autonomy amongst the cultural groups in South Africa played important roles in creating a sphere where the relationality between the mentioned churches was reviewed.³⁹⁴

³⁹⁴ JH Smit, *Die amp van die sendingleraar in die jongere Kerk*, 1974, 112.

The Autonomy of the church

The true church can be recognised if it has the following marks: the church engages in the pure preaching of the gospel; it makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them; it practices church discipline for correcting faults. In short, it governs itself according to the pure word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and holding Jesus Christ as the only Head.³⁹⁵

4.1 Introduction

From a missiological perspective, and here especially in a historical sense, it would seem that the autonomy of a church is always the end product of a long and gradual process in which the church grows towards ecclesial autonomy. This means that a newly formed/planted congregation/church does not have autonomy from the moment of its establishment and thus has to grow towards eventual 'independence' from the 'planter church'. This is often a long process characterised by different stages of development that leads to a declaration of ecclesial autonomy, by either the 'planter'- or the 'planted church'.³⁹⁶

In direct relation to the previous chapter, this chapter critically discusses the notion of *ecclesial autonomy*. This is primarily done within an ecclesiological framework built on historical Reformed church juridical tenets. Within this chapter the researcher hopes to provide a definition of what is to be understood by the term *ecclesial autonomy*. The reality and context - past and present - of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches are used as the backdrop, basis, and framework. A critical evaluation and a theological motivation are given in this regard.

Because of its importance within the scope of this study and because of its broader significance in the theological debate over the autonomy of the church, the researcher also looks into the place and importance of the offices within the 'planted church' and how the offices in the 'younger church' stand in relation to those in the 'planter church'.³⁹⁷ In this regard the instituted office of missionary as it came into being within the ranks of the DRC, and the place and role of the missionary in the DRMC and DRCA form part of this discussion.

³⁹⁵ The Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 29, *the marks of the true church*. In Pelikan & Hotchkiss (eds), *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, Volume II, 2003, 420.

³⁹⁶ As history would have it, the particular mission society or 'planter church' would in most cases declare the 'younger church' autonomous. Although this does not seem to be the aim of Mission and Missiology as a theological discipline, it nevertheless was the case in numerous instances.

³⁹⁷ Historical studies over the autonomy of 'younger churches' have shown that the place and practice of the offices within these churches have often been used as measuring rods for autonomy.

From this flows a necessary discussion on the relation between churches and here specifically the relation between the 'planter church' and the 'planted church'; the missional or *sendende* church and the 'younger church'.³⁹⁸ The unity of the church and the Lordship of Christ form central themes in this regard. These aspects are discussed from a Reformed perspective. Some remarks have been made from a broader ecumenical perspective.

The conclusions derived in this chapter are used as backdrop and as evaluation of the historical practices and processes within the DRC, the DRMC and the DRCA. The DRMC and the DRCA were, for the largest part of their histories, governed and directly controlled by the DRC on different levels. An evaluation in this regard is given in the following chapter(s).

4.2 When is a church autonomous?

Can one speak of ecclesial autonomy when the 'planted church' reaches the stage that it takes full responsibility for itself and thus controlling all its affairs? This is a question that touches the heart and nature of our understanding of what a church is. Therefore, when can a church/congregation be regarded as truly church in its own right i.e. when is a church truly Church?³⁹⁹

The authority of the church is and can never be a human construct as her authority lies in and through God. 'In the New Testament we see that the authority in the church is inextricably and intimately connected with the authority of Christ, the Head of the church'.⁴⁰⁰ This is what the church through all the ages has confessed and this is what the church must live out until the end of time. In this regard Sevenster reminds us that the church finds its origin in the preaching of the Word and indeed not by our own means. Or as he notes: *'(D)e kerk is niet tot stand gekomen door de samevoeging van verschillende gemeenten uit overwegingen van practische organisatie tot één geheel; zij is een grote werkelijkheid vooraf, die door de prediking van het evangelie is ontstaan.'*⁴⁰¹ This has major implications for our understanding and indeed also for the practice of church planting, as it

³⁹⁸ The term 'planter church', in most instances depicted as 'mother church', refers to the church/mission organisation of a specific church or churches whose mission work led to the establishment of a new church. The newly formed or 'younger church' is mentioned here as the 'planted church'. It also needs to be mentioned that this chapter does not in the first instance discuss the relationship between church and state and here especially with regard to the Reformed notion of the autonomy and independence of the church over and against the state. For a good overview of research done on the position of John Calvin over the autonomy of the newly formed Reformed churches in relation to the governments of Bern, Genève, France, and Holland, see HA Speelman, *Calvijn en de zelfstandigheid van die kerk*. Published Doctoral dissertation. Amsterdam: The Free University of Amsterdam. 1994.

³⁹⁹ Throughout this section I will make use of a distinction between *a church* (the local church) and *the Church* (the Universal Church).

⁴⁰⁰ MD Ciobotea, 'Holiness as Content and Purpose of Ecclesial Authority'. In Tamara Grdzeldze (ed), *One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. Ecumenical Reflections on the Church*. 2005, 91.

⁴⁰¹ G Sevenster, 'Oude en jonge kerken samen één werkelijkheid. Bijbels-Theologische opmerkingen over "wederkerige assistentie"'. In *Wereld en Zending*, 2de jrg.nr.1 (1973), 64.

places prominence on the relation between church and God. In turn this means that the 'younger church' can never 'belong' to the 'planter church', but that both the younger and the older church find their primary and equal relation in Christ.

Within the context of mission - and here specifically regarding the planting of churches - the question can be asked whether the 'younger church' should necessarily take on the form, structure, dogma, and teachings of the 'planter church'? This does not have to be the case. Historical developments in the sphere of mission have put great emphasis on the unique development of a newly planted church. In order for the 'younger church' to develop within its own contextual sphere, enough room should be left for multiformity on the mission field. The 'younger church' should be able to develop in its own respect within the parameters of its own context.⁴⁰² Sevenster points out that every constituted church has its own form. Or as he states: '*(W)ant elke geconstitueerde kerk bezit haar eigen vorm, regeering en macht; even zoo goed als een mensch door de geboorte uit zijne ouders een eigen wezen en eene menschelijke gedaante heft, van die zijner voortbrengers wel onderscheiden.*'⁴⁰³ In this regard Smith notes that Voetius specifically uses the term *plantatio ecclesiae* to indicate that, when it comes to the planting of new churches there is indeed no room for *transplantatio*. With the *plantatio ecclesiae* a new form of church should come into being through the preaching of the Word and through the work of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰⁴ This is in accordance with a Reformed interpretation of the Biblical model(s) regarding the early Church. History has shown that this aspect of Voetius' work and indeed of Reformed Missiology has not always come to its right.

As important as it is to stimulate distinctive development within a newly formed church one should always be cautious of the fact that this should take place within parameters. As a case in point the new form and/or unique development of the new church should not lead to a foundation characterised by independence in such a way that this church sees itself as separated from the broader/ecumenical Church. With this kind of schism the catholicity of the Church comes into danger, and as such it should be strongly rejected on the basis of the Church's deeply found relation in Christ.

Regarding the process of growing towards autonomy (*selfstandingwording*) of the Indonesian Churches that came into being through the mission work of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, Brouwer mentions that it is indeed interesting to note that the roles in this church have changed. For him the changes in roles of especially the missionaries in relation to the office bearers in this church is bounded by the fact that this church wants to take

⁴⁰² See Sevenster, 'Oude en jonge kerken', In *Wereld en Zending*, 1973, 70-71.

⁴⁰³ Gijsbertus Voetius, *De Plantatione Ecclesiarum. Tractaat over De Planting en de Planters van Kerken*. Translated by D Poll. 1910, 20.

⁴⁰⁴ NJ Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke'. 1973. According to Voetius *transplantatio* is part and parcel of the Roman Catholic model of church planting.

more and more responsibility over its own affairs.⁴⁰⁵ This example is used by Brouwer as a clear indication that the church in Indonesia is on the verge of becoming autonomous. The question can however indeed be asked namely should the 'planted church always *grow* towards the showing of signs that correspond to an understanding of ecclesial autonomy? This has mostly been the case through history. In some cases clear criteria have even been given to evaluate whether a church is autonomous or not and here the so-called 'three selves theory' of Venn and Anderson can be mentioned as an example.⁴⁰⁶ In most instances an evaluation of autonomy is done by the 'planter church' and indeed according to her understanding and impression of what the characteristics of an autonomous church should look like. This corresponds to a mostly 'western' perspective and thus to the practices of the 'planter church' that seldom takes the immediate context of the 'younger church' into (proper) account.

In the same sense the term 'mission church' historically refers to a planted church that has not yet grown to full completion or autonomy and who thus stands under the controlling guidance of the so-called 'mother church'. In this regard Kuyper describes the concept of 'mission church' as one of the aspects that he perceives as being unfinished church formations (*onvolkome kerkformatiën*) within the Dutch ecclesiastical context.⁴⁰⁷ A 'mission church' is thus a church/congregation that is in the process of developing into a distinct church/congregation; one that carries the characteristics of a true church according to Kuyper's Reformed understanding of what a (the) true church is. From this can be concluded that the 'mission church' grows/extends from the 'mother church' and in a very real sense is nothing more than an identical extension of the 'mother church'. As such Kuyper is of the opinion that the 'mother church' should take full responsibility for the mission church especially regarding governance and the administering of the sacraments. However, all this will change when the mission congregation *grows into completion*, thus being able to have her own church council.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁵ 'De "helpers" zijn de wereld uit, ja, goed beschouwd zijn de rollen omgekeerd. De Zendingen zijn de helpers geworden der Indonesische kerken, zij helpen deze op verdere weg naar groter zelfstandigheid en het wordt duidelijk, wat deze zelfstandigheid zeggen wil: het is het dragen van eigen verantwoordelijkheid.' See KJ Brouwer, *Zelfstandigheid van Indonesische kerken*, Overdruk uit Indonesië. 2e Jaargang, Nr 3. 193, 1949.

⁴⁰⁶ Many other models and criteria exist in this regard but because of its impact on the missional context of the DRC and because of the scope of this study, the researcher will focus on this model.

⁴⁰⁷ Abraham Kuyper, *Tractaat van de Reformatie*, 1883, 85. The three other forms of 'incomplete churches' are *Gelegendheidskerken*, *Kruiskerken* and *Doleerende Kerken*. See Kuyper, 1883, 84-90. There are two ways how a Mission Church can come into being namely (1) where the members of one congregation is sent as representatives to establish another congregation where there is no other (*filiaal-kerk*), and/or (2) when believers of a missional church/congregation, through missionary endeavours, establish a congregation under the newly "Christianised heathen". See Kuyper, *Tractaat*, 1883, 85.

⁴⁰⁸ Kuyper describes this development as follows. '... om aldus eerst allengs de organisatie dezer kerk tot eenige volkomenheid te brengen, en den dag te doen komen, waarop ze, als een losgemaakte stek van de moederkerk, haar eigen zelfstandig bestaan zal kunnen beginnen. Men heeft hier dus in deze zendingskerken het voorbeeld van nog onvolkome kerken, die een tijdlang zonder het recht gebruik der Sacramenten en zonder

As mentioned earlier, Voetius, within his mission directives, made the distinction between *ecclesia incompleta* and *ecclesia completa*. These two 'distinctions' are described as two opposite phases in the process of church planting and as such entails a clear development.⁴⁰⁹ Van Andel notes that conversion for Voetius was the first step in the process of planting a church or, as he states, the '*wegbereidster voor deze planting*'. For him church planting is dependant on conversion.⁴¹⁰ Van Andel is however quick to point out that, for a church to be formed, it necessitates that believers join in a covenant.⁴¹¹ When it comes to constituting the 'younger church' Voetius places a high premium on the input of the converted believers - they should be the ones deciding on it.⁴¹² As mentioned in the previous section, the completed church should take on its own form. But Voetius goes even further arguing that every constituted church in essence has its own form and governance. Or, '*elke geconstitueerde kerk bezit haar eigen vorm, regeering en macht...*'.⁴¹³ With this any form of governance, hierarchy, and guardianship of the 'planting church' over the 'planted church' is strictly denied.⁴¹⁴ This notion is built on and clearly shows in the direction of the perception of Christ's Lordship.

In his well known *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht* Bouwman makes it clear that every local church is fully church.⁴¹⁵ Bouwman is of the opinion that every local church, as portrayed in the New Testament, has a Godly given authority to discipline its members, to stand in relation to other churches and to collect money for its activities. Or as he states: '*Zij oefen tucht, excommuniceert onwaardigen, neemt den berouwvolle weer op, neemt beslissingen, oefent gemeenschap met andere kerken, geeft brieven van aanbeveling, verzamelt gelden voor eigen behoeftes en voor de kerk van Jeruzalem*'.⁴¹⁶ This should be read against the backdrop of the early church in the New Testament as Bouwman uses this church/churches as an ecclesial model for the Reformed church over and against that of the Roman Catholic Church. The relation between the church/churches of the New Testament is central to Bouwman's view on the unity of the church.

oefening van tucht zijn, en aan wie toch als wordende kerken het karakter van kerk niet kan worden ontzegd'. Kuyper, *Trataat*, 1883, 85-86. Highlighted by researcher.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ecclesia incompleta* refers to the first meeting of the 'young believers' and the *ecclesia completa* refers to the eventual formation of a church. See Voetius, *De Plantatione Ecclesiarum*, 1910, 6-7.

⁴¹⁰ HA van Andel, *De Zendingsleer van Gijsbertus Voetius*, 1912, 182-183.

⁴¹¹ '*Maar al zijn die geloovigen de stof, waaruit de kerk wordt samengesteld, zij vormen als zoodanig toch nog geen kerk. Hiervoor is noodig, dat zij met elkander in verband treden.*' See Van Andel, *De Zendingsleer*, 1912, 184.

⁴¹² Van Andel, *De Zendingsleer*, 1912, 184. Smith is of the opinion that the freedom of the believers to decide on the constituting of the church as advocated by Voetius, comes very close to Independentism/Congregationalism. See Smith, 1973, 86.

⁴¹³ Voetius, *De Plantatione Ecclesiarum*, 1910, 20.

⁴¹⁴ For an interpretation and discussion on the concept of 'eigen macht', see Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke', 1973, 78-88.

⁴¹⁵ '*(E)lke plaaslike kerk is een complete kerk*'. See H Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, Deel I, 1928, 62.

⁴¹⁶ Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 1928, 62. Bouwman makes it clear that the local church is not **the** church of Christ but rather part of Christ's Universal Church that does not have any borders.

From the abovementioned it is clear that a church is truly Church in Christ and that it finds its autonomy - and indeed also its authority - in Christ. In this sense no room is left for the overpowering and governance of the one (older) church over the other (younger) church. However, it is also clear that the *ecclesia completa* undergoes necessary development(s) in a process of growth. This process will only reach completion with Christ's final coming. In this regard I believe that it is helpful to distinguish between these two junctures - the first finding expression on a more theological level and the other having a more empirical outflow. It should be noted that this is a distinction and as such not a separation or a clear split between the two aspects; the one being purely theological and the other being solely empirical/ juridical. It is much rather a two-sided expression of the same notion found within the same theological dialogue. Within a more theological outline one finds the primary foundation of the Church in Christ as her living and governing Lord. He is the one that gives authority to His Church and as such the autonomy of the Church flows from His Lordship. This is a theological given and as such non-negotiable. A church is therefore complete in the sense that it finds its fullness in the Governance of Christ as its Lord. But a church is only (read fully) complete in the sense that Christ is her Head. This does not deter the church from any other development and/or growth. As such one finds the so-called 'signs' of completeness that a church shows in its development and spiritual growth towards a more mature existence. This is true for both 'younger'- and 'older' churches. As such a church always grows into a fuller expression of its identity in Christ. It is thus clear that, in reality, one has to do with a single theological component whilst this one element has two features; in essence two sides of the same coin. It is also clear that this critical balance should be reserved at all times, as an imbalance can lead - and indeed has led - to gross violation concerning the acknowledgment of Christ's sole authority over His Church.

When one takes the primary foundation of the church in Christ seriously, one can come to no other conclusion that there can be no developmental process towards ecclesial autonomy; especially not one measured by a 'western centred' ecclesiology printed on a 'non-western' context. As such a church is complete because it finds its completion - its 'constitution' - in Christ. This existence in Christ is built on the Word and the Sacrament and as such it cannot be humanly given nor can it be denied. This is true of both 'younger' and 'older churches'. The outflow of such a view is that all churches are equal in relation to each other and this equality is found in the relation between Christ and His Church. It thus becomes clear that any evolutionary process of growth in churches that has as aim the granting of autonomy to churches is false. Jonker makes it clear that this is unbiblical. Or as he states: "n "Onselfstandige kerk" is Bybels gesien 'n contradictio in terminis'.⁴¹⁷ But, what this does not mean, and herein lies the critical balance, is that the 'younger church' does not need a type of organisational structure e.g. that it does not need to have a church council, that it does not need to be self-supporting and that it does not need to grow in its mission.

⁴¹⁷ WD Jonker. 'Die Sendingbepalinge van die Ned. Gereformeerde Kerk van Transvaal'. In *Kerk en Wêreld. Teologiese studies oor die Sending van die Kerk in die Wêreld*. Nr. 4. Junie 1962, 39.

In fact, if a church truly finds its fullness in Christ, its foundation in the Word, and its identity in the Sacraments, these and other signs should gradually develop. Never can this be used as guidelines for a humanly constructed authority and autonomy of a church. Christ's presence in a church is not pre-determined by these and other signs; but because of His authority-giving presence a church continuously develops. In this sense autonomy does not have the same meaning as completion. This should be strongly emphasised.

4.3 The so-called 'three selves theory' of Venn and Anderson as measurement for ecclesial autonomy - a critical evaluation⁴¹⁸

With this in mind a brief discussion will now be given with regard to the so-called 'three selves theory' of Venn and Anderson.⁴¹⁹ As stated it should be noted that the model for the planting of separate mission churches by the DRC was influenced by various models including those developing from the missional thinking of Gustav Warneck, and the Pietistic tradition in general. However, it can be argued that the single biggest influence on the DRC relating to her development of a model for the planting of separate 'mission churches' can be found in the tenets of the so-called 'three selves theory'. Therefore I discuss and evaluate this formula within its historical framework in the following section. The main question that needs to be answered in this section is the following: Can the 'three selves theory' be used as a plunger to measure ecclesial autonomy? Is this model still of any significance within Reformed Missiology in the 21st century? The researcher attempts to answer these questions through a separate discussion of the so-called 'three selves' namely self-support, self-governance and self-propagation within the framework of the previous section.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ Although it is clear that there are differences in how Venn on the one hand and Anderson on the other has interpreted this model, the 'three selves theory' has historically been attributed to both these missiologists. This section will however not discuss these differences but will critically discuss and evaluate the place and role of the three pillars of this theory within the frame of this study.

⁴¹⁹ As was mentioned in Chapter 2, there has been wide and diverse criticism regarding the Biblical grounding and correct interpretation of the so-called 'three selves theory' as model for measuring ecclesial autonomy. This has been the case over a long period and in different contexts including the mission fields of South(-ern) Africa. Therefore only a brief discussion, with further comments within the different sections of this chapter, is given. For a short overview of the impact on this formula with regard to the position of the DRC in relation to the DRMC, the DRCA and the ERCA (Evangelical Reformed Church in Africa) see Leslie van Rooi, *Die vrou in die leraarsamp binne die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika. 'n Histories-Kerkregtelike beoordeling*. Unpublished MDiv Thesis. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University, 2005, 39-42.

⁴²⁰ Venn and Anderson had in mind the establishment of self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating **indigenous** churches. However, the discussion that follows focuses on the aspect of indigenisation of the church. This question is discussed in the following chapters. Research shows that the focus of the DRC within its mission strategies was lesser influenced by Venn and Anderson's understanding of indigenisation. See in this regard Jansen Van Vuuren, J.L. 1976. *Die Inheemswording van die Kerk. 'n Kritiese verkenning van die inhoud en implementering van die begrip met spesiale verwysing na die funksionering daarvan in die sendingbeleid van die Ned. Geref. Kerk*. Unpublished Lisenatiate Thesis. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University.

4.3.1 Self-supporting⁴²¹

Without any doubt it can be said that the financial position of a church plays an important role in the day-to-day affairs of a church regardless of it being a 'younger'- or an 'older church'. As part of society and indeed as a social agent the scale of the church's workings is largely influenced by financial abilities and input. Although this is the case one must be very careful not to put a too strong accent on money as if the existence of the church and its functionality as the body of Christ is totally determined by it. Therefore it is important that a church is able to support itself financially. But should a church's autonomy and value in society be measured by its financial standing? This question has direct implications for the church in the mission field.

In his discussion of the role of 'younger' and 'older churches' in joint missional activities, Bavinck discusses the direct role finances play. Although the context of Bavinck's discussion is directly related to mission, his findings and concluding remarks are of a broader significance. Therefore it is appropriate to take note of his findings in this section. The core of his remarks points to the fact that the unequal distribution of wealth is one of the biggest contributors to unequal relations. The history of the Church bares witness to this.

It is a fact that, in most instances, the 'younger churches' are economically in a weaker position in comparison to the 'older churches'.⁴²² And this leaves room for overpowering and manipulation. Bavinck points out that financial dependance bring about a feeling of subordination. In his view this has a direct impact on the relation between the churches. He states that: *'De geldelijke afhankelijkheid brengt onwillekeurig mee een besef van onderhorigheid. De oude Kerk heeft altijd het wapen in de hand, dat zij kan weigeren nog verder geld te zenden. Kortom, zolang de jonge Kerk economisch nog zwak is en nog in allerlei opzicht een beroep moet doen op de financiële ondersteuning van de oude Kerk, kan de onderlinge verhouding uiterst moeilijk recht getrokken worden'*.⁴²³ The history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches has shown that this can easily happen and as such one should be fully aware of it/guard against it.⁴²⁴ But for Bavinck an independant position

⁴²¹ The aspect of self-support was the central point of the discussion of ecclesial autonomy within the DRC. This notion was misused to show that the numerous 'mission churches' were not able to be autonomous and sadly, this was accepted as 'the way things were' by the 'mission churches'. For the largest part of their history the congregations of both the DRMC and the DRCA were unable to properly function within the framework of their church structures without the financial support of the DRC. However, this came with a price. In this regard self-governance and self-propagation were secondary to self-support. See in this regard JC Adonis, *Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur weer opgebou*, 1982, 206. It is interesting to note that the financial positions of the individual churches and the sharing of resources amongst them has again become one of the major talking points with regard to church re-unification within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

⁴²² This can be attributed to a broader economical interplay.

⁴²³ JH Bavinck, *Inleiding in de Zendingwetenschap*, 1954, 212.

⁴²⁴ Because of the unique financial position of the different churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, this factor will (again) play a role in the ongoing process of church re-unification between these churches.

brings about a feeling a maturity and completeness. Or as he states: *'Zodra een jonge Kerk economisch sterker wordt, gevoelt ze zich ook geestelijk meer volwaardig en durft se allerlei dingen aan te vatten, die ze vroeger angstvallig liet liggen'*.⁴²⁵ As such it is clear that it is indeed of great(er) importance and of great value that a church grows into financial independence. As such - and here especially with regard to mission - this should be encouraged.

It is however important to acknowledge that monetary support will always form part of ecclesiastical relations between churches as this is a direct outflow of our witness, which finds particular manifestation in our diaconal service. Thus it is part of our calling to each other and to the world.⁴²⁶ However churches need to guard against their perception and understanding of financial aid as a tool to control and over power. This kind of understanding/practice can indeed lead to a decline in good relations between churches and that it can serve a broader ideological purpose. Never should reciprocal financial aid lead to power games/struggles between churches.⁴²⁷

4.3.2 Self-governing

Churches function according to their own particular structure. Ecclesial structures find expression not only within the tradition that the particular church stands in but also in the immediate and specific context in which the church finds itself. This has a direct impact on the way a church is governed. With this in mind the question can indeed be asked, namely when is a church self-governing? And can this be used as criteria for autonomy?

Within the Reformed tradition great emphasis is placed on the role of the church council.⁴²⁸ A church council usually consists of the offices of teaching and governing elders and deacons.⁴²⁹ The leadership of a congregation - and indeed its day-to-day functioning - is (jointly) positioned in these offices. The church council is made up out of the abovementioned (specific) offices and as such they are distinguished in character and function from the general office of the believer. In this regard Bouwman notes that *'Onderscheiden van het ambt der geloovigen is het bijzondere ambt daarin, dat het door Christus is ingesteld, om de gemeente te leiden en te verzorgen, en te waken, dat alle dingen*

⁴²⁵ Bavinck, *Inleiding*, 1954, 212-213.

⁴²⁶ 'Financiële hulp over en weer is daarom vanzelfsprekend en men behoeft daarbij geen moment aan iets beschaamds te denken: in de kring van een alom-omvattende broederschap is dit geheel evident.' See Sevenster. 'Oude en jonge kerken'. In *Wereld en Zending*, 1973, 70.

⁴²⁷ See in this regard JC Adonis, *Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur weer opgebou*. 1982, 206.

⁴²⁸ 'Naar Gereformeerd belijden moet er in alle kerken een kerkenraad zijn. Dit beginsel rust op de navolgende gronden: 1. Dat Christus zelf een regeering in zijne kerk heft ingesteld; 2. Dat de kerk zich plaatselijk openbaart, en dat elke plaatselijke kerk is een zelfstandige complete kerk; en 3. Dat de regeering der kerk niet behoort te zijn bij één persoon, maar bij een raad van personen'. See Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*. Deel II. 1934, 99-100.

⁴²⁹ See in this regard Kuyper, *Tractaat*, 1883, 71-72.

eerlijk en met orde geschieden'.⁴³⁰ With this it is clear that these offices take in a central position regarding their services in a congregation. Bouwman further states that, due to the sinful nature of our existence and the dire imperfection that characterises our current reality, the church cannot do without the offices or, *'ambt en zonder het gezag, dat organisch van uit Christus door die ambtsdragers werkt*'.⁴³¹

But does this mean that a Reformed congregation can only fully function - and truly exist - once it has installed its own offices, thus having its own church council? In the first instance I firmly believe that this depends on the structure - and with this the tradition in which the specific church stands. Secondly this depends on the duties and function ascribed to the specific office(s). It can be argued that, within the context of the Reformed tradition, a congregation can optimally function when all (three) offices are in place and when these offices rightly perform the duties as ascribed to them in and through Christ. On the other hand this does not mean that a church - and here specifically within the Reformed tradition - cannot exist/fully function over a longer or shorter period of time - without one of these specific offices being in place. With this I place great emphasis on the contextual situation of a church and so doing I reject the notion that the autonomy of the local church can be challenged on the basis that it is or is not self-governing in the sense that the place and role of the church council lacks. However, I do not deny that, because of the specific structure of the churches especially within the Reformed tradition and on grounds of a better functioning of a congregation, it is by far more favourable to have all the offices in place. One must however be very careful not to see these offices as *the* determining structure without which there is no congregation/church. Through word and confession the Church knows and acknowledges that her being and full existence is in the first instance in and through the governance of Christ. The role and place of the offices flow from this confessed truth and as such it is open to practical arrangements.

4.3.3 Self-propagating

What should the relation be between the 'younger' and the 'older church' on the mission field? Should the church, born from mission endeavours, now join in mission work within its immediate context with the 'mother church' or should she start with her own mission endeavours? Should the 'younger church' rather take over the mission enterprise and by doing so broaden its own membership? The answers to these questions are deeply rooted in the specific relation between (these) churches. In this regard Bavinck states that the 'older church' should not think that it is in charge of the work. Just as the 'younger church' should not think that it is the one doing the work and that its role is therefore more important.⁴³²

⁴³⁰ Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 1928, 333. Bouwman emphasised that the Offices are called to serve under the sole Lordship of Christ. See Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*. 1928, 328-330.

⁴³¹ Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 1928, 352.

⁴³² *'De oude Kerk mag niet denken, dat zij het werk draagt, de jonge Kerk mag niet denken, dat zij het eigenlijke werk doet en dat haar taak de belangrijkste is'*. See Bavinck, *Inleiding*, 1954, 211.

For Bavinck the relation between the churches on the mission field should be more than just 'partners in obedience'⁴³³; it's about being one and thus showing the signs of belonging to a different order.⁴³⁴ Thus the centre of the discussion in this regard falls on the (proper) relation between the churches. And this is of great importance with regard to the witness of the Church and it correlates to her full identity in Christ.

It is important for, and indeed an integral part of our witness as Church within the expansion of the Kingdom of God, that the Church engages in active mission work.⁴³⁵ It is part of our identity as Church and as such this is true to the nature of every church, 'young' or 'old'. It should be acknowledged that the 'product' of mission will either lead to the establishment of new congregations/churches or believers will form part of existing congregations.⁴³⁶ The great Mission Conferences have time and again called for joint mission engagement between the churches in the north and those in the south.⁴³⁷ However, the importance of the proclamation of the gospel does not always go hand in hand with congregational growth and church expansion. The all encompassing task of the Church, through its preaching of the Word, can never only be the increase of its membership!

It can indeed be said that it is important for a church to be fully functional and as such live out her identity as the Body of Christ growing towards spiritual maturity with Christ as the head of the Church. This includes striving towards and indeed being self-supporting, self-governing, and self-expanding amongst others. Inline with my conclusion in the previous section it is necessary to distinguish between the essence of being church (theological) and the outflow of our identity (empirical/juridical). Once again I believe that, although there is a distinction between the two notions, one should not be rushed in making a clear separation between the two as if the one is primary and the other is a secondary by-product. In its growth and development it is very important for the 'younger churches' to achieve certain (structural) goals and this may include the abovementioned facets of the so-called 'three selves theory'. However, what needs to be made very clear is that the criteria of the 'three selves theory' can never be used as yardsticks to determine whether a church is fully church or not, whether a church is autonomous or whether it is still in a process of growing towards autonomy. This type of criteria can never be the determining factor(s) that set the tone for what the relation should be between 'younger'- and 'older churches'. As indicated a church finds its fullness (only) in Christ as her only living Lord. From this flow necessary

⁴³³ This term was used at the World Mission Conference in Whitby 1947. For an overview in this regard see JF Durand, *Una Sancta Catholica in Sendingperspektief*, 1961. 192-193.

⁴³⁴ 'De twee Kerken zijn meer dan partners, ze zijn één en dezelfde Kerk, ze zijn de Kerk in haar oecumenische gestalte, de zich, midden in het historisch gebeuren, met al zijn tegenstelling en verdeeldheden, weer herinnert, dat zij tot een andere orde behoort'. See Bavinck, *Inleiding*, 1954, 210.

⁴³⁵ I do not opt for a specific interpretation/understanding of what exactly *mission* is but leave this for interpretation within different ecclesial contexts.

⁴³⁶ It should be noted that the researcher acknowledges that, from a historical perspective, this is not the primary aim of mission.

⁴³⁷ For a good discussion in this regard, see Durand, *Una Sancta*, 1961. 192-195.

developments that include the particular structure that a congregation/church takes on. However, these developments should be theologically motivated.

In my opinion the most significant critique on the 'three selves theory' lies in the fact that the autonomy of the local church was decided upon by the self-appointed guardian. In this regard Bosch comically notes that '(I)n practice, however, the "younger churches like Peter Pan never grew up", at least not in the eyes of the older ones.'⁴³⁸

4.4 The offices as core of ecclesial community

As mentioned in the previous section the offices play a central role in the structure and functioning of Reformed churches. This is directly attributed to the Lordship of Christ as he governs the church through the offices. As such the authority of the offices is found in Christ. It is this same Christ who gives authority to His Church. From this it flows that, when it comes to the formation of a new church, the offices should indeed be put in place as soon as possible. However, it must be made clear that Christ is not dependant on the offices to govern His church. The same can not be said of the offices as they are absolutely dependant on Christ's governance through His Word and through the Spirit.

It is a given that, with regard to the relation between churches, the position of the offices is important in any ecumenical discussion. The discussion regarding the offices in the following section is done from an ecumenical viewpoint and the focus is on the relation between churches and the implication for this with regard to the offices. Thus, without focussing on a specific office, the importance of the place and role of the offices within ecumenical discussion is addressed. This discussion is done from a Reformed perspective.

4.4.1 The offices of the 'planter church' in relation to the offices in the 'planted church'

What should the relation be, if any, between the offices in the 'planter church' and those in the 'planted church'? From a theological perspective the answer is quite clear. If churches stand in a genuinely equal relation with each other, and if they fully acknowledge Christ's Lordship over His entire Church, there is no need to argue over the relation between the offices within different churches. Churches should fully acknowledge the offices as represented within different congregations, churches and in different ecclesial traditions. This is true for both the 'younger' and the 'older church'. This notion finds deep expression within the broader Reformed tradition in and through the so-called *golden rule of Emden*. The article states the inherent equality of churches and of the offices. '*Geen kerk zal over andere [kerken], geen dienaar over [andere] dienaren, geen ouderling over [andere] ouerlingen, geen diaken over [andere] diaken voorrang of heerschappij uitoefen (primatum*

⁴³⁸ DJ Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. 2007, 450.

*seu dominationem obtinebit), maar veeleer zal ieder wachten voor alle verdenking daarvan en gelegenheid daartoe’.*⁴³⁹

But how should this be understood? Exactly how should this be articulated? The core of this Emden article is relational. It is concerned about the relationship between churches and between the offices within churches with the effect that it denies any form of hierarchy in between different churches and between different offices. As such Van Meer interprets this Article of Emden as follows: *‘Een groote gemeente heeft evemin den voorrang boven eene kleinere, als eene hulpbehoevende gemeente overheerscht mag worden door een rijkere, ook al ontvangt zij daarvan ondersteuning. De vraag is deze, of zich de gemeente als zodanig heeft geïnstitueerd, en in dat geval is zij te beschouwen als een lid van een lichaam, waarin alle leden gelijke rechte hebben’.*⁴⁴⁰ With this quotation it is easy to see that, over history, this Article of Emden has been exposed to a diversity of interpretations. However this much is true; the foundation of the first Article of Emden is built on the call for an equal relation between congregations/churches/the offices. This relation knows no form of hierarchy/domination. With this Emden does not deny a direct, communal and living relation between congregations/churches/the offices. It is interesting and indeed of great worth to note that in his interpretation Plomp brings the 1st and last article of this very influential “church order” in a direct relation with each other.⁴⁴¹ With this, Plomp wants to underline that Emden is at the same time both anti-hierarchical and anti-independent.

Churches of the Reformation still need to learn to acknowledge equality both inside and outside of their own church structures. Nowhere is this more evidently expressed than in the relation between the offices within different churches. As the Offices are directly linked to a particular congregation this stance finds its basis in the relations between congregations/churches. As seen in the previous sections this relation is (pre-) determined by the relation between Christ and His Church. As such this needs to find direct manifestation not only within our juridical jargon but also in our practice. I firmly believe that this flows from our ecclesiastical identity and as such great(er) emphasis should be placed on this. In a more communal and/or ecumenical arena this aspect becomes increasingly important and as such it needs to be addressed.

4.4.2 The office of missionary

As seen in the previous chapter regarding the mission history of the DRC, the instituted office of missionary has played a pivotal role, not only in the establishment of separate ‘mission churches’ for the different cultural groups in South(-ern) Africa, but also regarding the governing and management of these churches by the DRC well after their

⁴³⁹ Article 1 of the church order of Emden quoted from J.Plomp, ‘De Kerkorde van Emden’. In D Nauta *et al*, *De Synode van Emden Oktober 1571. Een bundle opstellen ter gelegenheid van de vierhonderdjarige herdenking*, 1971. 89.

⁴⁴⁰ B van Meer, *De Synode te Emden 1571, 1892*, 166.

⁴⁴¹ Plomp, ‘De kerkorde van Emden’, In Nauta *et al*, *De Synode van Emden*, 1971, 89-91.

establishment. With this in mind it becomes important to study the basis for/of this office and especially its place in the mission history of the broader Reformed tradition.

Firstly the question namely what the role and place of the missionary was in a historical sense within the Reformed ecclesial tradition can be asked. Here it is important to establish whether indeed the missionary was a specially trained minister of the Word or whether indeed the missionary was trained as the holder of a separate office.

With regard to who had to be sent - who were the persons primarily responsible for missionary work - Voetius emphasises the role of the '*dienaren des Woords*'.⁴⁴² But Voetius also leaves room for the active involvement of other persons like the '*ziekentroosters*' under certain practical circumstances.⁴⁴³ One of these special circumstances would be in cases where there would be a shortage of ministers. However, what is made clear by Van Andel is that Voetius placed great emphasis on the '*ambt der gezonden dienaren des Woord*' and that he, in line with the practices of the day, did not know of, nor acknowledged the office of missionary as a separate office in his earlier works.⁴⁴⁴ What is clear is that practical circumstances on the mission fields led to the special training of ministers for the task of mission.

There is however no evidence to support the notion that Voetius, in his later works, had in mind the establishment of a separate office for the missionary, apart from that of the minister of the Word.⁴⁴⁵ This corresponds with the work of Rutgers. Regarding the question whether one can study to become a missionary-minister, Rutgers, in accordance with the decisions of synod, states that one cannot study to be a missionary per se. One study's to be a minister of the Word. Or as he states: '*(O)ok is door de Synode uitgesproken, dat men niet (althans in den regel niet) studeeren kan voor missionair predikant; evenmin als men kan studeeren voor staatspredikant, of dorpspredikant, of militaire predikant, of predikant by visschers, enz. Men studeert voor predikant of Dienaar des Woords in het algemeen*'.⁴⁴⁶ With this Rutgers clearly had in mind that there is no special office of missionary separate from that of the minister of the Word.

⁴⁴² See in this regard Voetius, *De Plantatione Ecclesiarum*, 1910, 56-59.

⁴⁴³ Van Andel, *De Zendingsleer*, 1912, 110-111. This correlates with the earlier mission endeavours by individuals at the Cape. It is also known that the '*siekentroosters*' performed the duties that correlate with that of a minister of the Word under the Dutch sailors and settlers in this earliest period.

⁴⁴⁴ Van Andel, *De Zendingsleer*, 1912, 121-122.

⁴⁴⁵ '*Voor al in zijn laatste zendingsschrift teekent Voetius meermalen den zendingssarbeid als een taak, door afzonderlijke personen te verrichten, wat in het bijzonder blijkt uit zijn wensch, dat deze personen een special opleiding mogen ontvangen. Tog wil hij voor die afzonderlijke personen niet een afzonderlijke ambt. Deze zendingssarbeid, deel van den dienst des Woords, worde verricht door dienaren des Woords.*' See Van Andel, *De Zendingsleer*, 1912, 121-122.

⁴⁴⁶ FL Rutgers, *Kerkelijke Adviezen*, Eerste Deel, 1921, 60.

One way of engaging with this question is to make use of the distinction between the *gewone amp* (general Office) and the *buitengewone amp* (exceptional Office).⁴⁴⁷ In this regard the office of the minister of the Word is an ordinary office and that of the missionary could be described as an exceptional office *insofar* as it relates/compares to the office of the evangelist as found in the New Testament.⁴⁴⁸ As such the office of missionary was (is) a temporary development that occurred only in the context of mission and here especially in the developmental stage of church planting. After the establishment of a congregation the role of the missionary was therefore limited to the extent that it was 'replaced' with that of the minister of the Word. As such the role of the missionary was confined to mission.

With regard to the abovementioned it seems that there never was a clear distinction between minister of the Word and missionary in the context of the 'mission churches' of the DRC. For a large part of the history of the DRCA and the DRMC the missionary fulfilled his task(s) as minister of the Word in the mission congregations.⁴⁴⁹ This was the case even though the missionary was not a (full) member of the particular congregation.⁴⁵⁰ Concerning church discipline the missionary was disciplined in the local Dutch Reformed congregation and as such the congregation in which he fulfilled active duty had no tangible jurisdiction over him.⁴⁵¹ In this regard it is thus clear that we find a schism and indeed a comprehensible distinction in practice. In the case of the congregations of the Dutch Reformed Churches the role of the missionary was restricted to mission and as such the missionary had no entitlement equal to that of the minister of the Word within the particular congregation. In short: the missionary was sent out by the Dutch Reformed Churches, whether it be by a synodical commission of the church or by a local congregation, to fulfil his special task in the 'mission churches' equal to that of a minister of the Word whilst his status in his sending congregation was mediocre in comparison to that of the minister of the Word. This fact becomes problematic. In this regard Jonker notes that a missionary should only be involved where a church has not yet been found. If a church has indeed been found the missionary can at best advise this particular congregation. He (sic) can never be an office bearer in this congregation:

Hy (the missionary) arbei waar daar nog geen kerk is nie, met die uitsluitlike doel om 'n gemeente op te rig onder die heidense volk. Sodra daar êrens 'n kerk gevestig is, is

⁴⁴⁷ According to his understanding of the offices within the Reformed tradition, Jonker makes the distinction between the *gewone amp* (ordinary office) and the *buitengewone amp* (exceptional office). Jonker, *Sendingbepalinge*, 1962, 47-48.

⁴⁴⁸ See in this regard Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrechten*, 1928, 354.

⁴⁴⁹ An example in this regard is the fact that the missionary chaired the meeting of the Church Council. This went on until as late as the 1970s.

⁴⁵⁰ Later on the DRC allowed the practice of dual membership so that the missionary were at the same time both a member of the DRC and a member of the particular 'mission church'. For a good discussion and evaluation on this, see Chris Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording. Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika 1881-1994*, 1998, 211-213.

⁴⁵¹ Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 213.

*hy nie meer nodig nie, behalwe om met raad en daad (soos Paulus) die gemeentes wat ontstaan het, te hulp te kom. Hy kon nooit 'n ampsdraer van een van die gemeentes wat deur sy arbeid tot stand gekom het, word nie, want dan sou hy sy eintlike taak waarvoor hy uitgestuur is, verruil vir die taak van 'n leraar.'*⁴⁵²

This clearly stands in contrast to the position of the missionary within the mission context of the DRC as is discussed above. As such one can come to no other conclusion than to say that the missionary in the mission context of the DRC was misused to uphold an ideological reality infused in the broader context of South(-ern) Africa.

In concluding this section it needs to be recognised that the missionary is a valuable component of mission. However, it is not clear whether the office of the missionary as it came to the fore in the Reformed tradition had a direct Biblical foundation or whether it was a mere practical arrangement pressed into a mould and constructed under certain circumstances and later based on a Biblical interpretation.⁴⁵³ However the case may be, the fundamental finding of this section is that the way that this office developed within the mission context of the DRC is indeed in stark contrast to Biblical directives concerning the church and the offices, and to Reformed church polity concerning the offices as they have developed over history. This grew from the strong belief that the 'younger churches' were subordinate to the DRC and as such had to accept the governance - and the specific form in which it came - of the DRC. The researcher thus concludes that the particular understanding of the office of the missionary was indeed a unique contextual development within the DRC that, in a historical sense, can only be understood when taking the broader socio-political context of South Africa into account.

4.5 The Synod of Emden (1571) and the impact of this synod on Reformed church polity

In the following section attention will be given to the outcomes and relevance of the Synod of Emden (1571)⁴⁵⁴ and the impact of this synodical meeting on Reformed church polity. In

⁴⁵² Jonker, *Sendingbepalinge*, 1962, 48-49.

⁴⁵³ Through history the Biblical example of the missionary work of Paul has been used especially to legitimate that the direct involvement of the missionary in the newly found church is extremely important for the spiritual growth of these churches. However, Bavinck rejects any Biblical-based interpretation in this regard that would allow missionaries, on behalf of the 'mother churches' to govern newly found churches in such a way that this restricts the development and growth of the churches. For a good discussion in this regard, see JH Bavinck, *Inleiding*, 1954, 196-202. It should be noted that it is not the primary aim of this section to make a final conclusion on this specific discussion.

⁴⁵⁴ From a historical perspective there have been numerous discussions and studies on the particular significance of Emden, if indeed Emden was a synodical meeting in a classical sense, if one can truly speak of a full church order following this synod as well as the impact of the Synod of Wezel (1568) on Emden. For an overview on these and other matters, see J Kamphuis, *Zo vonden wij elkaar. Het begin van het Nederlandse gereformeerde kerkverband, de synode van Emden, 1571*, 1971. Groningen: Uitgeverij de vuurbaak; D Nauta et al (eds), *De Synode van Emden Oktober 1571, De Synode van Emden Oktober 1571. Een bundel opstellen ter gelegenheid van de vierhonderjarige herdenking*, 1972. Kampen: JH Kok; PC Coertzen, *Vanaf Genève na die Suidpunt van Afrika*, 1989. In this dissertation Emden will be treated as a full church order.

line with the outcomes of this study I specifically focus on the relation between churches as well as the relation between the offices. This is complemented in the following section by a further consideration of issues relating to ecclesial autonomy from a more ecumenical perspective.

The Synod of Emden (Emden) is historically seen as the unifying event of especially the Reformed churches of the Netherlands to unite as a synod. The significance of this event is further underlined by the fact that it took place without the direct interference of the Dutch government. In this regard Hovius notes that through their coming together the congregations affirmed their belonging to one ecclesial structure anew. He states that: *‘(W)ij kunnen óók zeggen dat de kerken door middel van haar afgevaardigen in Emden bijeen kwamen om zich wederóm, dus om zich opniuw, tot een verband van kerken te constitueren’*.⁴⁵⁵ As such the historical value and significance of Emden can and should not be underestimated.

Regarding the immediate outcomes of this synod Hovius further points out that Emden had the freedom to further express the *‘calvinistisch beginsel’* (Calvinist principle) that there is no human governance in the church of Christ.⁴⁵⁶ For him this forms the core of the Emden church order and is fittingly articulated in the very first article of this historic church order.⁴⁵⁷ Through history this first article was of major importance for Reformed church polity. As such the tenets of this article are expressed in most Reformed church orders. From its content it is clear that this article is of particular value for this study.

Article 1, the so-called golden rule (canon aureus) of Emden, notes that the church, governed by Christ, know’s no domination of the one church over the other. In the same sense it does not know of the domination of one office over the other. *‘(G)een kerk zal over een andere kerk, geen dienaar de Woords, geen ouderling, noch diaken, zal de een over de ander heerschappij voeren, maar een iegelijk zal zich voor alle suspiciën, en aanlokking om*

⁴⁵⁵ J Hovius, *Notities betreffende de Synode te Emden, 1571, en haar artikelen*. Apeldoornse studies no. 4, 1972, 5-6.

⁴⁵⁶ *‘geen menselijke heerschappij in de kerk van Christus’*. Hovius traces this principle back to Calvin. See Hovius, *Notities betreffende de Synode te Emden, 1571*. 1972, 8. Also see Coertzen, *Vanaf Genève na die Suidpunt van Afrika*, 1989. 10. Coertzen points out that *‘(D)aarby lê die bepalende van Calvin se invloed sekerlik nie in ’n letterlike ooreenkoms van kerkordes nie, maar in die skriftuurlike teologie wat oorgeneem is en na die eis van omstandighede verwoord is’*. See Coertzen, *Vanaf Genève na die Suidpunt van Afrika*, 1989, 10.

⁴⁵⁷ From a historical perspective discussion exists specifically relating to the nature and outcome of the Synod of Emden. Here the question can be asked, namely whether indeed a church order was constructed at Emden. In this regard Plomp notes that Emden should indeed be viewed as a church order more than anything else. *‘Naar vorm en inhoud vertonen ze veel meer het karakter van een kerkorde dan van een verslag van een kerkelijke vergadering’*. See J Plomp, *‘De Kerkorde van Emden’* in D Nauta et al (eds), *De Synode van Emden Oktober 1571. Een bundel opstellen ter gelegenheid van de vierhonderjarige herdenking*, 1972. 88, Kampen: JH Kok.

te heerschappen wachten'.⁴⁵⁸ For Plomp this article is anti-hierarchical.⁴⁵⁹ In this regard Hovius is of the opinion that Emden indeed created the basis on which Reformed church polity is built.⁴⁶⁰ In his exposition of this article Hovius remarks that Scripture indicates that local congregations are indeed manifestations of the one body of Christ. As such he points out that the Reformation acknowledged the autonomy of the local church as well as the equality between the offices in the church. Or as he notes: *'(D)e Reformatie van de 16de eeuw brak met deze on-Schriftuurlijke ontwikkeling; zij ondeckte de zelfstandigheid der plaatselijk kerk als een Bijbels gegeven, en zij ontdeckte eveneens die andere, met de eerste nauw in verband staande, Schriftuurlijke notie van de gelijkheid der dienaren der kerk'*.⁴⁶¹ For Hovius the sound biblical basis of the Reformation is clearly expressed in Emden.

Emden should however not be read as a document that denounces the unity of the church on the basis of the autonomy of the (local) church. Any one who reads this document as a justification for the independence of churches/congregations violates the true message of this document. In this regard Hovius states that Emden clearly acknowledges the unity of the church. He notes that: *'(N)aaste het fundamentele beginsel van de zelfstandigheid der plaatselijke kerk, kent Emden nog een ander beginsel, namelijk dat van de eenheid van deze kerken...'*.⁴⁶² With this defining principle Emden points to the relatedness and interdependence of churches - a product and direct outflow of the Reformation according to Hovius.⁴⁶³ As such it is of importance to note that, for Emden, the autonomy and authority of the local church can and should not lead to independence. How this unity should be expressed varies. However, the role and place of confessions and specifically the unifying character of confessions stand out in perspectives on unity in Emden. Hovius agrees with this when he states that: *'(E)en zeer belangrijk middel om de eenheid te bewaren, zagen de kerken te Emden voorts in de ondertekening van de belijdenis der kerken. Hiervan is reeds in het tweede artikel sprake en geen wonder want juist de eenheid in geloofsovertuiging vormde de grondslag van het kerkverband'*.⁴⁶⁴ For Kamphuis this is the witness of Emden – unity in confession.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁵⁸ See art 1 of Emden in Hovius, *Notities betreffende de Synode te Emden, 1571*. 1972, 13.

⁴⁵⁹ *'Dit artikel is uitgesproken anti-hiërarchisch'*. See J Plomp, 'De Kerkorde van Emden' in D Nauta et al (eds), *De Synode van Emden Oktober 1571*. 1972, 89.

⁴⁶⁰ *'Deze bepaling die de hoeksteen van het gereformeerde kerkecht genoemd kan worden, is duidelijk uit de Heilige Schrift af te lezen. Deze laat ons telkens plaatselijke kerken zien, plaatselijk georganiseerd met plaatselijke ambtsdragers'*. See Hovius, *Notities betreffende de Synode te Emden, 1571*. 1972, 13.

⁴⁶¹ Hovius, *Notities betreffende de Synode te Emden, 1571*. 1972, 14.

⁴⁶² Hovius, *Notities betreffende de Synode te Emden, 1571*. 1972, 21.

⁴⁶³ *'Kerken mogen niet over elkaar heersen, maar ze mogen zich ook niet gedragen als hadden ze niets met elkaar maken'*. See Plomp, 'De Kerkorde van Emden' in D Nauta et al (eds), *De Synode van Emden Oktober 1571*. 1972, 90.

⁴⁶⁴ *'Om de eendrachtigheid in de leer tussen de Nederlandse kerke te bewijzen, heeft het de broederen goed gedacht de belijdenis des geloofs der Nederlandse kerken te onderschrijven; insgelijks ook de belijdenis der kerken in Frankrijk te ondertekenen, om daarmede haar verbinding en enigheid met dezelve Franse kerken ook*

Emden strongly denounces individualism. Or as Hovius notes: *‘Aan individualisme geeft de Emdener synode geen speelruimte, en daarvoor mogen wij dankbaar zijn, want individualisme in de kerkregering tast de souvereiniteit van de Koning der kerk aan, is niets anders dan menselijke heerschappij...’*.⁴⁶⁶ This has direct implications for the governance of church and relates directly to the authority of Christ over His church. This also rings true for Kamphuis. For him this anti-hierarchical relation between churches is biblically found and articulated in the Reformation.⁴⁶⁷

Hovius is of the opinion that, from this first article flow other regulations directly impacting on the governance of the church. In this regard he points towards the inherent authority of the (local) church council specifically when it comes to discipline.⁴⁶⁸

Relations between the distinguished offices are clearly indicated in art 1 of the Emden church order. As is the case with other articles pertaining to the relation between churches, this article clearly shows towards an anti-hierarchical relatedness between the offices or as Plomp states: *‘(D)e emdense kerkorde poneert reeds in haar eerste artikel de “aequalitas”, de gelijkheid in rang en rechten zowel tussen kerken als ambtsdragers’*.⁴⁶⁹ For Kamphuis this principle is founded in the *‘genade-heersappij van Christus’* (graceful governance of Christ).⁴⁷⁰ As such it becomes clear that there is indeed a unique relation between the offices as proposed by Emden. This relation directly correlates with the relation between churches as outlined in this section. In this regard Coertzen notes that Emden went a step further by not only pointing towards the relationship between churches but also to the relationship between the offices.⁴⁷¹ For Coertzen this relation is predetermined by the unique relation between Christ and His church.⁴⁷²

te betuigen...’. See art 2 of Emden in Hovius, *Notities betreffende de Synode te Emden, 1571*. 1972, 25. Relating to unity Hovius further notes that *‘(D)e bepalingen ter bewaring van de geestelijke en organisatorische eenheid der kerken hebben alleen betrekking op de eenheid in geloofs-overtuiging soals deze haar uitdrukking vindt in de confessie, of anders gezegd, zij hebben betrekking op de duidelijke leer der Heilige Schrift, waarop de belijdenis is gegrond’*. See Hovius, *Notities betreffende de Synode te Emden, 1571*. 1972, 29.

⁴⁶⁵ *‘Zó konden ze ook door middel van afgevaardigden samen komen en hebben zij in synode bijeen getuigenis afgelegd van de reeds aanwezige eenheid in belijdenis: dat en dat alleen is het cement dat de kerken samenbindt!’*. See J Kamphuis, *Zo vonden wij elkaar. Het begin van het Nederlandse gereformeerde kerkverband, de synode van Emden, 1571*, 1971, 51.

⁴⁶⁶ Hovius, *Notities betreffende de Synode te Emden, 1571*. 1972, 34.

⁴⁶⁷ See J Kamphuis, *Zo vonden wij elkaar*, 1971, 52.

⁴⁶⁸ Hovius, *Notities betreffende de Synode te Emden, 1571*. 1972, 20.

⁴⁶⁹ Plomp, *‘De Kerkorde van Emden’* in D Nauta et al (eds), *De Synode van Emden Oktober 1571*. 1972, 89.

⁴⁷⁰ See J Kamphuis, *Zo vonden wij elkaar*, 1971, 52.

⁴⁷¹ *‘By Emden is hierdie formulering nog verder verfyn deur nie net van kerk te praat nie, maar ook deur die verskillende ampte by te voeg en te waarsku teen ‘n neiging in hierdie rigting’*. See PC Coertzen, *Vanaf Genève na die suidpunt van Afrika*, 1989, 13.

⁴⁷² *‘Hierdie gelykheid van kerke en dienare ontstaan omdat Jesus Christus die enigste Heer en Hoof van die kerk is en al sy diensknegte gelyk aan Hom onderworpe is want hulle buig almal onder die gesag van die Woord’*. See Coertzen, *Vanaf Genève na die suidpunt van Afrika*, 1989, 13.

When reading Emden it is clear that there is a direct relation between the very first article of the church order and the last article. As such one can say that the whole church order should be read between these two ends. In this regard Plomp notes that:

*(H)et anti-hierarchische artikel aan het begin en het anti-independentistische aan het slot van de kerkorde vullen elkaar aan. Wie alleen ook heeft voor het gevaar van de hiërarchie vervalt gemakkelijk tot independentisme. Omgekeerd: wie alleen beducht is voor independentisme, heeft nauwelijks verweer tegen de hiërarchie. Emden heeft beide gevaren onderkend en afgewezen.*⁴⁷³

It can be asked what the historical value of a church order like that of Emden is, which through its imbeddedness within history denounces some of the tenets of Roman Catholicism. Can one still regard this kind of ecclesial documents as authoritative and can they still be seen as 'helpful' when used as a guideline to determine the relation between churches? It can be argued that Emden indeed helps us to re-define the relatedness between churches as well as between the offices by pointing towards Christ's Lordship.

This much is clear: a re-reading of Emden brings us back to the striking anti-hierarchical and anti-independent nature of this celebrated church order. As such one can indeed say that Emden shows as back to principles springing forth from the church Reformation of the 16th century. These very same principles embodied in the articles of Emden can help us to foster not only better relations between churches, but also to rediscover the biblical relatedness between the offices. The relation between both churches and the offices is found in the confession that Christ is Lord and that He alone governs over His church. Or as Kamphuis notes specifically relating to the first article of Emden: *'Hier in het eerste artikel van Emden is een kostbare parel, die voor de kerk tegen iedere andere schat moet opwegen, omdat het hier gaat om het enige excellente dat er ooit voor de kerk kan zijn: het koningschap van Christus, vergelijk Matth. 13:46!'*⁴⁷⁴

Hovius remarks that Emden has a deep pastoral character and as such should not be read or interpreted as a bureaucratic or formalistic document.⁴⁷⁵ This should be remembered before starting with an exposition of this document.

4.6. Ecclesial autonomy and the unity of the church

In this following section I give attention to the concept of ecclesial autonomy by focussing on the position of the local church. Special reference will also be made to the ecumenical context.

⁴⁷³ Plomp, 'De Kerkorde van Emden' in D Nauta et al (eds), *De Synode van Emden Oktober 1571*. 1972, 90.

⁴⁷⁴ See J Kamphuis, *Zo vonden wij elkaar*, 1971, 53.

⁴⁷⁵ 'Er zou veel meer Schriftbewijs aan te voeren zijn, maar wij laten het hierbij. Het moge genoeg zijn om aan te geven dat de regering der kerk een herderlijke, een pastorale taak is, en diensvolgens moet de regeling van de kerkelijke zaken, of wil men, moet de kerkorde een pastoraal karakter dragen'. See Hovius, *Notities betreffende de Synode te Emden, 1571*. 1972, 30.

4.6.1 Autonomy as Independence or Interdependence? - the church locally and universally

Within the previous sections comments have been given regarding the relations between 'younger' and 'older churches' within the context of the Reformed tradition. This question will be developed further in this section. The broader framework of this study has been expanded to include the broader ecumenical context. As such the questions that need to be answered in this section are namely what the relation should be between the 'younger'- and the 'older churches'. What is the relation between the 'younger church' and other surrounding churches? And what is the relation between the 'younger church(-es)' and the ecumenical church? The core of these questions lies in an interpretation of the term 'ecclesial autonomy' built on the importance given to the local congregation within Reformed theology.

The Reformation has put great emphasis on the Biblical directive that every local church is truly and completely church.⁴⁷⁶ In line with this it should be noted that, from a Reformed perspective, any discussion of the autonomy of the church starts with a focus on the local congregation. In this regard Van der Merwe notes that the autonomy of the local church should therefore stand central in ecclesiological discussions about the church. For him autonomy arises at the establishment of a local congregation and not when a synod is constituted.⁴⁷⁷ In this regard ecclesial autonomy is and remains a very important aspect of Reformed ecclesiology especially in pointing out the principle that churches, specifically local congregations - and here especially with regard to mission - should stand in an equal relation to each other. Admittedly this has led to great controversy and to gross disunity especially amongst the churches of the Reformation. However, I believe that one must not be too quick to deny the autonomy of the (local) church as a way of getting rid of the negative and sometimes unbiblical interpretations of this principle. As pointed out in the previous sections the autonomy of the local church is given to it directly by God. As such autonomy can never mean that the (local) church is autonomous *from God* in the sense that it is a complete church and thus not having to stand under the Lordship of Christ. In accordance with this autonomy interpreted from a theological perspective can never suggest that the (local) church has no direct relation with other (local) churches. In this regard the researcher is of the opinion that any study concerning the notion of ecclesial autonomy should focus on the (proper) relation between churches as, ecclesial autonomy can and should never lead to a situation wherein the local church deliberately has no

⁴⁷⁶ Jonker is of the opinion that one should understand this in the following manner: '*Die bedoeling is dat die kenmerke van die ware kerk in die plaaslike versameling rondom die bediening van Woord, sakramente en tug tot openbaring moet kom*'. Thus the signs of the true church primarily come to the fore within the local church. See in this regard WD Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 1965, 14.

⁴⁷⁷ '*Volgens Gereformeerde siening begin die selfstandige kerk by die plaaslike kerk en nie by die konsituering van 'n sinode nie. In ons beleid van kerkplanting moet ons dus soek om die plaaslike gemeente as selfstandige kerk te eerbiedig en om die plaaslike gemeente as selfstandige kerk te laat funksioneer*.' See WJ van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 55-56.

relation with other local churches and with the Church universally. This is in stark contrast with Biblical teaching and as such this calls for a re-interpretation and a critical analysis of what is to be understood with the principle of ecclesial autonomy within an ecumenical framework. I believe that questions in this regard should be answered from an ecclesiological perspective.

Every local church is part of the worldwide church and yet every 'part' is fully church.⁴⁷⁸ In this regard the world reknown Roman Catholic theologian Küng states the following:

But each (local congregation) is truly God's ecclesia and Christ's body because the Lord is present in each, truly, wholly and undivided. And because it is the same Lord who is truly, wholly and undivided present in each community, these communities do not exist side by side in isolation, nor even in loose federation, but they are all together in the same Spirit, the one ecclesia of God, the one body of Christ, and through koinonia, communion, fellowship with him they are in koinonia, communion and fellowship with one another'.⁴⁷⁹

It is thus clear that Küng shares a strong Reformed sentiment. In this I believe is the key to the interpretation of the term 'ecclesial autonomy'. In this sense autonomy forms the basis of any form of relationship/correspondence between churches. In a discussion on the term *ecclesia* in the New Testament, Smit clearly states that the concept of church indicates that local churches always stand in a prominent relation to one another.⁴⁸⁰ This means that the church in Jerusalem and the church in Corinth, within their rich diversity, stand in a deep, direct and equal relation to each other as the body of Christ. The local church is part of and lives in community with the ecumenical church.⁴⁸¹ In accordance with this Bouwman interprets the use of the term *ecclesia* in the New Testament as referring to the unity of both the local church and the 'general' church.⁴⁸² As such not only the local church is truly Church but this is also true of the church in a specific country. The catholicity of the church is uniquely expressed in the local church, but it is never fully expressed in it. The local church is therefore always part of the universal Church. And this has real theological implications. Or as Koffeman states: '*Erkenning van de theologische compleetheid van de lokale kerk dient samen te gaan met de handhaving van de theologische noodzaak om de eenheid met andere*

⁴⁷⁸ See in this regard Leo Koffeman, 'The urge for unity. Local and Supralocal Church in the Dutch Reformation'. In *Of all Times and Places. Protestants and Catholics on the Church Local and Universal*, 2001, 87.

⁴⁷⁹ Küng, *The Church*, 1973, 236. It is of vital importance for the Church that it allows Christ to be its head; otherwise it cannot be His body. See Küng, *The Church*, 1973, 236.

⁴⁸⁰ JH Smit, *Het Vraagstuk van de Zelfstandigheid van de zogenaamde jonge kerke met name in die periode na die Eerste Wêreldoorlog, met spesiale verwysing na de beïnvloeding door het Nasionalisme en de Kerklijke Eenheidsbeweging*, 1964, 23.

⁴⁸¹ JF Durand, *Una Sancta*, 1961. 40. 192-195.

⁴⁸² H Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 1928, 60-62. Bouwman shows that *ecclesia* is mostly used to refer to the local church/congregation.

lokale kerken te zoeken'.⁴⁸³ Bluntly stated, this means that no local church can create perimeters around itself in an attempt to border itself off from community with other local churches. Jonker agrees with this when he states the following: "*Die algemene kerk gaan aan die plaaslike kerke vooraf en is meer as die optelsom van die plaaslike kerk.*" *Juis hierdie feit roep egter die plaaslike kerke tot die innigste gemeenskap met mekaar*'.⁴⁸⁴ It can be argued that the way this reality can best come to expression is through the establishment of a synodical/denominational structure.

4.6.2 Part of the bigger reality? - the place of the local congregation in a synodical structure

In previous sections I tried to state clearly that, although the local church is a complete church, it can never be *the Church* and as such local churches always stand in a very close relation to each other.⁴⁸⁵ This develops from the premise of Christ's Lordship. In this section the accent once again falls strongly on the notion that the local church is at the same time fully church and yet also no more than a particular expression of the Church. For Jonker the local church is both fully church and a particular expression of the church. In this regard he states the following: '*(A)s openbaring van die algemene kerk is die plaaslike kerk wel 'n volwaardige kerk, maar dan slegs as 'n ecclesia particularis. Dit is op hierdie punt dat die volle erns van die probleem van die verhouding van plaaslike en algemene kerk deurbreek, en die vraag na die sigbare eenheid van die ecclesia universalis akuit word*'.⁴⁸⁶ Jonker makes it clear that this unity should be visibly expressed within a unified structure.⁴⁸⁷ Candidly Kuyper states exactly this: '*(E)en kerk mag niet op zichzelf blijven staan, daar zij niet de kerk Christi is, maar slechts een openbaring van de kerk Christi op ééne enkele plaats*'.⁴⁸⁸

From a theological perspective there is no solid ground for churches not to be unified with one another. This unity should be something real, factual and tangible and as such it should, in the first instance, find expression within a united synodical/denominational structure - the primary expression of ecclesial unity. In this regard MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel states that the denominational structure is there to express the relationality of the different local

⁴⁸³ J Koffeman, *Relatief en rekbaar? Bovenplaatselijke facetten van de Kerk bij Abraham Kuyper*. 1996, 19.

⁴⁸⁴ Jonker, *Aandag vir die kerk*, 1965, 44.

⁴⁸⁵ See in this regard Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht. Het recht der Kerken in de Practijk*. Deel II, 1934, 10.

⁴⁸⁶ Durand, *Una Sancta*, 1961, 104.

⁴⁸⁷ '*Die belydenis van die katolositeit van die kerk dring daarom voortdurend na die sigbaarwording van die eenheid van die kerk, wáár dit ook al mag bestaan. Die eenheid van die kerk word sigbaar in die onderlinge gemeenskap van die gelowiges in die plaaslike gemeente of daarbuite, maar dit word ook sigbaar in die onderlinge gemeenskap van die verskillende plaaslike gemeentes met mekaar. Waar die plaaslike kerk waarlik bely dat hy kerk in die volle sin van die Woord wil wees, bely hy terselfdertyd sy eenheid met die één katolieke kerk. En waar hy sy eenheid só bely, moet hy dit ook belewe. Die belewing van die katolositeit van die kerk vind plaas in die gemeenskap met ander plaaslike kerke en betrek so die plaaslike gemeente in 'n wêreldwye gemeenskap: die één kerk van Christus*'. See Jonker, *Aandag vir die kerk*, 1965, 37.

⁴⁸⁸ Kuyper, *Tractaat*, 1883, 77.

churches.⁴⁸⁹ For her the establishment of a synodical structure is therefore an instruction. She continues stating that *'(D)ie kerkverband is dus 'n feit en 'n opdrag. Die kerkverband is een van die belangrikste wyses waarop daar aan die wesenseienskappe van die kerk, te wete eenheid, heiligheid, katolesiteit en apostolisiteit van die kerk (sic) uitdrukking gegee kan word'*.⁴⁹⁰

In this regard Van der Merwe helps us to understand that even the process that leads to the constituting of presbyteries and synods cannot take place without the consent and cooperation of the local congregations.⁴⁹¹ With this he points to the fact that this customary development - the constituting of presbyteries and synods - cannot be infused by external developments from e.g. decision taken by the 'older church'.

In the previous sections I have argued towards the establishment of a relational reality between churches and as such for ecclesiastical unity. The question can now be asked what the underpinning is for this type of engagement between local congregations with specific reference to the formation of synodical/denominational structures.⁴⁹²

In Reformed ecclesiology the primary basis for the unity between churches that come together in the formation of a particular denomination is their unity in confession (*eenheid van belijdenis*).⁴⁹³ Concerning his study on the influence of the Synod of Emden in the establishment of a Dutch Reformed denomination⁴⁹⁴, Kamphuis calls the confessional basis of denomination the foundation for the *'liefdesbond der kerken'* (ecclesial covenant of love).⁴⁹⁵ For him the confessions form the backbone of a denominational structure binding churches together in accordance with the Word. As such the Word and the confessions have the highest authority in the churches of the Reformation.⁴⁹⁶ Although I agree with this, I firmly believe that one should be cautious not to deny correspondence with other churches/denominations on the basis of differing confessional underpinning. In the first instance churches are bound together through the Lord who governs His Church through Word and Spirit. As such confessions are authoritative but this authority is relative to that of the Word. Within Reformed church polity this is clearly expressed. Nonetheless, confessions are expressions of what we believe and how we add up the Word of God in our particular

⁴⁸⁹ *'(D)ie kerkverband is daar om juis die bo-lokale verbondenheid van die plaaslik (sic) kerke as openbaring van die een algemene kerk tot uitdrukking te bring'*. See MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 255.

⁴⁹⁰ Plaatjies van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 304.

⁴⁹¹ Van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 56.

⁴⁹² For an excellent overview concerning the origin of the synod and historical developments regarding it, see Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 1928, 136-145.

⁴⁹³ *'Eenheid van belijdenis is de onmiskenbare grondslag, waarop alle kerkelijke correspondentie, en dus ook alle kerkverband, moet staan'*. See Kuyper, *Tractaat*, 1883, 77.

⁴⁹⁴ This refers to the establishment of a denominational structure between the churches in The Netherlands.

⁴⁹⁵ See J Kamphuis, *Zo vonden wij elkaar. Het begin van het Nederlandse gereformeerde kerkverband, de synode van Emden, 1571, 1971*. 44.

⁴⁹⁶ *'Maar in de gereformeerde kerkregering hebben die kerken als eenheidsband niets anders dan het Woord der genade en de belijdenis der Waarheid'*. See Kamphuis, 1971, 45.

contexts. As such they form the foundation of our correspondence, as in their joint confession churches have always found deep solidarity.

It is important to note that the establishment of a denominational structure in which local churches come together in an expression of their living relation to each other on the basis of their shared faith and in their mutual identity in Christ as their Lord, is not something temporary. From a Reformed perspective a denomination is not a voluntary union in the sense that congregations can freely 'come and go' when they feel like it. In a denominational expression of unity the members, as the body of Christ, need one another and they indeed belong to one another, and in their unity there is a fuller expression of who they are in Christ. Jonker agrees with this when he states the following: '*... dit is ontoelaatbaar om sommer te sê dat kerkverband nie nodig is nie, as lede van die kerk dit nie begeer nie. Kerkverband rus nie op die wil van die lede nie – dit sou reine kollegialisme wees – maar op die eenheid van die kerk, in Christus, sy Hoof. Al die lede van die liggaam het mekaar nodig, of hulle dit wil weet of nie (vgl 1 Kor. 12:21!)*'.⁴⁹⁷

However, the fact that local churches come together in the formation of one synodical body/denomination does not mean that the autonomy of the local church is denied. This is not the aim of a denominational structure.⁴⁹⁸ In this regard Koffeman states that it is absolutely important that, within a denominational structure, churches should acknowledge each other. Or as he states: '*(W)ederzijdse erkenning van lokale kerken is daarbij het eerste dat binnen een kerkverband noodzakelijk is, zoal niet als voorwaarde vooraf bij kerkvereniging, dan toch in elk geval als een blijvende opdracht nadien*'.⁴⁹⁹ In turn this does not mean that the broader structure and status of a denomination is nullified by the acknowledgement of this theological reality regarding the local church. The fact that churches voluntarily come together in the formation of a broader structure binds them to each other and as such a synodical structure carries substance ascribed to it by the joint authority of the local churches.⁵⁰⁰ This gives a unique authority to a synod. However the authority lies therein that Christ is Lord of His Church.

⁴⁹⁷ Jonker, *Aandag vir die kerk*, 1965, 46.

⁴⁹⁸ '*Dit is egter duidelik dat 'n egte gereformeerde kerkverband nie daarop bereken is om die plaaslike kerk in hul selfstandigheid aan te tas nie, maar juis om hulle te dien in die vervulling van hulle roeping as selfstandige kerke. Buitendien is dit moontlik dat 'n mens op 'n manier oor die selfstandigheid van die plaaslike kerk kan praat, wat volledig on-Bybels is, omdat die Bybel die selfstandigheid van die plaaslike gemeente eerder laat sien as sy Christus-verbondenheid. Dit deel die plaaslike kerk egter met ander plaaslike kerke*'. See Jonker, *Aandag vir die kerk*, 1965, 45-46.

⁴⁹⁹ Koffeman, *Relatief en Rekbaar?*, 1996, 19. '*De waarde van een bovenplaatselijk kerkverband zal allereerst moeten liggen in de wederzijdse erkenning. Dat impliceert de erkenning van de ander als anders! Een kerkverband kan eigenlijk niet anders dan uitdrukking zijn van verzoende verscheidenheid*'. See Koffeman, *Relatief en Rekbaar?*, 1996, 20.

⁵⁰⁰ '*Juist vanwege dit noodzakelijke receptieve-proces op plaatselijk vlak zullen bovenplaatselijke structuren een zeker gewicht moeten hebben. Allerlei aspecten van de koinonia komen daarin feitelijk aan de orde: solidariteit, wederzijdse steun en gezamenlijke overleg, maar ook wederzijdse correctie en vermaning, concrete verzoening*

Regarding the relation between the local church and the broader church structure Busch notes that '(A)ll human leadership on the congregational level rather is derived from the actual congregation in question, and all national or international church structures are confederations of local congregations and not some kind of umbrella organization'.⁵⁰¹ The well-balanced tension between the local church, the broader ecclesiastical structures of a church, and with this the universal dimension of the One Church thus form the heart of the discussion. This is a tension that should be kept in balance. But it is also a tension that should revolve around the confession of Christ's Lordship. With the abovementioned in mind we can now look at a model for the (equal) relation between the 'planter church' and the 'planted church' within the context of mission.

4.6.3 The mission context as point of departure. The relation between the 'planter church' and the 'planted church'

In the previous chapter we came to the conclusion that the former DRMC and DRCA were, over the largest part of their histories, considered and treated as inferior, specifically as far as their status as churches in relation to the DRC as so-called 'mother church' was concerned. These 'daughter churches' were established and governed by the DRC in such a way that little room was left for tangible contextual developments such as structure, dogma, teaching and church polity of these churches. The product of this was an unbalanced relation imbedded in the social context of South Africa - the product of which plagues these churches until this very day. In this regard Adonis stresses the point that this kind of 'mother church'-'daughter church' relationship should be rejected as paternalistic and oppressive and in contradiction to the New Testamental understanding of church.⁵⁰² With this in mind we now need to look at possibilities of what the relation between 'planter church' and 'planted church' could/should be.

Firstly it is important to determine whether there is any Biblical basis for a distinction between churches on the basis of their epoch. Here Bavinck clearly denies any Scriptural distinction between 'older' and 'younger churches'.⁵⁰³ With this he rightly rejects an unequal relation between missional churches and 'mission churches' on the basis that the New

*in theologische en maatschappelijke zin, het zoeken naar centrum en grenzen van belijden, het zoeken naar groeiende convergentie en consensus, en niet in de laatste plaats: een gezamenlijke gerichtheid op de eenheid van de leefwereld waarin de concrete kerk-gemeenschap staat'. See Koffeman, *Relatief en Rekbaar?*, 1996, 20. For an insightful discussion on the authority of a Synod see Rutgers, *Kerkelijke Adviezen*, 1921, 200-204.*

⁵⁰¹ Eberhard Busch, 'Reformed Strength in Denominational Weakness', In Alston & Welker (eds), *Reformed Theology, Identity and Ecumenicity*, 2003, 32.

⁵⁰² Adonis, *Die Afgebreekte Skeidsmuur*, 1982, 206.

⁵⁰³ Bavinck, *Inleiding*, 1954, 195. 'Indien wij uit enige overweging de benaming "jonge" Kerk toch gebruiken, dan dienen wij dat te doen uitsluitend als een chronologische aanduiding'. See Bavinck, *Inleiding*, 1954, 202. See also JF Durand, *Una Sancta*, 1961, 41.

Testament knows no distinctions/differences between (the) churches.⁵⁰⁴ On this subject Sevenster makes it clear that ‘older’ and ‘younger’ churches together form one church. They are jointly directed on the one gospel...’.⁵⁰⁵ Concerning the relation between the Indonesian Churches and the Dutch Churches in a historical perspective, Brouwer states that the Dutch Church should support the Indonesian Church. This support should however come on request of the Indonesian Church. Or as he states:

*De jonge kerken en haar voormannen zijn ten diepste overtuigd, dat zij voor de ontwikkeling van eigen leven, voor de opbouw, geestelijk en organisatorisch, nog sterk de hulp der oudere kerken nodig hebben, die haar uit de schat der eeuwen, uit haar grotere ervaring, breeder theologische kennis, langere traditie allerlei kunnen mededelen, dat de jonge kerken broodnodig hebben. En dus: zij doen een beroep op ons. Maar op dat beroep moeten wij wachten. Wij kunnen niet meer naar die landen, waar een zelfstandige kerk bestaat, zendelingen uitzenden. Wij kunnen dat slechts doen, als die kerken er om vragen. Zij moeten weten en zeggen, welke taak er in en voor hun kerk te vervullen is en wij hier kunnen zoeken, wie er voor vervulling van die taak bekwaam en bereid is. Zendelingen van nu worden eerst gezonden als zij gevraagd zijn.*⁵⁰⁶

The emphasis in both these examples falls on the fact that both the ‘younger’ and the ‘older church’ stand in an equal relation to each other because of their equal relation before/in Christ.

This notion is also central to the work of Voetius. For him the *ecclesia completa*, as a young and newly formed church, finds itself in a process of growth and as such the direct relation between ‘planted church’ and ‘planter church’ is of great importance.⁵⁰⁷ However, this can only be if/when the ‘older church’ acknowledges and respects the autonomy of the ‘younger church’ under the Lordship of Christ and as such being its equal. If this is the case the ‘older church’ can only respond to help if the ‘younger church’ calls for its support.⁵⁰⁸ The ‘planter church’ can never take in a position of superiority over and against the ‘planted church’. A relation built on respect and the acknowledgment of equality should at all times

⁵⁰⁴ ‘...nergens is er ook sprake van een zekere zeggenschap, die de oudere Kerken zouden bezitten over de jongere, door het gehele Nieuwe Testament heen wordt de Kerk gezien als een levende eenheid, uit één wortel gegroeid, op één fundament opgebouwd’. See Bavinck, *Inleiding*, 1954, 195-196.

⁵⁰⁵ *Oude en jonge kerke zijn samen één kerk, één lichaam van Christus. Zij zijn alle gericht op één Evangelie, leven alle uit dezelfde vergeving en hebben eenzelfde laatste perspectief van komende dingen.* See Sevenster, ‘Oude en jonge kerken’, in *Wereld en Zending*, 1973, 70.

⁵⁰⁶ Brouwer, *Zelfstandigheid*, 197, 1949.

⁵⁰⁷ This however does not make the ‘younger church’ ‘less complete’. See in this regard Voetius, *De Plantatione Ecclesiarum*, 1910, 24.

⁵⁰⁸ To term sister churches can be, and is often used to express the equal relation between churches whether being older or younger.

be upheld. This position should be non-negotiable.⁵⁰⁹ It is important to acknowledge that this also has direct implications for the 'younger church'. Never can the 'younger church' take in a position wherein she rejects association with the 'older church' on the basis of it being fully church/an autonomous church. This should be strongly rejected. As sister churches 'younger' and 'older churches' should express their equal relation in their service towards each other based on their identity as churches of/in Christ.

It can thus be stated that churches stand in a direct relation with one another. This interrelatedness should come to a direct expression. This is true of both 'older'- and 'younger churches' and of churches with different structures and diverse dogmatic foundations. In the case of support to the 'younger churches', in whatever form it may come, one should always keep in mind that, in certain cases, it might hamper the growth and development of the 'younger churches'.⁵¹⁰ The relation amongst churches should be one based on respect, equality, and spiritual growth concerning both the 'younger' and the 'older churches', as this is in line with clear Biblical directives. An expression of the interrelatedness between churches brings to the fore a clearer and a richer/more diverse understanding of Scripture that has as direct product the furthering of the Kingdom of God.⁵¹¹

4.6.4 The Ecumenical context as point of departure

In a previous section I tried to show that, on a small scale the local church represents the Church as a whole. Therefore the local church is always *fully part* of the catholic church. In this there is perhaps the foundation of a Reformed understanding of ecumenicity. It is also true that ecclesiastical unity within the context of the ecumenical movement is always based on the Christology and as such these understanding will form the core of the following discussion.

Jonker states that the New Testament knows only of one church.⁵¹² This is in accordance with Sevenster as he points out that, in his interpretation the term *ecclesia* is used in the New Testament, which has always involved interdependence amongst churches. Sevenster says what we know as modern ecumenical efforts today was the essence of the existence of

⁵⁰⁹ For a discussion in this regard see Voetius, *De Plantatione Ecclesiarum*, 1910, 20-21.

⁵¹⁰ See in this regard Bavinck, *Inleiding*, 1954, 199-210. History has learnt that in certain cases the availability of direct help and involvement of the older church to the 'younger church' has led to a position where the 'younger church' becomes so used to and dependant on the support of the older church that it struggles to learn to support itself. Bavinck acknowledges the fact that this might even be a deliberate action from the side of the older church to keep the 'younger church' dependant on it. See Bavinck, *Inleiding*, 1954, 200. Both these examples can lead to the inhibition of ecclesial autonomy.

⁵¹¹ For an in-depth discussion of the importance of direct relations between younger and older churches with regard to mission, see Bavinck, *Inleiding*, 1954, 202-218.

⁵¹² 'Wanneer die meervoudsvorm van kerke gebruik word, slaan dit op die verskillende plaaslike gemeentes waarin die één kerk van Jesus Christus tot openbaring kom'. See Jonker, *Sendingbepalinge*, 1962, 25.

the church in the New Testament.⁵¹³ 'Ecumenicity' thus forms the basis and norm for the body of Christ in the early church. For Sevenster the Gospel is the core that binds churches together and brings them into a direct and living relation with one another. Here of course one also needs to add the fact that, flowing from our diverse interpretations of the Gospel, we find, in a special way, our living identity in the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Durand goes a step further when he states that the unity of the local church is not only found in communal confessions, but also in communion with each other and brotherly (sic) love in word and service.⁵¹⁴ With this Durand calls for an active seeking and indeed a concrete living out of our relatedness. I truly believe that this can best be done through an active understanding of our faith in the celebration of the Sacraments. Although dogmatic differences do occur, it can still be said that these Sacraments form the heart of our confession as the body of Christ.

As such the body of Christ knows no geographic or cultural borders and this should be reflected within our church structures.⁵¹⁵ The bottom line is that our structures should aid ecumenicity and ecclesiastical unity. And this brings us to the notion of difference/diversity. Does the fact that churches differ from each other in their interpretation of Scripture call for separation and in essence a vacuum of non-relatedness? Jonker denies that a biblical understanding of multiformity forms the basis for the existence of a multiplicity of churches. He notes that responsible ecumenicity should continuously search to unify the church. He states that: *'(M)aar dit alleen sal verantwoorde ekumenisiteit wees, dat die waarheidsvraag in alle erns gestel sal word en dat die eenheid van die ganse kerk van Jesus Christus narstigtilik (sic) gesoek sal word'*.⁵¹⁶ The 'waarheidsvraag' (question of truth) cannot be found within history as the brokenness of the church is an historic truth. In this regard Jonker prophetically states the question is not if we have ever had a unified church in history. For him the biblical commission that the church is and thus should be one is a central point of departure. As such he notes the following:

⁵¹³ Sevenster. 'Oude en jonge kerken', In *Wereld en Zending*, 1973, 66. Here the sharing of the One Gospel is what binds the worldwide Church together. The Gospel churches share is also the basis for a relationship of solidarity and mutual responsibility. See Sevenster, 'Oude en jonge kerken', In *Wereld en Zending*, 1973, 67. See also in this regard Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 1928, 136-137.

⁵¹⁴ *'(D)ie eenheid van die plaaslike kerk bestaan egter nie net in die gemeenskaplike belydenis en onderworpenheid aan dieselfde Woord in sy lewensrigting nie, maar is tewens ook koinonia, broederlike liefdesdiens in woord en in daad'*. See Durand, *Una Sancta*, 1961, 42.

⁵¹⁵ For an excellent historical overview concerning the history of national church structures within the Reformed traditions in Genève, France and The Netherlands see Karel Blei, 'The Church National and Universal. On the Ecumenical relevance of National Church Structures.' In Leo Koffeman & Henk Witte, *Of all Times and of all Places. Protestants and Catholics on the Church Local and Universal*. 2001, 19-45. Zoetermeer: Meinema.

⁵¹⁶ Jonker, *Sendingbepalinge*, 1962, 28.

*Die vraag is nie of daar al ooit sedert die dae van die apostels één sigbare kerk bestaan het nie, want ons weet tog dat die kerk altyd deur die sonde bedreig is, in sy eenheid so goed as in sy heiligheid. Die geskiedenis is tog nooit ons norm nie, maar alleen wat die Woord van God aan ons voorhou as die wil van God. En daarom sou dit dwaas wees om op grond van die feit dat daar nog nooit een sigbare kerk (die Una Sancta) op aarde bestaan het nie, te konkludeer dat die kerk dit nie as ideaal en as imperatief vir homself moet sien, dat daar slegs een sigbare kerk op aarde moet wees nie. Immers, die kerk op aarde was ook nog nooit volmaak heilig nie, maar niemand dink daaraan om dus die eis van die heiligheid vir die kerk te verswak nie.*⁵¹⁷

The question of diversity is of great importance for the planting of new churches as noted in the discussions in previous sections. The notion that because we are different we should be separated finds no theological foundation and as such it should be rejected as sinful. However this can never signify that our diversity goes up in a dull 'oneness' denying our rich differences.⁵¹⁸ Enough space should thus be left for the celebration of diversity. But this should always be done under the acknowledgement of Christ's Lordship and not as a stumbling block in expressing our deep unity. Or as Jonker states: *'As ons die kerk egter vanuit sy Hoof benader, kan nie aan die waarheid ontkom word nie, dat die eenheid van die kerk veel belangriker is as die verskille wat tussen die lede mag bestaan'*.⁵¹⁹ For far too long our discrepancies have been used as a tool to justify separation.

Even from the perspectives of the Southern Baptist tradition Hugh Chambliss is of the opinion that '(W)hen any group of Christians get together with the idea of beginning or planting a new church, they must of necessity consider the relationships that church will have after its beginning. The constituting of a Christian church should never be considered to be a private matter.'⁵²⁰ For Chambliss this is an absolutely obvious notion that flows from our very nature as Christians.⁵²¹ In reaction to the remarks of Chambliss one can ask where exactly this 'nature as Christians' come from - if indeed there is such a nature. Jonker makes it clear that unity as Christians is not in the first instance a human construct but that it is a Godly commission. Or as he states: *'Die eenheid wat daar tussen die lede van Christus bestaan, is nie gebaseer op hulle eie toenadering tot mekaar of op hulle besluit om iets met mekaar te doen nie. Hulle eenheid is 'n wesenlike eenheid, omdat dit God self is wat deur Sy Gees in hulle woon en hulle aan mekaar verbind, al kom hulle uit hoeveel verskillende volkere en sosiale stande.'*⁵²² Our relation, unity, and being as the Church take place in and

⁵¹⁷ Jonker, *Sendingbepalinge*, 1962, 24-25.

⁵¹⁸ Unity is not equal to oneness.

⁵¹⁹ Jonker, *Aandag vir die kerk*, 1965, 41.

⁵²⁰ HO Chambliss. 'The Relationship of Churches'. In TR Amberson (ed), *The Birth of Churches. A Biblical Basis for Church Planting*, 1979, 138.

⁵²¹ Chambliss, 1979, 139.

⁵²² Jonker, *Sendingbepalinge*, 1962, 22-23.

through our belonging, as 'members of Christ'⁵²³, in Christ. Christ is the basis and driving subject of ecumenicity and thus of church unity not because we want Him to be/we want this to be, but because of our nature as 'members of Christ'.

In conclusion it can be said that churches, based on Biblical directives, can only stand in a decent relation with one another, and they can only work towards visible and structural unity, if they acknowledge each other as having an equal status as church(-es) in Christ. This notion is based on theological argumentation. It needs once again to be made clear that this 'status' i.e. the autonomy of the church is not a human construct but flows from the church's relation in Christ - a relation that points out that the Church belongs to Christ. The Bible knows of no other type of relationship between churches. In fact, the Bible does not know of more than one church. Because there is only one God, there can only be one Church. This is what we confess; this is what our faith is based on; this is the heart of our identity. Thus, ecclesial autonomy and the practicalities that flow from it should carefully - and indeed continuously - be interpreted by Scriptural directives. We believe in one, holy catholic and apostolic church. And if this is so it becomes clear that the relational nature of the Church knows no humanly constructed boundaries and as such her structures differ from that of e.g. the state. Thus, physical boundaries e.g. national and cultural borders are foreign to the Church and it should be rejected as such. Never can the Church of South Africa or the Church of the Netherlands or the Church of the Xhosa nation come into existence. This is in stark contradiction to our faith and to our confession(s) pertaining to the catholicity of the Church and the Oneness of God. But there can be a church in South Africa and a church in The Netherlands just as there can be a church consisting of Xhosa members whilst these churches visibly confess their deep relatedness to one another.⁵²⁴ I believe that there is merit in Hoedemaker's statement when he observes the following: 'The problem of unity in diversity within Christianity can only be dealt with in a viable way if it is understood as a part of the problem of unity and diversity of humankind as a whole.'⁵²⁵

However, the way we, as the Church, speak about and grow into embracing diversity, and the way we celebrate it, differs from that of a voluntary organisation seeking the best solution on behalf of its paying members or even from that of a government in the process of creating new resolutions so that its peoples can live in harmony, side by side.

With this cultural diversity and its richness are not rejected. The same goes for the existence of different interpretations of the Bible within different ecclesiastical traditions. Diversity should however not lead to brokenness and disunity, but should indeed aid ecclesiastical

⁵²³ 'members of Christ' is the direct translation of the phrase used by Jonker in the previous quotation namely '*lede van Christus*'. See the previous footnote.

⁵²⁴ '*Landsgrense, volks-, taal- en kultuurverskille behoort nie die kerk van Jesus Christus te verdeel nie*'. See Jonker, *Sendingbpalinge*, 1962, 29.

⁵²⁵ Bert Hoedemaker, 'Ecumenism Inside Out. Transpositions of the Discourse of Unity'. In Anton Houtepen and Albert Ploeger, *World Christianity Reconsidered. Questioning the Questions of Ecumenism and Missiology*, 2001, 27.

unity, as with it comes a better, richer and truer (fuller) understanding of Scripture. Within a worldly climate where peoples struggle to embrace their differences the church can and should do no other than to act prophetically and embrace diversity within its growing unity - unity within its rich diversity. Or as Jonker states: *‘Die kerk is immers die vergadering van alle ware gelowiges, watter verskille daar ookal onderling tussen hulle mag bestaan. Tensy ons sou wou aanneem dat die kerk ’n privaatsaak is van mense, sodat hulle soos by elke ander vereniging van mense, die kerk na hulle eie smaak en voorkeur kan inrig, het ons geen reg om parallelle kerk in die lewe te roep vir mense net omdat hulle Engelse of Duitsers, Afrikaners of Skotte, Franse of Bantoes is nie’.*⁵²⁶

Lastly it is important to stress that ecclesial autonomy is not equal to independence. The foundation of my argumentation is that ecclesial autonomy is indeed the core for interdependence and as such it directly shows towards the interrelatedness between churches. A (re-)interpretation of autonomy brings to the fore that, in the acknowledgement of an equal relation between churches based on Christ’s Lordship over His Church, every local church is fully part of the universal Church. With this the catholic nature of the Church is fully expressed.

4.7 The Lordship of Christ over His Church

Throughout this chapter it has evidently - and rightly - come to the fore that a church, first and foremost, stands in a direct relation to Christ as Lord over His Church. The church belongs to Christ and therefore the Church is only and truly church in Christ⁵²⁷ and as such Christ is embodied by the Church.⁵²⁸ In this sense this section, focussing on the Lordship of Christ over His Church, forms the theological nucleus of this chapter. The understanding of ecclesial autonomy as proposed in this chapter has been based on the confession of Christ’s Lordship. Throughout this chapter the argument is that one cannot fully comprehend a deeply ecclesiological understanding of ecclesial autonomy without discerning it from the Biblical concept of Christ’s Lordship. The underpinning of this is that the relational nature of the Church - characterised by the interdependence between churches - flows from Christ as the only head of the body.

It has further become clear that there is indeed a very close relation between Christ and the Church. It is vital to fully comprehend this relation. In order to fully understand this unique relation it must be made clear that Christ is not dependant on the Church as the Church is on Christ. Or as Visser ‘t Hooft points out: *‘Daarom kan van een directe vereenzelviging van Christus met de Kerk geen sprake zijn. Christus blijft de Koning en de leden van de Kerk*

⁵²⁶ Jonker, *Sendingbepalinge*, 1962, 30.

⁵²⁷ *‘Wie met die Kerk te doen het, het op een of ander manier met Christus self te doen’* See Jonker, *Sendingbepalinge*, 1962 20.

⁵²⁸ WA Visser ‘t Hooft, *Het Koningschap van Christus*, 1947, 88. *‘De opgestane Heer zet Zijn werk in de wereld voort en is tegenwoordig in en door de Kerk’*. See Visser ‘t Hooft, *Het Koningschap*, 1947, 88.

blijven het volk van de Koning'.⁵²⁹ Pointing towards the fact that a congregation exists as a result of the fact that Christ gathered her, Busch notes the following:

Christ transfers them (the believers) out of their natural surroundings into a new context. That is God's work and not the result of sociability, rooted in the urge of like-minded individuals. But God's work is this: to transplant humans into the visible space and company of other Christians and to add them to the one people of God. And thus he is the real office-bearer, who gathers, protects, and keeps this congregation. Since he himself provides for it by the Holy Spirit and therefore needs no earthly substitutes, all members of it are sisters and brothers. The original form of the church is, hence, the congregational assembly, living from the promise that here the Lord in the Holy Spirit will speak and work, so that its members will become listeners to and doers of his word, who invoke and confess him.⁵³⁰

With this it is clear that Christ calls the congregation/church into being. Not only does He do this, but He also equips and governs the church. This fact brings the members in an equal relation to each other and calls upon them to confess Christ as their Lord. Pointing towards this equal relation between members under the governance of Christ Jonker points out that If Christ truly governs His church no one else can take in this position.⁵³¹

This much is clear: Christ governs His Church as its King.⁵³² Therefore, ecclesial autonomy should primarily be understood from the perspective of Christ's Lordship.⁵³³ Bouwman, who places great emphasis on the voluntarily coming together of believers to form a congregation, notes that the church is indeed not a society where members come and go as they please. For him the authority of the church comes from above; from the head of the church i.e. Christ. Or as Bouwman states: '*De kerkvorm is dan ook niet eene liefhebberij, die afhangt van de willekeur der leden. Zij sluiten zich niet aanneen evenals de leden eener Vereeniging, die samenkomen tot een bepaald doel. Neen, de autoriteit, die in de kerk zeggenschap heft, komt van boven, van Christus, die het Hoofd zijner kerk is.*'⁵³⁴ As such, the concept of Christ's Lordship over His Church is an important aspect in the context of mission and here especially concerning the planting of churches. Christ Himself constitutes a church. This places a great emphasis not only on the role of the members in the church but also on the relationship between the members of the church. As the church is universal, it is also true for relations between different churches.

⁵²⁹ Visser 't Hooft, *Het Koningschap*, 1947, 88.

⁵³⁰ Eberhard Busch, 'Reformed Strength in Denominational Weakness', In Alston & Welker (eds), *Reformed Theology, Identity and Ecumenicity*, 2003, 32.

⁵³¹ WD Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 1965, 7.

⁵³² '*De Koning regeert, maar Hij regeert af het Kruis en door het Woord*'. See Visser 't Hooft, *Het Koningschap*, 1947, 92.

⁵³³ Smit focuses on the Christological perspective. See Smit, *Het Vraagstuk*, 1964, 25.

⁵³⁴ Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 1928, 65. In-line with Calvin Bouwman notes that '*Die regeering der gemeente is een christocratie.*' See Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 1928, 72.

Christ is Lord over His church and therefore the church stands in a direct and special relation to Him.⁵³⁵ The Church receives its authority in and through Christ. Any other relational construct of the church flows from this. This being the case one could also speak of the *Christonomy* rather than of the *Autonomy* of a church. Once again this calls for an interpretation of the term Christonomy with specific focus on the importance of this notion in the confession of the Lordship of Christ over His church in relation to the Trinity. In this regard Kuyper notes that Christ's authority is from the Father. Or as he states: '*(D)it koninklijk gezag bezit de Christus niet uit zichzelf, het is hem verleend door den Vader als loon op zijn zelfvernederings, tot in den dood*'.⁵³⁶ Kuyper undoubtedly places great emphasis on the authority of the Trinity over the Church. As such, Christ, *our Redeemer*, being truly God, governs His Church through Word and Spirit.⁵³⁷ With regard to Christ's authority over His Church, which is deeply imbedded in the work of the Trinity, Ciobata states the following: 'If we look attentively at the authoritative teaching of Christ, we understand that the way in which Jesus Christ exercises his authority, reveals that authentic authority is rooted in the mystery of the life of the Holy Trinity. In other words, authority issued by the Father, is manifested and instituted in the church by the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, and is constituted and communicated in the life of the church throughout the centuries in the Holy Spirit'.⁵³⁸

From his perspective as a Reformed theologian Willie Jonker notes that we, as believers, should always remember that the church can never belong to us.⁵³⁹ This is one of the primary principles of the Reformed church polity and ecclesiology and it has direct implications for both the missional context and for the relation between churches in general. Coertzen is in agreement of this thus noting the following: '*(E)en van die bekende kenmerke van Calvin se kerkordelike denke is die unieke posisie wat Christus daarin neem. Die sg. Alleenheerskappy van Christus in die kerk*'.⁵⁴⁰ Coertzen continues by pointing out that this fact is clearly illustrated in the earliest Dutch confessions.⁵⁴¹

As such Reformed church polity should always take into account that Christ alone governs His church. For Jonker the foundation for Reformed church polity is found in the Lordship of

⁵³⁵ I am of the opinion that this notion has historically been interpreted with great diversity within the different church traditions. However, the focus of this discussion would be on the Reformed perspective whilst keeping the broader ecumenical context in mind.

⁵³⁶ Kuyper, *Tractaat*, 1883, 13.

⁵³⁷ See in this regard Kuyper, *Tractaat*, 1883, 14-15.

⁵³⁸ Ciobata in Grdzeldidza (ed), *Holiness as content and purpose*, 2005, 92. He goes further to say that '(T)he power and authority of Christ, as authority received from the Father and communicated through the Holy Spirit to the church, reveals that within God's own being, authority means sharing, so-responsibility and cooperation'. See Ciobata in Grdzeldidza (ed), *Holiness as content and purpose*, 2005, 92.

⁵³⁹ 'Die kerk is nooit "ons" kerk nie, ook nie wat sy institusionele gestalte betref nie, want dit behoort aan Christus'. See Jonker, *Sendingbepalinge*, 1962, 22.

⁵⁴⁰ Coertzen, *Vanaf Genève*, 1989, 12.

⁵⁴¹ Coertzen, *Vanaf Genève*, 1989, 14.

Christ. Or as he states: *'Dat Jesus Christus die Hoof en Here van Sy kerk is en as Koning direk en persoonlik oor Sy kerk regeer, is die grondwaarheid waarvan die kerkreg moet uitgaan'*.⁵⁴² Jonker calls this governance of Christ over His Church *'genade-heerskappy'* (a governance of grace).⁵⁴³

As such we should continuously remind us that we do not measure the quality of a church; Christ qualifies His Church. We do not hand autonomy to a church as a gift for showing signs of what we constructed; the autonomy of a church is solely found in Christ. In this the challenge is found for the Church to become who it is. This is true of both 'younger'- and 'older churches' as well as for churches of different cultural and ecclesiastical traditions. This is true of the church both locally and universally. Christ continuously governs, sustains and qualifies His Church.

Visser 't Hooft's opinion is that a church that takes the Lordship of Christ seriously will continuously work towards the restoration of the unity of Christ's Church.⁵⁴⁴ This is reiterated by Jonker when he states that: *'(D)ie eenheid is in Christus gegee. Die gemeenskaplike beslotenheid in Hom as die Hoof bring vanself die onderlinge eenheid van die lede van sy liggaam mee'*.⁵⁴⁵ For Visser 't Hooft this is no cheap unity but rather a costly and constant seeking of the Will of God in every situation. As such the church cannot be satisfied with good working relations. It should seek to find a full expression of its unity in Christ.⁵⁴⁶ Flowing from his understanding of the church's deep dependence and grounded identity in Christ made visible through the work of the Holy Spirit, Jonker goes even further by grounding the unity of the church on Ephesians 4:4-6. He states the following:

*Hulle is één kragtens die feit dat daar maar één Here, één geloof, één doop, één God en Vader vir almal is (vgl. Ef.4:4-6). Hierdie eenheid is ook 'n wesenlike eenheid, want die band wat die gelowiges aan mekaar bind, is nie maar net die gemeenskaplike geloofsoortuigings nie, ook nie 'n humane gevoel of algemeen-menslike vriendelikheid nie. Dit is selfs nie eers geleë in enige gesindheid wat in hulle hart teenoor mekaar bestaan nie, maar in die feit dat die Heilige Gees hulle deurdring (1 Kor, 12:13) en die één God en Vader dus ook in hulle almal is (Ef.4:6).'*⁵⁴⁷

In line with this Visser 't Hooft notes that the *Una Sancta* can only come into being where the church is one and therefore willing to become the *Una Sancta*.⁵⁴⁸ From this it flows that,

⁵⁴² Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 1965, 3.

⁵⁴³ Jonker, *Aandag vir die Kerk*, 1965, 15.

⁵⁴⁴ Visser 't Hooft, *Het Koningschap*, 1947, 105.

⁵⁴⁵ Jonker, *Aandag vir die kerk*, 1965, 37.

⁵⁴⁶ *'Daarom kunnen wij niet tevreden zijn met een goede verstandhouding tussen de kerken onderling en interkerkelijke samenwerking in aangelegenheden van gemeenschappelijk belang'*. See Visser 't Hooft, 1947, 106-107.

⁵⁴⁷ Jonker, *Aandag vir die kerk*, 1965, 37.

⁵⁴⁸ *'De Una Sancta komt tot stand waar de kerken één zijn in hun bereidheid de Una Sancta te worden'*. See Visser 't Hooft, *Het Koningschap*, 1947, 108.

through the church being the Church of Christ, she should give full expression to this not only in her confession, but also in her practice. And because there is one Lord governing His Church, there can only be one Church. As such ecclesial unity is not a voluntary cause, it is our commission. 'The exercise of ecclesial authority is at the same time difficult and necessary; it is called to fight against all fragmentations, divisions and alienations produced in humanity by the forces of sin and death'.⁵⁴⁹ This is our (public) role flowing from our deep identity in Christ.

As will be pointed out in chapter 6 this understanding of unity should find expression in the ecclesiology of the church. A specific expression of ecclesiology namely an ecclesiology of vulnerability is proposed in this chapter. The notion of a vulnerable ecclesiology is built on the interdependence and interrelated nature of churches and has as an outflow a proposed impact on the structure of the church, its polity, its understanding of diversity - including diversity in confession -, and a possible model that impacts on the planting of churches. As will be pointed out the notion of an ecclesiology of vulnerability directly impacts on the process of church re-unification between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

4.8 Conclusion

Over its history the Church has faced serious threats with regard to its unity and catholicity. On more than one occasion have these threats been fuelled by social ideologies that filtered through ecclesiastical dogma, thus navigating the Church away from her core identity. An acknowledgment of this is very important in our striving to be a truer - and indeed a fuller - expression of our being in Christ. This acknowledgement however does not free the church from the future impact of these dangers on her nature. As such the Church must learn to place itself in the midst of its context whilst at the same time directing itself, on the basis of the Word, to the eschatological reality. In this chapter it has been clearly highlighted that this can only take place when the Church takes its confession that Christ is her Lord seriously. In this respect Jonker points out that this has as an outflow that the church should be guided by the Word. Or as he states: *'(D)it betekende eger ook dat die kerk hom in alles deur die Woord van God moet laat lei en dus prakties die Woord van God in hom moet laat regeer en nie allerlei menslike ideologieë nie.'*⁵⁵⁰

In the discussion concerning ecclesial autonomy in this chapter I opted for a tension between a more historical review of major Reformed works in respect of a/the relation between churches and a more ecumenical approach to this. The primary focus was on the relation between the 'younger' and the 'older church' and the place of the 'younger church' within an ecumenical framework. As such the question was asked namely how one should interpret the historical work of theologians like Voetius, Bouwman, Kuyper, *et al.* What does

⁵⁴⁹ Ciobata in Grdzelidza (ed), *Holiness as content and purpose*, 2005, 92.

⁵⁵⁰ Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 1965, 23.

a re-reading of Emden⁵⁵¹ and a re-interpretation of Willie Jonker's theology look like? And then, do these and other works have any importance for the 21st century practice of theology? And even more: do these interpretations, based on Scripture and imbedded within its unique socio-historical framework, aid growing ecumenicity? I opted for a critical conversation with and a dynamic re-evaluation of the works coming from the pen of these great theologians and documents and found that they (can) liberate us from our misconceptions and all too often skew quasi-Biblical practices, even within the context of our day. This much should be remembered: the Reformed church is in a constant state of Reformation.⁵⁵²

The major finding of this section was that 'younger' and 'older churches' stand in a direct, equal and interdependent relation with each other. This is based on an understanding of ecclesial autonomy stemming from the theological foundation of Christ's Lordship over His Church. In essence one cannot speak of 'younger' and 'older churches' being two separate churches that have nothing to do with the well-being of each other, as they are in essence one church, or as Bavinck states: *'feitlijk één Kerk in verschillende gestalten'*.⁵⁵³ With this the freedom of the different churches to develop in distinct ways is not denied. However, any ecclesial developments emanate from Christ's Lordship. This is true not only of the relational nature of the Church but also of her ecclesial structures.

Finally the question remained what the impact of this understanding of Christ's Lordship is on the relation between churches. In this regard great emphasis is placed on a relation based on the recognition that churches are equal in status and as such the relation between them should be characterised by equality, respect and partnership. These characteristics should express the interdependent nature of churches. The foundation for this is found in the confession that Christ is Lord of and over His Church. From this arises the acknowledgement that every local church is a real and complete part of the universal church. Thus the Christly given autonomy of the local church has to be maintained. Or as Durand states: *'Versprei oor die antieke wêreld is die plaaslike kerke deel van die een algemene kerk kragtens die een enige Fondament en Hoof; een in belydenis, een in diens, een in sy getuigenis teenoor die wêreld. Dit is die taal van die Nuwe Testament wat nóg weggeredeneer, nóg ontwyk kan word. Dit is 'n velle aanklag, maar terselfdertyd die verkondiging van 'n heerlike realiteit'*.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵¹ For a re-interpretation of Emden and a discussion of its relevance in a modern - and indeed a more ecumenical - context, see FRJ Knetsch, 'Het getuigenis van Emden in de situatie van heden'. In D Nauta et al. 1971. *De Synode van Emden Oktober 1571. Een bundel opstellen ter gelegenheid van de vierhonderdjarige herdenking*. 122-136. Kampen: JH Kok.

⁵⁵² Visser 't Hooft reminds us of the following: *'Want "hervorming" is een gebeurtenis, niet een toestand'*. See Visser 't Hooft, *Het Koningschap*, 1947, 94.

⁵⁵³ Bavinck, *Inleiding*, 1954, 209. Bavinck strongly connects this to a unified celebration of the Eucharist. See Bavinck, *Inleiding*, 1954, 209.

⁵⁵⁴ Durand, *Una Sancta*, 1961, 43.

With the abovementioned in mind it can be said that an evaluation of how ecclesial autonomy was understood and indeed also how it played out in the ecclesial histories of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches and here especially within the histories of the DRMC and the DRCA is not complete without revisiting the theological concept of Christ's Lordship over His church and particularly how this concept found expression in the structures of the mentioned churches.

| Chapter 5 |

An Ecclesiological evaluation of Church Juridical developments in the DRCM and the DRCA - 1881-1994

‘We believe that ministers of the word of God, elders and deacons ought to be chosen to their offices by a legitimate election of the church, with prayer in the name of the Lord, and in good order, as the word of God teaches. As for the ministers of the Word, they all have the same power and authority, no matter where they may be, since they are all servants of Jesus Christ, the only Universal Bishop, and the only Head of the church’.⁵⁵⁵

5.1 Introduction

‘Reformed church life and theology played a formative role in the development of South African culture and society. In particular it contributed greatly to the formation of a distinctive identity among the white settlers and to their conviction of superiority to indigenous peoples and slaves.’⁵⁵⁶ With this paragraph Gerstner begins his study on the Christian monopoly of the DRC in the early days of colonial life in South Africa.

From his point of view Gerstner is of the opinion that the DRC can indeed be seen as a dominant formative agent of the South African society since the earliest of times. But, to what extent was the DRC influenced by social thinking and engineering in the latter years of South African history? To answer these and other questions it is important to once again look into the close relation between the DRC and the Afrikaner nation. It is also important to see whether this relation changed in accordance to the different phases in the socio-political history of South Africa.

As mentioned in Chapter 2 it is clear that a strong feeling of superiority from the side of the settlers existed in relation to the indigenous cultural/racial groups in South Africa. This however is not unique to the South African context.⁵⁵⁷ For the aims of this study it is of worth to take note of this very strong feeling of an inherent superior value or higher dignity

⁵⁵⁵ The Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 31, *the officers of the church*. In Pelikan & Hotchkiss (eds), *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, Volume II, 2003, 421.

⁵⁵⁶ Jonathan Gerstner, ‘A Christian Monopoly: The Reformed Church and Colonial Society under Dutch Rule’, In Richard Elphick & Rodney Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa. A Political, Social & Cultural History*, 1997, 16.

⁵⁵⁷ Bosch notes that this strong feeling of superiority from the side of the West is a historical phenomenon. In this regard he notes that: ‘(T)he Enlightenment, however, together with the scientific and technological advances that followed in its wake, put the West at an unparalleled advantage over the rest of the world. Suddenly a limited number of nations had at their disposal the “tools” and know-how vastly superior to those of others. The West could thus establish itself as master of all others in virtually every field.’ See DJ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 291, 1991.

under the Afrikaner. This feeling played out within the socio-political context of South Africa and had direct implications on both the political and ecclesial spheres. This notion of a higher value and dignity under the Afrikaner was coupled with a very strong feeling against any form of equalisation (*gelykstelling*) between the Afrikaner and the other cultural/racial groups in South Africa.

As further pointed the position of the DRC in relation to racial assimilation and equalisation was clearly formulated in the mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches of 1935 - a policy that tried to silence the fear of equalisation among its members specifically in the context of mission. The impact of this immense anti-equalisation idea on the South African society should not be underestimated. Its effect is clearly visible in how South Africa has historically dealt with its racial issues/problems.⁵⁵⁸

This cultural distinction was present from the earliest days of life in the Cape Colony. What is of interest in this study is the fact that this distinction was built on strong and sharp religious undertones. In this regard a clear distinction was made between, on the one side being Christian and, on the other side being (a) heathen. Here one should be reminded that to be European and thus to be Christian meant that you had a superior social status. Gerstner makes it clear that due to the Dutch Calvinist traditions imbedded in the identity of the church and built on the notion of covenant theology, being Christian was made equal to being of European descent and being heathen meant having a lower cultural status, separated from those of European descent.⁵⁵⁹ Although Smit agrees that covenantal language was present in the history of especially the Afrikaans Reformed churches in South Africa he is quick to point out that the expression *covenant* was seldom used in religious and political discourse (amongst others) in South Africa.⁵⁶⁰ Smit thus points out that 'South Africans, including Afrikaners, are - contrary to widespread assumptions - not really used to covenant discourse'.⁵⁶¹

However this may be it is clear that religious distinctions in the early history of South Africa got a cultural overtone. A definite (higher) status was associated with being a Christian thus having as outflow that for a heathen to become a Christian he/she should, on the one side denounce his/her cultural heritage whilst, on the other side, he/she should be treated with the dignity with which any European would/should be treated.⁵⁶² Gerstner further points out that the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper played a significant role in the

⁵⁵⁸ Here the development of policies relating to segregation and later the full on implementation of state apartheid can be viewed as a direct outflow of a long process dealing with the fear of equalisation.

⁵⁵⁹ Gerstner, 'A Christian Monopoly', In Elphick & Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa*, 1997, 16-23 & 25.

⁵⁶⁰ DJ Smit, 'Covenant and Ethics? Comments from a South African perspective', In DJ Smit (ed), *Essays in Public Theology*. Collected Essays 1. 2007, 212.

⁵⁶¹ Smit, 'Covenant and Ethics', In *Essays*, 2007, 215.

⁵⁶² Gerstner, 'A Christian Monopoly', In Elphick & Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa*, 1997, 29-30.

formation of a group identity in the ranks of the Settlers as well as those living in the Cape.⁵⁶³

The celebration of the Lord's Supper had an immense impact on the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, as ecclesial separation would first be practiced around the Eucharistic table and would from the table lead to the separate church buildings for coloured, black and Indian members of the DRC.⁵⁶⁴ Here it should be remembered that the official synodical decision of the DRC, until 1857, was that separation is unbiblical and that it should not be allowed.⁵⁶⁵ Due to the position of the church in society in the 18th and 19th centuries in South Africa it can without any doubt be said that practiced separation would have a direct impact on the society as a whole. But, from documentation from the mentioned *Acta Synodi* (*Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1829, 1834, 1837 and 1842) it is clear that the DRC was directly influenced by the socio-cultural context of the time.

The idea of being of unique descent and standing in a unique relation with God played a major role in the formation and growth of the idea of having a unique group identity under the Afrikaner. As time went by this identity had to be fostered more and more to the point that the Afrikaner distanced itself from all the other cultural groups in South Africa. This separation played out in every sphere of life in South Africa and would eventually lead to instituting state apartheid. What is of interest in this study is that the church - and here especially the DRC - played a pivotal role in promoting and establishing this unique and separate identity under the Afrikaner nation.

It is clear that the social and political history of South Africa was closely connected to the history of the church (and here especially that of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches). Or as Van der Watt points out: '*(S)endinggeskiedenis is daarom sterk saam in een gedink met die volksgeskiedenis van die Afrikaner*'.⁵⁶⁶ For the largest part of the history of South Africa it is almost impossible to clearly distinguish between church affairs and societal - and cultural affairs. This intertwined relation meant that the society - later also including the state and its affairs - strongly influenced the church just as the church immensely influenced societal - and eventually also state - policy. This clearly comes to the fore in ecclesial documentation as well as in government legislation from the nineteenth century right through the 20th century.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶³ '...their group identity centred on the sacraments'. See Gerstner, 'A Christian Monopoly', In Elphick & Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa*, 1997, 24-27. Gerstner makes a distinction between the group of people that lived in the Cape and surrounding districts and the settlers living on the Eastern border of the colony.

⁵⁶⁴ See in this regard, IJ van der Watt, *Eiesoortigheid en Sending*, 1963, Potchefstroom: Pro Rege.

⁵⁶⁵ See in this regard *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1829, 1834, 1837 and 1842.

⁵⁶⁶ Gideon van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener. Koersaanwyser in die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk se Sending en Ekumene*, 1990, 118.

⁵⁶⁷ It should be taken into account that the relation between church and state in South Africa is very complex and that it differs from period to period. For a good overview regarding this history, see T Kuperus, *State, Civil society and apartheid in South Africa: an examination of Dutch Reformed church-state relations*, 1999,

After the 1880s until the mid/late 20th century, this intertwined relation between church and state can better be expressed as a relation between church (DRC) and *volk* (Afrikaner). This relation comes to full expression in synodical decisions of the DRC. Here the mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches (1935) can specifically be mentioned. As noted, the formulation of a mission policy by the federated Dutch Reformed Churches set the tone for the development of regulations within state apartheid and as such this policy was at times 'nicknamed' the mission policy of apartheid.⁵⁶⁸

It can without any doubt be stated that the social position of the Afrikaner and the strong feeling against equalisation (*gelykstelling*) had an enormous influence on the mission outlook and mission policy of the Dutch Reformed Churches.⁵⁶⁹ This is clearly expressed in the mission documents and the early mission policies of the mentioned churches. The issue of equalisation was, however, not confined to the sphere of mission as it also greatly impacted on the social dynamics of the South African society in general. As such, the DRC would clearly come to the fore as a rebel on behalf of the Afrikaner nation.

Undoubtedly the relation between church and society on the one hand, and church and state on the other hand during the timeframe of this study, was intertwined to the extent that one struggles to make a clear distinction between the three legs of a perfect triangle between the Afrikaner nation, the DRC, and the South African government of the time. However, it should be stated that this relation differed over the different periods in the political history of South Africa. That the DRC, and also her establishment of different 'mission churches' influenced the South African society is clear.

With regard to the issue of racial/cultural segregation and state apartheid and the influence of the DRC on policies relating to these aspects, many studies have pointed out that the role of the DRC in promoting and proclaiming segregation and apartheid in history should not be underestimated.⁵⁷⁰ But, to what extent popular thinking impacted on the DRC and to what extent - if it was the case - did the social dynamics of South Africa influence decision making in the ranks of the DRC needs to be researched further.

To further look into these aspects and in an attempt to answer questions on the influence of the DRC on segregation and apartheid policies in the South African society on the one hand, and the possible influence of socio-political dynamics on decisions made in the ranks of the

Basingstoke: Palgrave. In line with the timeframe of this study, I refer to the relation between church and state within the specific period outlined by this study, and the relation between *volk* (Afrikaner) and church (DRC) between 1881-1994.

⁵⁶⁸ See in this regard G van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener. Koersaanwyser in die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk se Sending en Ekumene*. 1990. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Bloemfontein: University of the (Orange) Free State.

⁵⁶⁹ In the rest of this chapter I will now look into just how this played out in the mission sphere of the DRC closely connected to the establishment of separate mission churches and how practices flowing from this outlook deviated from mainstream Reformed theological thinking.

⁵⁷⁰ See in this regard, Johan Kinghorn (ed). *Die NG Kerk en Apartheid*. 1986. Johannesburg: Macmillan.

DRC, the relation of the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA will now be evaluated by focusing on aspects relating to church juridical matters impacting on the relation between the mentioned churches.

5.2 The offices in the 'planted church' as well as in the 'planter church' with specific reference to the office of the missionary

It is clear that it was only after the first official synod of the DRC in 1824 that this church progressed towards a more fixed view on mission. This synod therefore can be seen as the starting point - although its effects were sluggish - of mission work by the DRC. This start was signified by instituting the office of the missionary in 1824 and, at the synod of 1826, and by adopting regulations and practical arrangements regarding the role and work of the missionary.⁵⁷¹ The DRC found in itself a very interesting development that had as outflow the separation between the office of the minister and the office of the missionary. Historical documentations point to the fact that there was a difference in status between ministers serving in the local congregations of the DRC and the missionaries serving in the 'mission congregations' - those called for service in the local congregation and those sent to work in the mission congregations/mission field.⁵⁷² Crafford points out that this distinction was built on the fact that the missionaries received training separately and that the content and outcomes of their training would differ immensely from that of the ministers. He states that:

*(D)ie probleem was dat sendelinge met 'n ander status as dié van predikante aan die Sendinginstituut opgelei is. Hulle was nie beroepbaar in die Moederkerk nie, is betitel as "eerwaarde" en het vir 'n lang tyd ontoereikende salarisse ontvang. Hierdie dubbelslagtige status van geordendes het meegebring dat daar dikwels stemme opgegaan het vir die sluiting van die Sendinginstituut.*⁵⁷³

This clearly points towards a split between the church/congregational life and mission. This idea is also articulated by Jacobus Smit. Regarding the adopting of regulations that guided the calling of as well as the installing of missionaries in the DRC, Smit observes that this had very real consequences for the church. He points out that with this decision a split came with regard to the office of the minister.⁵⁷⁴ It should once again be noted that this

⁵⁷¹ See in this regard *Acta Synodi*, DRC in SA, 1824, 14-15; *Acta Synodi*, DRC in SA, 1826, 34, 55.

⁵⁷² See JH Smit, *Die amp van die sendingleraar in die jongere Kerk*, 1974, 54.

⁵⁷³ D Crafford, *Aan God die Dank. Geskiedenis van die sending van die Ned. Geref. Kerk binne die Republiek van Suid-Afrika en enkele aangrensende Buurstate*. Deel 1, 1982, 510. The Mission institute at Wellington was officially closed in 1962. After this period the training of missionaries for service in the ranks of the DRC and her 'mission churches' would be done at the official theological institutions of the DRC. See in this regard Crafford, *Aan God die Dank*, Deel 1. 1982, 510.

⁵⁷⁴ 'Met hierdie reglement en die instelling van die sendingamp het die kerk sy voet geplaas op 'n weg wat die Woordamp in die kerk verdeel het'. See JH Smit, *Die amp van die sendingleraar in die jongere Kerk*, 1974, 54. 'Voortaan sou die sending anders as in die teologie van die reformatore en die praktyk van die Kaapse kerk, al meer geskei word van die bediening van 'n afsonderlike ampsdraer, die sendeling. Sending sou al minder gesien word binne die raamwerk van die groei en uitbreiding van die plaaslike kerk en al meer ontwikkel in die rigting

development is not unique to the South African context. The history of the ecumenical movement points to a clear struggle to unify missionary activities and to get churches/congregations involved in mission.⁵⁷⁵

The fact that separate mission activities gave rise to separate churches is also not unique. What is of note is the fact that, especially after the DRC synod of 1824, mission work in South Africa was not primarily done by mission societies situated in Europe or in the United States of America. This meant that the 'missional church' and the 'mission church' were to be found in the same geographical area and therefore not thousands of miles from each other. The formation of separate mission congregations - and later separate mission churches - in a very close proximity of local Dutch Reformed congregations, having the same structure, confession, and liturgy, cannot be excused by practices and international missional tendencies of the time. As such, a justification of these practices can only be found in the socio-political sphere of the South African society of the time.

The fact that the missionary was restricted to work under the 'heathen' exemplifies this fact.⁵⁷⁶ This restriction further points towards a clear division between being 'christian' and being 'heathen' which in the history of South Africa - as was the case within numerous other contexts - would be based on cultural/racial differences and would indeed also perpetuate cultural separation. As mentioned in previous sections, this separation should be read and understood against the backdrop of the (growing) social and cultural inequality between whites and blacks in South Africa at the time.⁵⁷⁷ This stark division and clear dissimilarity would indeed plague especially the family of Dutch Reformed Churches for decades to come. It further points to the fact that the church, through her practices, played a direct role in confirming social practices that had as outflow cultural/racial separation.

In respect of the basis for the establishment of the office of the missionary within the Reformed tradition I have, through the work of Voetius, Rutgers and others pointed out that, from the perspective of Reformed theology, there is indeed no (scriptural) basis for the establishment of a separate office of the missionary.⁵⁷⁸ This is not to deny the fact that missionaries played an enormous role in the establishment of churches all over the world and that missionaries were directly engaged in celebrated mission activities. What needs to

van afsonderlike byeenkomste vir inboorlinge en nog later afsonderlike gemeentes en kerkverbande'. See Smit, *Die amp van die sendingleraar*, 1974, 54.

⁵⁷⁵ For an overview in this regard, see Ruth Rouse & Stephen Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948*, 1954, London: SPCK; Efiog Utuk, *From New York to Ibadan. The impact of African questions on the making of ecumenical mission mandates, 1900-1958*, 1991, New York: Lang.

⁵⁷⁶ See *Acta Synodi*, DRC in SA, 1826, 34.

⁵⁷⁷ See in this regard, Sampie Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa. 1652-2002. 2002*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.

⁵⁷⁸ See in this regard, G Voetius, *De Plantatione Ecclesiarum. Tractaat over De Planting en de Planters van Kerken*. Translated by D Poll, 1910, Groningen: Firma Bouwman & Venema; FL Rutgers, *Kerkelijke Adviezen. Eerste Deel*, 1921, Kampen: J.H.Kok.

be pointed out is that, from a historical perspective, it is clear that practical circumstances in the mission field allowed for the training of missionaries where there was a need. Ministers were not present in the specific mission context and missionaries had to fulfill a double responsibility: that of missionary in the classical sense of the word and that of minister of the Word. As such the role of missionary would be confined to that of mission. However, this practice should clearly be distinguished from the establishment of a separate office of the missionary, separated from the office of the minister as was the case in the context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

It is therefore clear that the family of Dutch Reformed Churches took in a unique direction with the establishment of a separated office of the missionary. It can be stated unequivocally that the mentioned churches made provision for missionaries to take in the place of the local minister in the so-called 'mission congregations'. Thus the missionary would have the same church juridical authority as a minister of the Word and as such the missionary was responsible for administering the sacraments, preaching the Word and he even chaired the meetings of the church council. This practice continued from 1824 till after 1960 i.e. a long time after the establishment of DRMC and the DRCA as 'autonomous churches'.⁵⁷⁹ It is of interest that according to Du Plessis this practice in fact inhibited coloured and black ministers to train themselves for ministers of the Word in the DRMC and the DRCA and that this would later hamper the autonomy of the mentioned churches. In this regard he notes that the missionary stood in the way of the minister.⁵⁸⁰ The problematic place and nature of the missionary in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA thus becomes clear.

The missionaries (and later also the so-called mission ministers) were members of either the local 'mission congregation' within which they served, or simultaneously both members of the local 'mission church' and the local congregation of the DRC. As such a unique development occurred in the ranks of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches namely that of double membership. The issue of double membership of the missionaries would cause heavy debates in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRC. It would also be one of the major reasons why the DRMC decided to end the Deed of Agreement between itself and the DRC in SA.⁵⁸¹ From a church juridical perspective there can be no justification for this practice. Concerning the unique character and significance of the missionary in the context of the DRC, Van der Merwe points out that missionaries were sent out as ministers of the DRC for service in the 'mission churches'. He further notes that the position of the missionaries in the family of Dutch Reformed Churches was indeed a special office and that it was not equal

⁵⁷⁹ See in this regard *Acta Synodi*, DRC in SA, 1961, 158 & 262; Smit, *Die amp van die sendingleraar*, 1974, 57

⁵⁸⁰ WH du Plessis, 'Leraars vir die Bantoe in die Ned. Geref Kerk in S.A.', In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang XII, Sept 1950, No.3, 91.

⁵⁸¹ See in this regard *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1982, 621.

to that of a common member of the mentioned churches.⁵⁸² Once again - as is discussed below - one can only conclude that this unique development(s) within the structures of the DRC can only be justified on the basis of socio-political factors.

It should be mentioned that in the history of the DRMC and the DRCA the place and role of the missionary was not the only uniquely distinguished office within the structures of these churches. Although not on the same level as the other offices - that of missionary, elder (both governing and teaching), and deacon, the position of the *evangelist* or *catechist* played an important role in the history of the DRMC and the DRCA.⁵⁸³ Loff writes that the unofficial office of the evangelist was closely linked to that of the missionary. The obvious and very important difference between these two 'offices' was that coloured and black members of the DRMC and the DRCA respectively, could serve as evangelists whilst they initially could not serve as missionaries.⁵⁸⁴ Smit, however, questions this clear distinction between the missionary and the evangelist noting that there is indeed no evidence of this apparent distinction. Or as he states: '*(H)y word genoem 'n besondere diens met die oog op die heidenne. Die voorwerp waarop sy diens dus gerig is, is dieselfde as dié waarop die sendingleraar hom rig. Die vraag wat dus uitgemaak moet word, is of daar 'n prinsipiële onderskeid is tussen die besondere diens wat die evangelis verrig en die besondere diens wat die sendingleraar verrig. Verrig albei nie 'n amptelike Woorddiens aan dieselfde objek: die heidene nie? Het ons dan nie hier esensieel dieselfde amp nie?*'⁵⁸⁵ Du Plessis mentions that the existence of this special office, as well as that of the missionary had a negative effect on the enouragment of especially black and coloured members of the DRCA and the DRMC respectively to train themselves as ministers of the Word. As such it hampered the calling and placing of ministers in general in the mentioned churches. In this regard he mentions a couple of reasons namely:

'i) Die evangelis is 'n goedkoper werkkrag as wat 'n leraar sou wees. It is cheaper to have an evangelist than a minister.

ii) Die evangelis is dikwels die persoon wat 'n teenpropaganda op tou sit teen 'n leraar, omdat in sy onderbewussyn daar die drang is om self 'n leraar te wees. There are instances where evangelists spread propaganda against ministers because they want to be acknowledged as ministers.

⁵⁸² 'Sendelinge is as gesante uitgestuur deur die Ned. Geref. moederkerk. Hulle spits hulle hoofsaaklik toe op evangelisering en die geestelike opbou van die dogterkerke. Hul posisie in die dogter- en in die moederkerk is 'n besondere en kan nie juis met die posisie van die gewone lidmate of leraars van moeder- of dogterkerke vereenselwig word nie.' See WJ van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 74.

⁵⁸³ It is interesting to note that Bouwman relates the Biblical basis for the missionary to that of the evangelist. See in this regard Bouwman, H. 1928. *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*. Deel I. Kampen: JH Kok.

⁵⁸⁴ Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 213.

⁵⁸⁵ Smit, *Die amp van die sendingleraar in die jongere Kerk*, 1974, 151.

iii) *Die evangelis bewoon die enigste woning beskikbaar en geskik vir 'n leraar. Hy kan nie geskuif word nie, gevolglik word die beroep van 'n leraar op die langebaan geskuif*.⁵⁸⁶ The evangelist stays in the house set aside for a minister. As the evangelist can not be thrown out of the house, and because there might be no other house available, a minister can not be called.

However this may be, it is clear that from historical records it seems that evangelists or catechists were timely instituted semi-offices established on the basis of a dire need of aid on the mission field. The model was most probably taken over from the Anglicans (through the Church Mission Society) and the French Mission Society that worked in Lesotho and as such was not unique to the context of the DRC.⁵⁸⁷

Due to a decision taken by the DRC in 1916, the DRMC decided to start with the training of the first evangelists in 1917 with the first class of evangelists finishing in 1919.⁵⁸⁸ With reference to further developments in the DRMC, the training of evangelists followed a broken pattern that eventually led to the end of the training of evangelists in 1996.⁵⁸⁹ Loff concludes his section on the place and role of the evangelists in the history of the DRMC by noting that, in the context of the DRMC, the evangelist was always subordinate in relation to the missionary. Or as he states: *'(D)ie evangelis het as ongeordende bedienaar van die Woord 'n ondergeskikte rol ten opsigte van die sending gespeel. Alhoewel daar groot waardering was vir die werk van die evangeliste, was hul status nooit anders as dié van "hulpwerkkragte" vir sendelinge nie*.⁵⁹⁰ As such it can be concluded that the semi-office of evangelist was temporal and as such of a low status. Provision was made for the existence of these 'offices' within the rules and regulations for the governance of the DRMC and DRCA. From a historical perspective it needs to be pointed out that the evangelist played an important role in the history of the DRMC and the DRCA.⁵⁹¹

As the offices play an immense role in the structure and the function within the churches of the Reformation, attention is turned to the relation in general between the offices in the DRC and the offices in the DRMC and the DRCA. To grasp this relation it is important to take into account what has already been said in the previous sections of this chapter. The distinction between the office of minister in the local congregations of the DRC and the office of missionary (and later mission minister) in the local congregations of the DRMC/DRCA stood firm when the distinct difference in status between these two offices is taken into account. As such the office of the minister was considered as being of a higher

⁵⁸⁶ Du Plessis, 'Leraars vir die Bantoe in die Ned. Geref Kerk in S.A.', In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang XII. Sept 1950. 92-93.

⁵⁸⁷ Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 213.

⁵⁸⁸ *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1920, 42.

⁵⁸⁹ CJ Kriel, *Die Eerste Eeu. Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika. 1881-1981*, 1981, 79-80.

⁵⁹⁰ Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 216.

⁵⁹¹ This clearly comes to the fore in a synodical discussion of the synod of the DRMC on the place and role of evangelists in this church. See in this regard *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1986, 142-144.

status then that of the missionary.⁵⁹² This can best be understood in the light of social and cultural practices within the context of South Africa at the time. In my understanding this distinction was given a secondary theological foundation in an attempt to merit this unique development. Additionally this phenomenon characterised by unequal status should be read and understood by taking the broader ecclesial situation specifically the relation between the DRC and the 'mission churches' into account. The unequal and paternalistic relation between the DRC and her 'mission churches' had an effect on every sphere of the identity, structure and practice of the DRMC and the DRCA. This relation found direct expression within the (other) offices of the DRMC and the DRCA and the relation to these (equal) offices within the DRC.

Focusing on the relation between the offices of elder and deacon in the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA, one should once again take into account that this relation is directly connected to the broader relation between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA in general. Here one should remember the paternalistic behaviour of the DRC in relation to the DRMC and the DRCA. As noted in Chapter 4 the authority of the local church councils of the DRMC and the DRCA at times were challenged specifically when it came to the calling and disciplining of ministers.⁵⁹³ Here, factors such as the ecclesial identity of the churches, the economic position of the churches⁵⁹⁴, as well as the socio-political context within which these churches were imbedded, should be taken into account.⁵⁹⁵

In this section I have tried to indicate that the office of the missionary as it played out in the missional history of the DRC was the outcome of practical arrangements arising on the 'mission field'. The unique place given to missionaries and the distinctive adaptation within church structures as well as the effect thereof on the broader church juridical scene cannot but be attributed to practical arrangements regarding mission activities in the ranks of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. It is clear that the basis for the establishment of an office of the missionary as well as the creation of a semi-office in the form of the evangelist or catechist cannot be traced back to historical tenets in Reformed church polity or any other mission principles. The same goes for principles pertaining to the planting of churches

⁵⁹² For an overview in this regard, see Chris Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording. Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika 1881-1994*, 1998, 211-213.

⁵⁹³ Here one should take note of the significance of the so-called golden rule of Emden. See Article 1 of the Church Order of Emden quoted from J.Plomp, 'De Kerkorde van Emden'. In D Nauta *et al*, *De Synode van Emden Oktober 1571*, 1971. 89.

⁵⁹⁴ It is clear that, from the very beginning, economic factors played a role in the relation between the churches and that this had a direct connection to the relation between the offices. Here the constitution of 1881 stipulating what the influence and role of the local congregation is when it came to the calling of the minister can be used as an example in this regard. See Proposed *Schema* for the establishment of the DRMC by the Inland Commission for Mission, In the *Acta Synodi*, DRC of SA, 1880, 8; *Wetten en Bepalingen voor het bestuur van de Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika*, 1916, 101.

⁵⁹⁵ In the following sub-section I point out the process and criteria linked to the calling of ministers for service in congregations of the DRMC and the DRCA.

within the Reformed ecclesial tradition. A clear deviation in the abovementioned context can thus be identified.

It can thus be said that the relation between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA is one characterised by strong paternalistic tendencies.⁵⁹⁶ This comes to a unique expression in a discussion concerning the offices as it played out in the ranks of the DRC, the DRMC and the DRCA. A reading of the constitution *for* the DRMC makes it clear that this church fell under the direct governance of the DRC in SA. These tendencies were deeply imbedded in the socio-political history of South Africa. As such they can only be 'justified' against the backdrop of contextual imbeddedness. Any attempt - as was the case - to justify the skew relationship and indeed the governance of the DRC over its 'daughter churches' on the grounds of ecclesiology and here especially on church juridical principles shows towards an unjustifiable and irreconcilable ideal. It should, however, be taken into account that, not only did the socio-political context of the time have an influence on the church, but the church, in different spheres and in varying degrees directly influenced the South African landscape and society.

The relation between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA cannot be interpreted outside the context of mission. The perceived missional paradigm within which the DRMC and DRCA was 'born and bred' is the lens through which this relation should be read. This unequal relationship is best expressed through the use of the terms 'mother church' for the DRC and 'daughter church' for the DRMC and DRCA. In this regard the DRC is viewed as the guardian or *voog* of the DRMC and the DRCA. This relationship is further exploited by the socio-economic position of the churches. This relationship is reflected in every sphere of church life and in every structure within the churches. It is nowhere else more clearly expressed than in the offices. This is the case when referring to the relationship between the offices of elder (both teaching and governing) and deacon as understood within the Reformed tradition as well as through the use of offices of missionary (and the unique role and place ascribed to the missionary) and evangelist. It is exactly here that numerous practices as explained in the section above, strongly deviates from Reformed theological thought.

5.3 The calling of ministers by the DRMC and the DRCA

The calling of ministers in the history of the DRMC and the DRCA was regulated by either the Inland Commission for Mission or the local congregations of the DRC that either fully reimbursed the salary of the 'mission minister' or subsidised a proportion of the salary. Policies regulating the calling of ministers for service in the DRMC and the DRCA are stipulated in the earliest possible 'church order' of the DRMC namely the constitution of

⁵⁹⁶ As stated in previous chapters my opinion is that slight variations in this relationship can be traced in the histories of the different 'mission churches'. As these churches got older and expanded their theological outlook, this had an effect on the relation between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA. However, this does not take away the fact that the relation between these churches was characterised by gross inequality as stipulated in this section.

1880. These policies are closely connected with the financial contribution that the 'mission congregation' could make towards calling the minister.⁵⁹⁷ Stipulations regarding the calling of ministers in the DRMC and the DRCA as well as the functions ascribed to these ministers/missionaries specifically relating to congregational life and their service on the moderation of the DRMC or DRCA were to be found in all the constitutions for the different 'mission churches'. Such stipulations can also be found in other juridical documents relating to the governance of the DRMC and the DRCA as well as in documents and structures relating to the mission activities of the DRC for decades to come after 1880.⁵⁹⁸

With this in mind and in reading through the different constitutions and the Acts of Agreement it is clear that the DRMC and the DRCA did not always have the freedom to call their own ministers. Also in this practice can no church juridical justification be given. However, it needs to be pointed out that regulation regarding the calling - and for that matter the disciplining of ministers in the structures of the DRMC and DRCA was confined to the white ministers or missionaries. This becomes especially clear when the amount of coloured and black ministers in the ranks of the DRMC and DRCA respectively increased. In this regard, the DRMC and the DRCA took full responsibility when it came to the calling of coloured and black ministers. These churches were also held responsible for the remuneration (including housing) of these ministers.⁵⁹⁹ Van der Watt's opinion is that the growing number of coloured and black ministers in the structures of the DRMC and DRCA is of great significance. For him this is in line with the missional aims of the DRC. Regarding the outflow of the mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches (1935), Van der Watt points out that the growing toward autonomy of the 'mission churches' would be complete when all the ministers serving in these churches would be 'indigenous'.⁶⁰⁰

5.4 The role of the Inland Commission for Mission in the planting of separate, indigenous 'mission churches'

Another interesting development in the structures of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, specifically relating to mission, can be found in the role and place of the Inland Commission for Mission. This commission took responsibility for missional growth/expansion within the borders of South Africa. To fully understand the role of this commission it is necessary to relate back to Chapter 2 and my discussion on the missionary enterprise in the 18th/19th century South Africa.

⁵⁹⁷ *Acta Synodi*, DRC of SA, 1880.

⁵⁹⁸ See in this regard The Concept constitution for the Dutch Reforme Bantu Church in SA. In the *Acta Synodi*, DRC in SA, 1945, 122-123; the concept constitution of the DRMC in Natal, in the *Acta Synodi*, DRC in Natal, 1948, 66.

⁵⁹⁹ See in this regard the constitution for the DRMC, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961; Constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961.

⁶⁰⁰ Van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 101.

As noted the first South African Mission Society came into being in 1799 under the name of the SAMS. Although this society was not part of the DRC it is clear that it formed close ties with the DRC. SAMS led the church to understand that it was of great importance to be actively involved in mission work. This should be read against the backdrop of a growing involvement of foreign mission societies in the Cape Colony. Due to the active involvement of SAMS in the Cape Colony and specifically on the rise of its influence on the DRC it can be concluded that the institution of the office of the missionary by die synod of 1824 was a direct outflow of the directives and outcomes of the SAMS.

As the mission activities of the DRC got momentum and as it grew in numbers it became more and more important to organise and structure the activities of the church better. For this nothing less than an official structure was needed. This eventually led to the establishment of an official commission for mission within the ranks of the DRC.⁶⁰¹ This commission would be known as the Inland Commission for Mission. With regard to the structures of the DRC this commission had as outcome, toiling in the growing mission activities of the DRC and the direct governance of the different 'mission churches' that fell within the border of South Africa. As such the importance and value of the work of the Inland Commission for Mission should not be underestimated.⁶⁰² In a very real sense this commission formed the governing body of the different mission churches and was directly responsible for the structural organisation of the churches. Here it should once again be stated that, although both the DRMC and the DRCA were seen as autonomous churches and self governing churches, the role that this commission played was one of overseeing and governance within the structures of the mentioned churches. Representatives of the Inland Commission for Mission would for a very long time form part of the moderation of the DRMC and the DRCA and would at times also form part of the later liaison committees between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA. As such the Inland Commission for Mission functioned as an extensional but separate body to the structures of the DRMC and the DRCA. This being said, it should also be stated that the Inland Commission for Mission was committed to the growth and expansion of mission activities of the DRC in the mission fields in South Africa.

As was the case with the clear separation between congregational life and mission, the basis of this commission was clear. It had to oversee the mission activities of the church and thus formed a separate mission structure apart from congregational activities of the DRC. Although it is clear that it was expected of every local congregation to engage in mission

⁶⁰¹ It should be remembered that before the coming into being of the Inland Commission of Mission different structures of the DRC took responsibility for mission. These included the local church councils of the Dutch Reformed congregations, presbyterial commissions, synodical commissions for mission as well as other *hulpgenootskappe*. See in this regard NJ Smith, 'Die planting van afsonderlike kerke', In *Annale*, 1973.

⁶⁰² It should once again be noted that the duties of this Commission was restricted to the borders of South Africa. The mission work done outside the borders of South Africa was administered by the Foreign Commission for Mission. See in this regard JM Cronje, *Aan God die Dank*, Deel 2. 1981.

(mostly with regard to financial contributions), the official work and administration of mission activities was left to Inland Commission for Mission. It can thus be said that in essence the Inland Commission for Mission took responsibility for the better organising of mission activities of the DRC, for putting into practice the outcomes of the later mission policy, and for administratively overseeing the structures⁶⁰³ of the DRMC and the DRCA.

In conclusion it can be said that the autonomy and self-governance as well as the authority of the synods of the DRMC and the DRCA come into question when one takes into account the immense role that the Inland Commission for Mission played in these churches. The control of the Inland Commission for Mission ranges from oversight in church juridical matters to representation and a decision making authority in synodical meetings of the mentioned churches.

This leaves questions not only on the structures of the DRMC and the DRCA but also on the model followed by the DRC in the planting of the mentioned churches. With this in mind an evaluation of the historical model followed by the DRC in establishing separate, autonomous, indigenous 'mission churches' in South Africa is given.

5.5 The planting of separate churches by the Dutch Reformed Churches

5.5.1 The model of church planting by the DRC

As noted in the previous chapters it is clear that the DRC, and here specifically on the subject of her mission outlook, was influenced by especially two missional paradigms coming from the work of Gustaf Warneck and the so-called 'three selves theory' attributed to Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson.⁶⁰⁴ I agree with church historians pointing to this clear fact. However, the specific socio-political/socio-cultural context of South Africa formed the backdrop for an adaption of these models to fit the challenges of the local context. The biggest perceived challenges in the context of South Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries were connected to cultural/racial matters.

It should also be remembered that the model for the planting of churches by the DRC had a clear progression. In the context of the church in the Cape, from 1652-1880, separation between coloured and white members of the one DRC in congregational life was deemed unbiblical and would therefore not be allowed. However, the cracks of separation were clearly visible in congregational life and separation on the basis of colour would start through having different church services (specifically when it came to the celebration of the Lord's Supper). On this would later follow the building of separate church buildings and this would eventually result in establishing the DRMC as a separate church. This gradual development is not visible in the structures of the Dutch Reformed Churches in Transvaal,

⁶⁰³ These include the general overseeing of, and representation on the level of the local presbyteries as well as on synodical level.

⁶⁰⁴ I will further discuss the influence of the 'three selves theory' in a separate section of this chapter.

the Orange Free State and Natal. Here separate services and separate churches for the different cultural groups would form the hallmark of Dutch Reformed mission.⁶⁰⁵

Whether the outflow of this model - specifically the notion of separation - developed gradually or whether it was strictly enforced from the earliest mission activities of the Dutch Reformed Churches, this much is clear. The model for church planting as adhered to by the Dutch Reformed Churches was built on a definite separation along cultural/racial lines. This was coupled with a strong notion that these 'mission churches' should be indigenous⁶⁰⁶ and that they should - on the basis of the 'three selves theory' - be self-supporting, self governing and self-propagating. The 'success' of this model was measured by the numeric growth in the 'mission congregations'. A further consequence of this model was that these congregations/churches were to be guided by the DRC towards reaching a state of ecclesial autonomy. This meant that the DRC had to follow a strict paternalistic pattern of governance over the DRMC and the DRCA - one described in the circles of the DRC as guardianship. This is expressed by MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel when she notes that the 'mission churches' were not regarded as complete churches and thus the 'mother church' acted as guardian over these churches. Or as she states: *'(D)ie NGK het nie die gekonstitueerde Sendingkerke as komplette kerke gesien nie en het die voogdyskap oor die gekonstitueerde sendingkerke uitgeoefen. Die NGK het haar die eiesoortige mag te wete resprekende, wetgewende en regerende mag, van die kerk toegeëien onder andere deur die verskanste Grondwette en deur die daarstelling van die Sendingrade'*.⁶⁰⁷ As noted, this outlook finds confirmation in the first mission policy of the Federated Dutch Reformed Churches (1935).⁶⁰⁸

As such the key to understanding the model for the planting of churches as followed by the DRC is through the concept of ecclesial separation along cultural/racial lines. Therefore it is of great importance to note that the unification of the so-called 'black mission churches' namely the DRMC in the OFS, the DRMC in the Transvaal, the DRMC in Natal, and the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in the Cape to constitute the DRCA in 1963 signalled the end of this model for planting of culture-specific separated churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.⁶⁰⁹ According to Crafford the reason(s) for the unification of the 'black

⁶⁰⁵ For an overview in this regard, see NJ Smith, *Die planting van afsonderlike kerke*, In *Annale*. 1973.

⁶⁰⁶ With indigenous was understood that these churches should maintain their own unique cultural character. As noted one of the measurements of ecclesial autonomy was related to the amount of indigenous leaders active in the DRMC and the DRCA. See Van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 101.

⁶⁰⁷ MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerkreg*, 2008, 333.

⁶⁰⁸ See in this regard the concept mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches, Appendix H, *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1936, 339-341. See also the mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches in Gerdener, *Reguit koers gehou*, 1951, 85-92.

⁶⁰⁹ Regarding the planting of separate, cultural-specific mission churches by the DRC as well as the indicated consequence, the influence of the mission thinking of Gustaf Warneck becomes clear. As noted in Chapter 2 Warneck emphasised the idea of *volksbekering*. See in this regard Gustaf Warneck, *Historische schets der*

mission churches' to form the DRCA can be found in the perceived fact that there was not enough differences – including cultural differences – to separate these churches. In fact, they had more in common than what separated them. Or as Crafford states: *'daar genoeg kulturele en emosionele gemeengoes tussen die verskillende Swartvolke is om ten spyte van taalverskille tog 'n gesamentlike erediens en kerkverband sinvol te maak.'*⁶¹⁰ With this statement the apparent foreignness of unity, whether on ecclesial or any other social level, between the different black cultural groups in South Africa comes to the fore. In line with this Van der Merwe points out that there was at times asked that the different mission churches be strictly divided according to differences regarding ethnicity and language. However, regarding the 'mission churches' in South Africa, this was practically not possible.⁶¹¹ In this type of argumentation the influence of Warneck becomes apparent once more.

Again one finds a strong indication of the noticeable interrelatedness of the ecclesial and social spheres of the South African society. After this process of unification in the formation of the DRCA, which already started decades earlier, it seemed that the tide of planting separate churches for the (perceived) separate cultural groups in South(-ern) Africa was starting to turn.⁶¹² This being said, one should note that this did not have as immediate effect a spontaneous quest for unification between the different churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. It was only in the middle of the 1970s that strong expression of (re-)unification would come to the fore especially in the ranks of the DRMC and the

Protestantsche zendingen van den tijd der kerkhervorming tot op het hede: eene bijdrage tot de nieuwere kerkgeschiedenis, 1882, Utrecht: Bijleveld.

⁶¹⁰ Crafford, *Aan God die Dank*. Deel 1, 1982, 575. It is interesting to note that the idea of a united DRCA came from the legions of the members themselves and was not necessarily echoed within the ranks of the Dutch Reformed Churches. In this regard Crafford notes that *'(D)ie vraag kan dan gestel word waarom die NGKA nie ook gekonstitueer het in selfstandige kerke vir die verskillende taalgroepe nie. Alhoewel dit dikwels as ideaal gesuggereer is, het Swartmense dit afgewys as etnisiteit binne die Kerk waarvoor hulle nie te vinde is nie'*. See D Crafford, *Aan God die Dank*. Deel 1, 1982, 574-575.

⁶¹¹ *'Daar is meermale in die Ned. Geref. sendingkringe 'n pleidooi gelewer vir 'n kerklike indeling volgens etniese en taalgrense. In praktyk was dit meestal nog nie moontlik nie. Die dogterkerke wat die naaste aan volkskerke gekom het, is die kerk in Malawi en dié in Botswana'*. See WJ van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 53. See also AA Odendaal, 'n Herindeling van die Sendingkerke'. In *Op die Horison*. Jaargang VII. March 1945. No.1. 142-146.

⁶¹² Here one should of course remember that the unification of the DRMC in the OFS, the DRMC in Transvaal, the DRCM in Natal and the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in 1963 followed the unification of the four Dutch Reformed Churches in 1962. The unification of the four Dutch Reformed Churches followed just after the process of constituting the Republic of South Africa in 1961 and the unification of the Dutch Reformed Churches in 1962. See in this regard EPJ Kleynhans, *Die Kerkregtelike Ontwikkelinge van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1973, 333-335. For an overview of the first church order of the united DRC, see the *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1962, 38-51.

DRCA.⁶¹³ This culminated in the unification of the DRMC and the biggest part of the DRCA in the formation of the URCSA in 1994. This was in a way the end of the discussed model for the planting of separate 'mission churches' and, in another way, the start of an ongoing process of church re-unification in the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

A discussion on the model as followed by the DRC in planting the different 'mission churches' is not complete without taking note of the impact of the so called 'three selves theory' attributed to Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson. Therefore I will pay special attention to the evaluation of the 'three selves theory' and its historical impact on the family of Dutch Reformed Churches in the following section.

5.5.2 An evaluation of the so-called 'three selves theory' as it impacted on the family of Dutch Reformed Churches in historical perspective with specific reference to the notion of 'self-support'

It is clear that a unique interpretation of the so-called 'three selves theory' within the context of South Africa had an immense impact on the mission outlook of the DRC especially when it came to the planting of separate 'mission churches' on the basis of cultural/racial distinction or separation. This unique stature of the 'three selves theory' is best expressed in the relation between the DRC and her 'daughter churches' in an historical perspective.

Furthermore, a discussion on the 'three selves theory' goes hand in hand with a discussion on ecclesial autonomy and this is of major importance in this study. By focusing on the impact and outflow of the three pillars of this well-known missiological formula attributed to the work of Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn, I will briefly discuss the effect and mode of these three pillars namely, self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating on the relational history of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches by specifically focusing on the aspect of 'self-support'. I will show towards the force of this 'self' on the two other 'selves' namely that of 'self-governance' and 'self-propagation' indicating how these notions can only fully be understood in relation to the aspect of 'self-support'.⁶¹⁴ By doing this the fact that, in the context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, a particular interpretation and impact of the 'three selves theory' was at the order of the day, will be pointed out.

⁶¹³ It should be noted that the other church within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches namely the RCA expressed the same need for (re-)unification in the mentioned period. This study, however, focuses on the activities and developments in the DRMC, the DRCA and the DRC.

⁶¹⁴ Whilst the aspect of self-support is of higher importance for Venn when it comes to the evaluation of the autonomy of a church, Bosch notes that the aspect of self-propagation is emphasised by Anderson as belonging to the core of ecclesial autonomy. See DJ Bosch, 'Die Selfonderhoud van die Inheemse Kerke', in *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal*, Sept 1962, 482. With these remarks Bosch notes that there were indeed clear differences regarding the outlook towards the 'three selves' in the work of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson.

The indication is that the financial position of the local congregations of the DRMC and the DRCA impacted on the relation between these churches and the DRC. This becomes apparent in articles in the constitutions and the acts of agreement specifically pertaining to the calling of ministers to the congregations of the DRMC and the DRCA. This shows to the fact that the autonomy of the local congregations of the DRMC and the DRCA was measured by its financial position or its self-supporting capability. This was not unique to the context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. Regarding the financial aspects relating to the establishment of churches on the mission field Gilhuis notes that, from a mission-historical perspective, the financial position of the church on the mission field can be seen as one of the contentious issues. Or as he states: *'Het finantiële aspect van het zendingswerk, wanneer dit leidt tot instituering van kerken en tot ontwikkeling van dit kerkelijk leven, behoort tot de neteligste problemen die zich op dit terrain hebben voorgedaan, en die nog steeds de aandacht gevangen houden'*.⁶¹⁵

In a very definite sense it could indeed be stated that the notion of self-support and financial matters in general form the major key to understanding the socio-economic and theologically motivated historical relation between the DRC and the so-called 'mission churches'. As mentioned, this skewed relation was characterised by a paternalistic attitude from the side of the DRC maintaining guardianship over the DRMC and the DRCA thus 'guiding' these churches towards ecclesial autonomy. Due to the immense role the subsidiary financial position of the congregations of the DRMC and the DRCA - in relation to the congregations of the DRC - played in this regard, it is necessary to understand how specifically the notion of 'self-support' played out in the mission history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. In this regard J Combrink notes the self governance in the 'younger church' is usually delayed due to the fact that this church cannot support itself financially. This can be attributed to the fact that the members of the 'younger church' is usually poor. Or as Combrink states: *'Finansiële verantwoordelikheid is seker 'n belangrike stap op die weg na selfregering, dog die ondervinding leer dat die ideaal van finansiële selfstandigheid erg vertraag word, aangesien die oorgrote meerderheid van die dogterkerk se lidmate baie arm is. Hierdie mense is ekonomies onselfstandig: die groot meerderheid het geen vaste inkomste nie en nog minder het hulle vaste eiendom'*.⁶¹⁶ As such the principle of self-support clearly becomes important in evaluating the outflow of the other 2 'selves' namely that of 'self-governing' and 'self-propagating'.

The content of the constitutions and other documented agreements between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA clearly expresses the immense impact the financial position of the congregations of the DRMC and the DRCA had on the ability of these churches to govern

⁶¹⁵ JC Gilhuis. *Ecclesiocentrische aspecten van het Zendingswerk. Met name bij de ontwikkeling daarvan in Indonesië, bijzonder op Midden-Java*, 1955, 15-16.

⁶¹⁶ J Combrink, 'Die Taak van ons Kerk ten opsigte van die Nie-blankes'. Aantekeninge van 'n referaat gehou op die Teologiese dag, 17 Junie 1939. In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang I, July 1939, No.3, 134. See also GC Olivier, 'Selfstandigwording van die Bantoekerke in Suid-Afrika'. In *Op die Horison*. Jaargang I. April 1939. No.2 76-78.

themselves. As such the financial position of the 'mission congregation/church' and the consequent financial support given by the DRC, had a direct impact on the sense of autonomy of the DRMC and the DRCA. Fact is, the church juridical structures - specifically the local church councils - of these churches were inhibited and willfully kept from self-governance by taking away the authority of the local church councils, the presbyteries and even the synod of these churches. In turn this had a direct impact on the self-propagation of the DRMC and the DRCA whether on a congregational level or on a synodical level. The DRMC and the DRCA did not always have the right to self-propagation.⁶¹⁷ In the same way *werkkringe*, falling within the geographical jurisdiction of the DRMC and the DRCA, were to be controlled by the DRC. This only changed in later versions of the different constitutions and with the eventual drafting of Deeds of Agreement.⁶¹⁸ All these attributes concerning self-governance and self-propagation can be traced back to a specific interpretation and a corresponding outflow of the notion of self-support. It can thus be said that ecclesial autonomy, in the context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, was primarily measured by the financial position of, and financial responsibility taken in by the particular congregation of the DRMC and the DRCA. This had a definite impact on the relation between the DRC on the one side and the DRMC and the DRCA on the other side.

Van der Merwe points out that because of the fact that congregations of the DRC, the DRMC and the DRCA was in certain instances geographically in the same area, he is of the opinion that this led to the DRMC and the DRCA becoming dependant on the DRC for financial support.⁶¹⁹ With this he points out that the DRMC and the DRCA at times took in a position of indebtedness in relation to the DRC. When evaluating this statement it is my opinion that the socio-economic positions of the majority of the members of these churches should be taken into account.

The flip-side of Van der Merwe's statement can also be argued. From the historical documentation as conveyed in the preceding chapters, it is clear that the economical position of the DRMC and the DRCA as well as their dependence in general on the DRC was used as a tool to subdue these churches, thus denying their autonomy under the Lordship of Christ and creating a subservient position for the DRMC and the DRCA in relation to the

⁶¹⁷ See in this regard Proposed *Schema* for the establishment of the DRMC by the Inland Commission for Mission, In the *Acta Synodi*, DRC of SA, 1880, 8.

⁶¹⁸ See art 2 Constitution for the DRMC, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 158; Art 2 of the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the Cape Regional Synod of the DRCA, 1965, in *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1965, 178.

⁶¹⁹ 'Omdat die sendingvelde in Suid-Afrika geografies so ná aan die moederkerk was en dikwels binne die resort van moedergemeentes, was die versoeking groot vir die dogterkerke om maar in alles steun van die moederkerk te verwag en vir die moederkerk om op onoordeelkundige wys hulp aan te bied.' See Van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 53.

DRC.⁶²⁰ As such churches should be extremely careful not to use their financial position as a means to overpower other churches. Bosch points out that the outcome of this skewed relation in the family of Dutch Reformed Churches was that the DRC prohibited the DRMC and the DRCA in their ability to support themselves financially.⁶²¹

Van der Merwe is therefore right when he points out that a position of financial self support from the ranks of the 'younger church' cannot be used as a measuring rod to determine the autonomy of this church. Or as he states: *'(S)elfonderhoud kan nie as absolute maatstaf vir selfstandigheid gestel word nie. Dit sou ongeoorloof wees om dit as voorwaarde vir die reg tot 'n leraar se beroeping te stel. Tog is selfonderhoud lewensbelangrik vir die kerk.'*⁶²² The same can be said of the notions of self-governance' and 'self-propagation'.

In conclusion it can be said that the critique that was expressed towards the 'three selves theory' within mission studies and missiology in general also stands true in the context of South(-ern) Africa. In this regard and by focusing on the context of the global movement of rediscovering the local church as missional church(es) in the 20th century, Bosch notes that:

(O)n the surface, at least, the Protestant "Three-Selfs" (sic) formula (self-government, self-support, and self-propagation) appeared to be more sound; soon "younger" churches would in all respects be the equals of "older" churches. Reality, however, turned out to be different. The Younger churches continued to be looked down upon and to be regarded as immature and utterly dependant upon the wisdom, experience, and help of the older churches or mission societies. The process toward independence was a pedagogical one; in the end, the self-appointed guardian would decide whether or not the moment for "home rule" had come. Churches and mission agencies in the West understood themselves as churches *for* others.⁶²³

In line with this and specifically regarding the perspectives of Venn and Warneck and the apparent influence of their work in the missiological outlook of the DRC, Van der Merwe makes it clear that he disagree's with these theologians regarding their view that a 'mother church' can hand over autonomy to the 'daughter church'.⁶²⁴ Although this critique remains valid, the question is: was it the opinion of Venn and Anderson that, at a specifically assigned time a 'mother church' can grant autonomy to her 'daughter church'? Further

⁶²⁰ It should once again be noted that this is not unique to the context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. For an overview of the historical outplay of the financial positions of 'younger' and 'older churches' especially on their relation, see Bavinck, JH. 1954. *Inleiding in de Zendingwetenschap*. Kampen: JH Kok.

⁶²¹ See DJ Bosch, 'Die Selfonderhoud van die Inheemse Kerke. Is dit vir ons waarlik 'n saak van erns?', in *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal*, Sept 1962, 487-489.

⁶²² Van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 57. Van der Merwe continuous stating that *'Selfonderhoud kan nie bepalend wees vir selfregering nie'*. See Van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 57.

⁶²³ DJ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*. 378-379, 2007.

⁶²⁴ 'Venn sowel as Warneck fouteer deur te dink dat die moederkerk eintlik op 'n gegewe tydstip, deur homself bepaal, selfstandigheid aan sy dogterkerk kan gee.' See Van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 46.

critique against the 'three selves theory' is based on the fact that the 'three selves' namely self-propagation, self-governance, and self-support can be viewed and presupposed as *notae ecclesiae* without which a church/congregation is not fully/truly church. Such an interpretation of the 'three selves theory' denies that a church can be church without adequately expressing the tenets of the 'three selves theory'. A noticeable development with regard to the interpretation of the 'three selves theory' can be found in the context of South(ern) Africa. In the history of the DRMC and the DRCA and specifically their relation with the DRC it is clear that, regarding the implementation and understanding of the 'three selves theory', the aspect of self-governance and self-propagation was secondary to the aspect of self-support. In short: if a church was not self-supporting it could not attain self-governance nor be self-propagating.⁶²⁵ In all of this it is clear that the only way that the DRMC and the DRCA could obtain ecclesial autonomy was through the approbation of the DRC. A key to this approbation seems to be found in the financial position of the congregations of the DRMC and the DRCA. The question arises on how one should interpret this development.

It is clear that the outlook of the DRC with regard to mission and more specifically the planting of churches and the relation between the 'older church' and the 'younger churches' was hugely influenced by the prevailing social and political context of South Africa since the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. In fact, mission was used as a tool, a means to and end, to express and install the social and political position of South Africa better, especially in the late 19th century until well into the 20th century. Bosch is of the opinion that missionaries in South Africa were regarded as government allies in executing its political blueprint of apartheid.⁶²⁶ With this in mind it can be stated that the 'three selves theory' was interpreted and in a certain sense re-worked to fit the South(-ern) African context in the light of the ecclesial, social, and political aims prevailing at the time. It can thus be concluded that the prevailing relationship between the DRC and the 'mission churches', one characterised by guardianship, was fostered by a specific interpretation of the 'three selves theory' as well as by the work of Gustav Warneck.⁶²⁷

The influence of the 'three selves theory' does not suffice in a historical interpretation of the biggest missiological influences on the DRC especially relating to the model of church planting as followed by the DRC. According to historical studies the influence of the German theologian, Gustav Warneck, should not be underestimated. However, the apparent re-interpretation and contextualisation of the 'three selves theory' of Venn & Anderson in the

⁶²⁵ In a classical sense this means that, in its interpretation of the 'three selves theory', the DRC opted to follow the model with which Venn was more comfortable. See DJ Bosch, 'Die Selfonderhoud van die Inheemse Kerke', in *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal*, Sept 1962, 482.

⁶²⁶ DJ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*. 304, 2007.

⁶²⁷ 'Die Venn-formule, op verskillende wyses toegepas, is dus deur die N.G. Kerk van die Angel-Saksiese sending oorgeneem en het 'n integrerende deel van sy beleid van kerkplanting geword.' See WJ van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967.

unique mission context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches played the biggest role in fostering the specific model for the planting of racially separate, indigenous, 'autonomous daughter churches' by the DRC. Thus my particular emphasis on the 'three selves theory' in this study.

In the same way it is important to notice that the biggest missiological influences of the mission thinking of the DRC cannot be attributed to mainstream Reformed theology/missiology. The influences of Voetius and other theologians who had a deep and lasting impact on Reformed missiological thinking in general did in fact not have the same impact on the DRC when compared to for example the 'three selves theory' of Venn and Anderson.⁶²⁸ However, a Reformed theologian that did have an impact on both ecclesial and socio-political thinking is South Africa is the famous Dutch theologian, Abraham Kuyper. In the following section there is a brief discussion on Kuyper's views on church formations and church planting. With this there is an attempt to discern to what extent the work and thought of Kuyper had an impact on the model of church planting as followed by the DRC.

5.6 The influence of Abraham Kuyper on the mission outlook of the DRC with specific relevance to the model for church planting as followed by the DRC⁶²⁹

WJ van der Merwe points out that the establishment of the DRMC was based on Abraham Kuyper's description of unfinished church formations or *onvolkome kerkformatiën*.⁶³⁰ To indicate whether Van der Merwe interprets Kuyper correctly and to see whether Kuyper influenced the missiological outlook of the DRC, Kuyper's description of 'mission churches' and the relation between these churches and the 'mother churches' are looked into.

In Kuyper's view there are two ways in which a 'mission church' can come into existence, namely where the members of one congregation are sent as representatives to establish another congregation where there is no other church (*filiaal-kerk*), and/or when believers from a particular congregation, through missionary endeavours, establish a congregation of 'unbelievers'.⁶³¹

Kuyper describes the concept of 'mission church' as one of the aspects of what he understands to be unfinished church formations (*onvolkome kerkformatiën*) within the Dutch ecclesial context.⁶³² A 'mission church' is thus a church/congregation that is in the process of developing into a distinct church/congregation; one that carries the

⁶²⁸ See in this regard WJ van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 48-49.

⁶²⁹ In Chapter 3 I shortly remark on Kuyper's view on the planting of churches. In this section will follow a thorough reference of Kuyper's discussion of *unfinished church formations* with specific relevance to the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

⁶³⁰ See WJ van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 49.

⁶³¹ Abraham Kuyper, *Tractaat van de Reformatie*, 1883, 85.

⁶³² Kuyper, *Tractaat van de Reformatie*, 1883, 85. The three other forms of "incomplete churches" are *Gelegendheidskerken*, *Kruiskerken* and *Doleerende Kerken*. See Kuyper, *Tractaat*, 1883, 84-90.

characteristics of a true church according to Kuyper's Reformed understanding of what a true church is, but has to grow to full completion.

From Kuyper's view on how a 'mission church' can come into being it is clear from both these formations that the 'mission church' grows from the 'mother church' and, in a very real way, it is nothing more than an identical extension of the 'mother church'. As such, Kuyper states that the 'mother church' takes full responsibility for the 'mission church' as far as especially the governance and the administering of the sacraments are concerned. This will change, however, when the 'mission congregation' *grows into completion*, thus being able to have her own church council.⁶³³

Kuyper uses what he calls the principles of Reformed church law to denounce the idea that a second church, identical to the other in its form, church government and confession should be established within the resort of another. Or as he states: *'Met hoe goede bedoelingen deze stichtingen nu ook in het leven mogen geroepen zijn, toch zijn ze op grond van de beginselen van ons gereformeerd kerkrecht zeer stellig te veroordeelen. Zoo iets mag niet. Neen, zendingskerken kunnen slechts daar ontstaan waar de kerk nog niet is...'*⁶³⁴

From the abovementioned it is clear that Kuyper's views do not fall outside the cadre of common missiological thinking in the 19th century. As such his views are not all that unique. What is of importance for this study is Kuyper's view on a 'mission church' as an *'onvolkome kerkformatiën'* that, in his view, should grow to completion. In the context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches this came to expression in that the DRC guided the DRMC and DRCA to fuller completion and as such their advancement towards 'completion' was measured through the tenets of the 'three selves theory'. Here the principle of guardianship should be remembered. This coupled with an understanding of direct governance over the DRMC and the DRCA had as impact that the church juridical authority of the mentioned churches was denied in the name of sound guardianship by the DRC. The question remains whether in fact this is what Kuyper understood with the responsibility of the 'mother church' over the 'mission church' and whether the developments within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches as expressed in this study can indeed be attributed to the work of Kuyper.

It can be argued that the DRC should have taken more serious note of Kuyper when it comes to Kuyper's denouncement of establishing a second church, identical in form, government and confession in the resort of another. The history of the family of Dutch Reformed

⁶³³ Kuyper describes this development as follows. *'... om aldus eerst allengs de organisatie dezer kerk tot eenige volkomenheid te brengen, en den dag te doen komen, waarop ze, als een losgemaakte stek van de moederkerk, haar eigen zelfstandig bestaan zal kunnen beginnen. Men heft hier dus in deze zendingskerken het voorbeeld van nog onvolkome kerken, die een tijdlang zonder het recht gebruik de Sacramenten en zonder oefening van tucht zijn, en aan wie toch als wordende kerken het karakter van kerk niet kan worden onttogd'.* Kuyper, *Tractaat*, 1883, 85-86.

⁶³⁴ Kuyper, *Tractaat*, 1883, 85.

Churches until this very day shows towards the opposite as numerous congregations of the DRC, the DRCA, the RCA and the URCSA are found in close proximity of each other. This is despite the fact that these churches do not stand in any definite relation to one another.⁶³⁵ As mentioned these churches do have the same structure, government, and confessional basis.⁶³⁶ The primary difference between these churches is culture/race and this is the key reason for their structural division.⁶³⁷ Kuyper would be of the opinion that this would be in direct contrast to expressions of Reformed church polity. With this in mind I cannot but conclude that, if Kuyper had an influence on the missiological outlook of the DRC, this influence was fairly limited.

5.7 The place and role of the constitutions for the different ‘mission churches’

In the previous sections attention was given to evaluating the broader model followed by the DRC in establishing separate, indigenous ‘mission churches’ under the different cultural groups of South(-ern) Africa. In the following sections there is closer attention to evaluate the primary documents used as the church juridical backbone for the establishment of the DRMC and the DRCA.

The structure of the very first constitution, namely the constitution for the governance of the DRMC, would form the structural basis of all the other constitutions to follow. As such a general trend is visible in the different constitutions for the ‘mission churches’.

What is also important to note is that there is a difference in the content of the very first constitutions (1881, 1910, 1916) when compared to the later constitutions (1961) for the different ‘mission churches’. It is therefore clear that there is a definite development specifically relating to the autonomy given to the DRMC and the DRCA by the DRC. However, as noted, there are certain tenets within these constitutions that stood the test of time. These include regulation regarding the membership of the church (the question of self propagation), regulations regarding the governance of the church through their particular synodical structures, the calling of ministers to congregations of the DRMC and the DRCA as well as their disciplining, and regulations regarding amendments to the constitutions.

Due to its historical and current importance I briefly discuss developments in the calling and disciplining of ministers to congregations of the DRMC and the DRCA as it was stipulated in the different constitutions.

⁶³⁵ The only definite expression of relatedness is found in that these churches belong to the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. On the one side this term tries to express the relatedness of the mentioned churches whilst, on the other side, it expresses the division between these churches in the sense that DRC, the DRCA, the RCA and the URCSA form part of a ‘family’ and is structurally not one and the same church.

⁶³⁶ The only difference here would be that the congregations of the URCSA also ascribe to the Belhar Confession.

⁶³⁷ The only church within the family that in essence portrays a multiracial character in its membership and structure is the URCSA.

5.8 The calling and disciplining of ministers in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA

About the calling of ministers/missionaries, the role that the financial position played in the local congregations of the DRMC and the DRCA has been pointed out. Even as late as the 1960s clear stipulations are found regarding the contribution to the salary of called ministers in the context of the DRMC and the DRCA.⁶³⁸ The issue here is not that there were clear stipulations with regard to the calling of ministers. What stands out is that these stipulations were forced upon the DRMC and the DRCA by the DRCA, and that an apparent distinction was made between the calling procedure for white and coloured/black ministers.

Pertaining to disciplining ministers in the DRMC and the DRCA, it is necessary to make the abovementioned distinction. It is clear that there was a difference in the positions of white ministers on the one side, and black and coloured ministers on the other side in the context of the DRMC and the DRCA.⁶³⁹ As such not only their status, but their place in general seemed to differ. This had as effect that all the stipulations regarding the membership and discipline of ministers in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA applied to the white ministers/missionaries.⁶⁴⁰ Respecting the effect of this on the relation between the DRC and the DRMC and the DRCA in historical perspective, I agree with Durand when he points out that '(T)he position and status of ministers have always been one of the most intriguing aspects of the relationship between the DRC and the other churches in the family. If ever there was a one-way traffic, this was it. Ministers of the DRC stepped across the divide, were called and accepted as ministers by other churches. The opposite never happened and was never allowed to happen. The church orders of the DRCA and the DRMC recognised the training and licensing orders of the DRC and acknowledged the right to call as ministers members of the DRC.⁶⁴¹ The question can be asked whether this has changed and whether it is different in the current context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

From a church juridical perspective it is clear that the place and role of the different constitutions developed uniquely in the context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. An evaluation of these constitutions points out that their bases and therefore the content of most of the articles in the constitutions are not compatible with Reformed church polity.

⁶³⁸ 'Geen gemeente van die Sendingkerk het die reg om tot beroep van 'n blanke leraar oor te gaan nie, tensy 'n minimum salaries van R2280 met vrye woning gewaarborg is. Vervoerkoste is nie hierby ingesluit nie. See 10 of the Constitution for the DRMC, 1965, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1965, 175. The same would ring true for the congregations of the DRCA.

⁶³⁹ This fact is also clearly expressed in the abovementioned section relating to the calling of ministers to the congregations of the DRMC and the DRCA. As such it can be concluded that this distinction was a general practice in the latter history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

⁶⁴⁰ See Art 11 of the constitution for the DRMC, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 160; Art 15 of the constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 166.

⁶⁴¹ J Durand, 'Church Unity and the Reformed churches in Southern Africa'. In Páraic Réamonn. *Farewell to Apartheid? Church relations in South Africa*, 1994, 63.

These include the fact that the DRC governed over the different 'mission churches' at the hand of the constitutions, therefore I have pointed out the historical role of the Inland Commission for Mission. The structural development of the DRMC and the DRCA was further controlled through the constitutions hampering their growth as well as denying their identity as autonomous churches under the Lordship of Christ. The calling, place, role and disciplining (of white ministers/missionaries) in the congregations of the DRMC and the DRCA affirm the inferior position of the DRMC and the DRCA in relation to the DRC. This came to full expression in the polity of the DRC and therefore also in the polity of the DRMC and the DRCA. As the mentioned developments stand in contrast to Reformed church polity I cannot but conclude that the justification for these developments can only be traced back to socio-political and socio-cultural matters in the historical context of South Africa.

It can be concluded that the different constitutions for the 'mission churches' played an immense role in the history of the DRMC and the DRCA. This is specifically true in respect of the governance of the mentioned churches. The constitutions not only impacted on the relation between the DRC and the 'mission churches' but in essence they also regulated this relation. As noted in the previous sections of this study this relation was characterised by the inferior position of the DRMC and the DRCA and the subsequent control/governance of the DRC over these churches. It is however interesting to note that there were indeed voices within the ranks of the DRC who called for the full acknowledgment of the independance of the DRMC. In this regard one can refer to an article by JF Mentz. He notes that at a stage in the history of the DRMC the DRC granted autonomy to the DRMC. However, he is of the opinion that the time has arrived for the DRC to grant independence to the DRMC.⁶⁴² Questions remain namely what Mentz's understood with independence and who and if his understanding of autonomy differed from ecclesial separation along racial lines. In this regard Mentz makes mention of at least three factors that would have to change in order for the DRMC to be acknowledged as autonomous church. These include the notion that the representation of the Inland Commission of Mission on the synodical meetings of the DRMC should end. For him it reminded of the Dutch Reformed Churches own past where the '*Kommissaris Politiek*' had a permanent seat in the synodical meetings of this church. Mentz further calls for the transportation of properties to the DRMC and that the DRMC should have a voice in the matter of the training and legitimisation of its ministers for service in its ranks.⁶⁴³ As such it becomes clear that, for Mentz, there is no clear distinction between autonomy and independence. However this may be, it would still be decades before the autonomy of the DRMC would be acknowledged by the DRC.

⁶⁴² 'Sewe-en-Vyftig jaar gelede het die Moederkerk aan die Sendingkerk sy grondwet gegee. Daardeur het hy 'n selfstandige Kerk geword, maar nie 'n onafhanklike Kerk nie. Het die tyd nie nou aangebreek dat sy volle onafhanklikheid sal kry nie?' See JF Mentz, 'Die Binnelandse Sendingkerk', In *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel*, Deel VI, Augustus 1938. No.8. 241. Mentz notes that this acknowledgement of autonomy should also bring about a change in name for the DRMC as this church should then loose its status as a 'mission church'. See Mentz, 'Die Binnelandse Sendingkerk', In *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel*, Deel VI, 1938. No.8. 242.

⁶⁴³ See Mentz, 'Die Binnelandse Sendingkerk', In *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel*, Deel VI, 1938. No.8. 242.

History does, however, point out that the eventual drafting and implementing of Deeds of Agreement between the regional synods of the DRC and the regional synods of the DRCA as well as the DRMC led in a new phase in the relation history between the mentioned churches.

5.9 A brief evaluation of the role and function of the Deeds of Agreements between the DRC and the DRMC and the DRCA⁶⁴⁴

Any discussion relating to the drafting and implementation of the Deeds of Agreement between the regional synods of the DRC and the regional synods of the DRCA as well as the DRMC should take into account the coming into being of the liaison committees between the mentioned churches/church structures. These committees set the tone for the drafting and implementation of the later Deeds of Agreement.⁶⁴⁵

With regard to the Deeds of Agreement these documents led in a new phase in the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches in as much as they brought the end of the different constitutions. This had specific relevance for the relation between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA. In a very real sense the signing of the Deeds of Agreement signalled the end of the old constitutions although, as indicated, there are examples pointing to the fact that some of the basic tenets of the constitutions are still present in the Deeds. This is especially true of the infamous issue of double membership going hand in hand with the placing of as well as the disciplining of white ministers/missionaries in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA.⁶⁴⁶

However, the Deeds of Agreement between the mentioned parties have been unique developments in the context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches pointing to the distinctive relationship between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. This compels one to ask the questions why it was necessary to draft and implement these contractual agreements between the mentioned churches and if indeed,

⁶⁴⁴ For a detailed discussion on the different Deeds of Agreement between die DRC and most of the churches that grew from her mission work spreading across a vast area of Africa, see JW Brooks, *'n Teologiese-Missilogiese beoordeling van die Aktes van Ooreenkoms tussen die Ned. Geref. Kerkverbande in Suid-Afrika*, 1982. Unpublished MTh Thesis. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University.

⁶⁴⁵ Regarding the composition of and the stipulation for the liaison committee's see Art 13 of the Constitution for the DRMC, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 161; art 19 of the constitution for the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in SA, 1961, In *Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1961, 167. It is important to note that how these committee's played out in the reality of the DRMC and the DRCA differed. For a detailed discussion of the liaison committee's see chapter 4.

⁶⁴⁶ See in this regard the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the DRMC, 1975, 196. Differing positions occur in the regional Synods of the DRCA. See the Deed of Agreement between the DRC-OFS and the DRCA-OFS in Brooks, *Aktes van Ooreenkoms*, 1982, 132; the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in Natal and the DRCA-Natal in Brooks, *Aktes van Ooreenkoms*, 1982, 173.

Reformed church polity knows of the necessity for these kinds of agreements? To answer these and other questions I will now look at some of the key notions of the Deeds.

With regard to the reasons behind the signing of a Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the Cape Regional Synod of the DRCA, art 1.3 states that it perceived that this agreement would give a structural expression of the relatedness of the mentioned churches. Or as the article states: *'Die diepe, innerlike verbondenheid van die twee Kerke in hul gesamentlike gebondenheid aan die Woord van God en die gemeenskaplike belydenisskrifte'*.⁶⁴⁷ This confirms my presumption that the Deeds had to express the relatedness of the churches involved.⁶⁴⁸

With this it is clearly expressed that, on the one hand the Deeds were a particular expression of the relatedness between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA.⁶⁴⁹ On the other hand the Deeds formed a contractual agreement stipulating the procedures for matters that affect both parties. These would include matters pertaining to properties, finances and mission. As such the Deeds would in a sense organise joint activities better - on the basis of relatedness - between the churches involved.

It should be mentioned that directives regarding these very same matters as indicated in art 1.5 of the mentioned Deed were dealt with in most of the constitutions. The difference was now that the particular regional synod of the DRC would consult with the particular regional synod of the DRCA as well as with the synod of the DRMC on these matters. This was not necessary before the calling into being of the liaison committees. As such it seems that the Deeds were contractual attempts to express the unity between the different churches as well as an attempt to convey and acknowledge the autonomy of the different churches. In the Deeds one thus finds the clearest expression of impartiality between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA.

The Deeds give a better expression of the Christ sanctioned authority of self-governance through the structures of the DRMC and the DRCA. However this may be, these documents fail miserably in acknowledging the outright ecclesial autonomy of the DRMC and the DRCA.

⁶⁴⁷ Art 1 of the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the Cape Regional Synod of the DRCA, 1965, in *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1965, 177.

⁶⁴⁸ Of further importance is art 1.5. This article states that: *'(D)ie begeerte dat alle onderhandelinge oor sake van gemeenskaplike belang, werksaamhede en fondse sal geskied op die basis van onderlinge vertroue, liefde en samewerking in onse Here en Koning van die Kerk, Jesus Christus, en volgens ons Gereformeerde beginsel "dat alles orderlik sal geskied" (1 Kor 14:40). Verder, om vir die hede en toekoms weë en middele te vind vir die twee sinodes om gesamentlik die eer en die koninkryk van God te soek en gehoorsaam te wees aan die laaste opdrag van Christus: om saam die onvoltooide taak te durf en in Sy Naam uit te voer.'* See Art 1 of the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the Cape Regional Synod of the DRCA, 1965, in *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1965, 177.

⁶⁴⁹ It is interesting to note that the common confession basis of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches is noted as one of the ways within which the relatedness between these churches is expressed.

This became clear in the functioning of the church orders of the DRMC and the DRCA as secondary documents that did not stand free from these contractual agreements. It also fails to express the unity between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches clearly in the sense that the relatedness between the churches on the basis of confession is seen as a full expression of their unity. The relatedness of the mentioned churches expressed through the Deeds, can only fully be expressed in a structural manner. The Deeds, however, did not leave any option for structural unity between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA.⁶⁵⁰

From a church juridical perspective it seems that the Deeds of Agreement cannot but be interpreted as documents that relate to the governance of the DRMC and the DRCA. As such one has to ask questions concerning the functioning and authority of church orders in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA. It is so that the Deed of Agreement between the DRC in SA and the DRMC directly led to the drafting of a church order for the DRMC. In the following section I evaluate this church order as well as the church order of the DRCA - a document that already came into being in 1963 with the unification of the four so-called 'black mission churches' to form the DRCA.

5.10 The place and role of church orders within the DRMC and the DRCA

Any discussion on the church orders of the DRMC and the DRCA must be coupled with the question whether the documents as they were used by the DRMC and the DRCA in an historical perspective can be considered as proper church orders per se. In other words, can the church orders of the DRMC and the DRCA be viewed as legitimate documents that fulfilled the position and had the church juridical authority ascribed to church orders in the Reformed ecclesial tradition?⁶⁵¹

A discussion on the church orders of the DRMC and the DRCA cannot be done without taking the Deeds of Agreement between these churches and the DRCA into account as the Deeds had an influence on the governance of the mentioned churches.

⁶⁵⁰ In this regard the DRMC saw it as inevitable to end the Deed of Agreement between itself and the DRC in SA on the road towards structural unity with the other churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. See *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1986, 945.

⁶⁵¹ For an overview on the historical role and the church juridical importance of church orders in the Reformed branch of the church with specific relevance to the context of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, see Pieter Coertzen, *Gepas en Ordelyk. 'n Teologiese verantwoording van orde vir en in die kerk*, 1991, 175-196. Pretoria: RGN Uitgewers. For the English version of this publication, see Pieter Coertzen, *Decently and in Order. A theological reflection on the order for, and the order in, the church*, 2004, Leuven: Peeters.

The historical church orders of the DRMC and the DRCA did not carry the authority characteristic of church orders within the Reformed tradition. As noted, this changed with the drafting and coming into being of the church order of the URCSA.⁶⁵²

5.11 An evaluation of mission strategies in the DRC and the mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches

When one studies the mission endeavours of the DRC it becomes clear that it was driven by a strong sense of faith-based responsibility and as such it was coupled with a resilient model of guardianship over the 'mission churches'. White people, strongly influenced by the Calvinist tradition, saw themselves as '*draers van 'n hoër kultuur*' (carriers of a higher culture).⁶⁵³ As such they had the responsibility to convert the peoples from other cultural groups to their Godly sanctioned culture. This comes to particular expression in the mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches (1935).⁶⁵⁴

It is clear that, when it comes to specific principles and policies for mission work, the DRC shows differing developments. These developments rest between the poles of 'private missional initiatives' to an unequalled growth in numbers due to active mission work.⁶⁵⁵ The latter is factual despite the fact that official mission work by the DRC only started early in the 19th century after the establishment of SAMS. However, mission activities only got robust momentum after establishing a Synod of the DRC in 1824 and the institution of the office of the missionary at this very synod. The immense growth in mission activities called for the establishment of structures and implementing strategies to organise mission work better. These were asserted in the drafting and implementation of the first official mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches in 1935. As noted in previous chapters this policy had an immense impact on various spheres in South African society. This idea is supported by Crafford and thus he notes the following:

Toe die Sendingreglement geformuleer is, was die historiese proses van afsonderlike kerkplanting reeds voltrek. Uit eeue van praktiese ervaring het die NGK geleer dat mense van verskillende kultuuragtergronde verskillende behoeftes het aan religieuse belewenis en uitdrukking. Daarom is nooit daaraan getwyfel nie dat die ideaal van 'n selfstandige

⁶⁵² See in this regard the *Church Order and Regulations of the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa*, 2001. Cape Town: Newwave Digital Junxion.

⁶⁵³ GBA Gerdener, *Reguit Koers Gehou*, 1951, 23. Gerdener is of the opinion that every Christian should be an active missionary. In this regard he mentions consequences if Christians in South Africa (and here especially members of the DRC) forsake their responsibility. '*Doen ons dit nie, dan skep ons verwarring by diegene wat na ons opsien. Laat ons dit aan ander Kerke en sektes oor om ons werk te doen, dan lê ons op die klein aantal sendelinge van ons Kerk 'n byna ondraaglike las*'. See Gerdener, *Reguit Koers Gehou*, 1951, 23.

⁶⁵⁴ As pointed out in Chapter 2 and in other sections of this chapter, the historical fear of equalisation in the context of South Africa had an immense impact on the drafting of the first mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches.

⁶⁵⁵ See in this regard GBA Gerdener, *Reguit Koers Gehou*, 1951, 14; JC Adonis, 'Bevryding tot Eenwording en Getuienis', in P Coertzen (ed), *350 Years Reformed. 1652-2002*, 2002, 13.

*inheemse kerk ook in 'n veelvolkige situasie binne dieselfde geografiese gebied geldig is. Die NGK het dan ook doelbewus dit nagestreef om sy Dogterkerke tot selfstandigheid te lei.*⁶⁵⁶

With this the outcomes and impact of mission work by the DRC - both before and after the first official mission policy (1935) - within the borders of South Africa are clear. This came to expression not only within the ecclesial context(s) of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches but also in the social and political spheres and historical reality of South Africa. The intended impact of the mission policy is clearly indicted in the different aspects mentioned in the policy.⁶⁵⁷ As such the mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches cannot be separated from the idea of Afrikaner nationalism and the apartheid policies of South Africa.⁶⁵⁸ In this regard Kuperus notes that '(T)his Missionary Policy clarified the NGK's position on equalization and introduced some of the key concepts that later crystallized into apartheid ideology'.⁶⁵⁹

In conclusion it can be said that, in a very real sense the formulation of a mission policy rang in a new phase in the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches impacting directly on the history of South Africa as a whole.⁶⁶⁰ In this phase theologians of the DRC would now clearly formulate dogmatic guidelines for dealing with the racial question in South Africa.⁶⁶¹ From this was gathered a theological justification for apartheid. As such it becomes clear once again that the relation between the DRC, the Afrikaner nation and the State of South Africa is at stages very integrated.

⁶⁵⁶ Crafford, *Aan God die Dank*. 1982, 574.

⁶⁵⁷ 'Soos blyk uit die teks van daardie beleid in die vorige paragraaf het die sendingsaak nie net te doen met die verkondiging van die evangelie nie, maar met die verhouding van die Kerk tot die owerheid en tot ander Kerke. Voorts met die opvoeding en onderwys asook met die maatskaplike en ekonomiese ontwikkeling van die nie-blanke groepe'. See Gerdener, *Reguit Koers Gehou*, 1951, 92.

⁶⁵⁸ Sien in die verband, JC Adonis, *Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur weer opgebou*. 1982, 131-154.

⁶⁵⁹ Tracy Kuperus, *State, Civil Society and Apartheid in South Africa*, 1999, 71.

⁶⁶⁰ In this regard Van der Watt notes the following: 'Faktore wat onder andere aanleiding gegee het tot hierdie verandering in die dertigerjare, was die Ned. Geref Kerk se formulering van 'n eie sending- en rassebeleid, die stigting van die Federale Sendingraad, die kerklike aandrag om apartheid toegepas te kry en die groei van 'n apartheidsteologie - 'n prinsipiële begroning van apartheid. Veral Afrikaner-nasionalisme en 'n bepaalde toepassing van Kuyperiaanse denkbeelde op die Suid-Afrikaanse volkeresituasie, sou belangrike faktore wees in die vestiging van apartheid as dogmatiese model'. See Van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 178.

⁶⁶¹ This would lead to many divergent discussions, conferences and research on the theological justification of apartheid. On the one side is found argumentation that shows that racial segregation and apartheid should be justified on the basis of practical experience and lessons learnt from the encounters between the different cultural groups/races in South Africa. As such this side felt that one cannot justify or defend apartheid biblically. Of this group Prof GBA Gerdener was a representative. On the other hand one found a strong and influential group arguing that the church can do no other than to justify racial separation and apartheid theologically on all levels of the South African society. This group was represented by ministers including Rev JG Strydom. This much is clear though: the differing views only differed in their justification of apartheid and not on the fact that apartheid should be implemented as an answer to the racial question/problem in South Africa.

Regarding the impact of the earlier mission strategies and the later mission policy of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches it can without any doubt be said that it had an effect on the relation between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA. As noted in this and other chapters of this dissertation the DRC had as outcome in her mission endeavours the planting of separate and subordinate 'mission churches'. The effect of this on the DRMC and the DRCA was that these churches were governed by the DRC for decades after the establishment.

5.12 The 'growth' of the 'mission churches' to a fuller autonomy

I have given attention to documents impacting on the relation between the DRC and the DRMC and DRCA as sanctioned through different historical documents. In the following sections I specifically look at the expansion of the DRMC and the DRCA in terms of church juridical matters and their church polity in general. Special attention is therefore given to the developing of a unique theological identity in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA as well as in the URCSA.

Can one speak of a fourth self, namely that of self-theologising?⁶⁶² David Bosch coins this term and adds it to the classical 'three selves' through his specific interpretation of the 'three selves theory' of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson. With the term 'self-theologising' he stresses the necessity for the 'younger churches of the mission fields' to develop their own theologies or their own theological identities in the process of acculturating the gospel in every (unique) context. It is his opinion that this process of inculturation has self-theologising as outflow, as the younger churches reach a fuller sense of autonomy. Thus it seems that, for Bosch at least, ecclesial autonomy goes hand in hand with the development of a contextual interpretation of the Word of God that has as outflow that these churches develop their own means of doing theology.

This presupposition is of immense importance when interpreting the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. The question is: to what extent have the DRMC and the DRCA developed their own theological identities? Before this question is answered it should be noted that the context(s) of which Bosch is speaking is characterised by the fact that the 'planter church' and the 'planted church' are in most cases literally continents apart. This is not the case within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. However, as Naudé notes, this is not to say that there are no contextual differences between the DRC, the DRMC and the DRCA. In this regard he shows back to our deeply divided history noting that '(L)iving in physically separate worlds in the same country, led to separate social constructions of reality, and ultimately to opposing theological judgments about the reality'.⁶⁶³ As such it seems that, from the one Reformed tradition, there are different interpretations of Scripture according to social setting contextual factors.

⁶⁶² See in this regard, Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 2007, 451-452.

⁶⁶³ Piet Naudé, 'Reformed Confessions as Hermeneutical Problem: A Case study of the Belhar Confession', In Alston & Welker (eds), *Reformed Theology. Identity and Ecumenicity II. Biblical Interpretation in the Reformed Tradition*, 2007, 257.

Sevenster would argue that this is something very positive and as such it should be encouraged. Regarding the Dutch mission context he deplores the fact that the 'younger churches' take on a 'western identity' with a 'western theology'. As such Sevenster calls on the church to experience the blessing of pluriformity, or as he states: '*(D)ient de jonge kerk – zo vraagt men – niet zelf tot ontwikkeling te komen en moet er daan niet in reactiviteit op het Evangelie een eigen bijvoorbeeld Indische of Afrikaanse kerk ontstaan? Moet het niet worden betreurd, dat de theologie zo westers is en is het niet gewenst, dat er langzamerhand en geheel eigen, inheemse theologie ontstaat? En wanneer dit inderdaad zou geschieden, mag men dit dan zelfs niet al seen rijke pluriformiteit toejuichen?*'⁶⁶⁴ I firmly believe that this diversity should be encouraged and cherished within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches and that it should even guide these churches towards structural unity. However, the challenge in this regard remains that differences and unique developments in an ecclesial sense did at times result in strong feelings of independence and separateness. As such churches should be cautious and not allow this to happen. This is especially true for the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

In line with Bosch, Gilhuis emphasises the importance and necessity for the younger churches to adopt their own confessions of faith. He gives four reasons to indicate the importance of this when he points out that: '*(M)en kan in her algemeen zeggen, dat het in het leven der kerk noodzakelijk tot symboolvorming komen moet om redenen gelegen in: 1. het bestaan van de kerk zelf (the being of the church); 2. de noodzaak tot getuigenis coram public (the necessity of public witness); 3. het openlijk betuigen van eendracht in de leer (witnessing to the unity of dogma and teaching); en 4. het bewaren van de zuiverheid der leer*' (the purity of teaching).⁶⁶⁵ As such Gilhuis is of the opinion that in these four reasons are found a full(er) expression of the growing towards autonomy by the churches in the mission field.⁶⁶⁶

This of course brings us to another question namely to which extent the 'younger churches' should adopt the confessions of the 'older churches'. For Gilhuis the power of confession lies therein that it conveys unity between churches. As such, unity in confession brings about unity amongst churches. This point is of historical value in the relational history of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. As pointed out these churches share in the same confessional basis, interestingly enough referred to as the 'formulas of unity', namely the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt. As such these confessions express the deep relatedness - on the basis of Confession - of the mentioned churches. To the same degree the adoption of the early ecumenical symbols, such as the Nicene Creed as the Apostles Creed would strengthen the unity of the

⁶⁶⁴ G Sevenster. 'Oude en jonge kerken'. In *Wereld en Wending*, 2de jrg.nr.1 (1973), 70-71.

⁶⁶⁵ Gilhuis. *Ecclesiocentrische aspecten van het Zendingswerk*, 1955, 15-16.

⁶⁶⁶ Gilhuis, *Ecclesiocentrische aspecten van het Zendingswerk*, 1955, 16. Gilhuis clearly points out that context will determine the nature of the new confession and that, as such, the confession(s) of the church in Africa will differ from that of the church in Asia. See Gilhuis, *Ecclesiocentrische aspecten van het Zendingswerk*, 1955, 50.

DRC, DRMC and the DRCA as part of the ecumenical and catholic church over all times and places.

It can well be asked whether this development regarding the 'taking over' of the ecumenical creeds in the Dutch Reformed tradition (the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt) and the development of new confessions from within their own contexts is evident within the ecclesial histories of the DRMC and the DRCA and, if so, what the impact of these confessions are on the theology and identity of the churches involved.

As is already evident from the previous section it is clear that the DRMC and the DRCA, from their very beginning, adopted the 'formulas of unity' as their confessional basis.⁶⁶⁷ This is further expressed in the church orders of the mentioned churches.⁶⁶⁸ Concerning the structures of the church orders it is clear that they are built on the Belgic Confession of Faith.⁶⁶⁹

Regarding the second part of the question namely the development of new confessions within the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA I have already mentioned the Confession of Belhar adopted by the DRMC synod of 1986 and its influence on the unification process between the DRMC and the DRCA. Mention is further made of the fact that this confession would, along with Scripture, form the basis of the church order of the URCSA. In the following section I look into the Confession of Belhar once more. This time I give attention to its impact on the theology of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

5.13 The Belhar Confession and its impact on the theology of the DRMC and the DRCA

The impact of the Confession of Belhar (Belhar) on the theology of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches and here specifically its impact on the DRMC, the DRCA and also the URCSA should not be underestimated. This specifically holds true for its rightful impact on the church order of the URCSA (1994).⁶⁷⁰ However, one should not forget that the drafting of this Confession was preceded by theological developments specifically relating to the

⁶⁶⁷ See in this regard Proposed *Schema* for the establishment of the DRMC by the Inland Commission for Mission, In the *Acta Synodi*, DRC of SA, Cape Town, 1880, 7; Concept constitution for the DRMC in Natal, In the *Acta Synodi*, DRC in Natal, 1948, 66.

⁶⁶⁸ '... ooreenkomstig the Heilige Skrif en die Belydenis soos vervat in die Drie Formuliere van Enigheid...' See Art 1 of the *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1978, 7. It is interesting to note that no mention is made of the ecumenical creeds namely the Apostles Creed and the Creed of Nicea. This is also true for the church order of the URCSA. See Art 1 of the *Church order and Regulations of the General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa*, 2001, 2.

⁶⁶⁹ See in this regard the *Kerkorde, Bepalinge en Reglemente van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1978; Concept church order of the DRCA, 1963. In the *Handelinge van die Eerste Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika*, 1963, 24-41.

⁶⁷⁰ See in this regard LB van Rooi, 'Bevry om te bely en te beliggaam', In *The Dutch Reformed Theological Journal (NGTT)*, 48 no. 3&4, Sept & Dec 2007, 799-810.

context of the DRMC. Pointing to the immense influence that the *Belydende Kring* (Confessing Circle)⁶⁷¹ had on the theology of the DRMC and the DRCA, I elsewhere note the following:

Furthermore, I am of the opinion that the theology practised as well as the society envisioned within the meetings and gathering of the BK (*Confessing Circle*) hugely influenced the theology and outlook of the DRCA and the DRMC. The theological rejection(s) of Apartheid by these churches, the declaration of a *status confessionis* by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the DRMC, as well as the theology behind the Belhar Confession can be viewed as products of the enormous influence the BK (*Confessing Circle*) had on especially the younger churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.⁶⁷²

With this I clearly point out that there were strong influences that impacted on the theology of the DRMC and the DRCA that eventually played out in anti-apartheid theology and also in the drafting of the Belhar Confession.

In a classical sense the background and content of Belhar would fall under the fourth heading of Gilhuis's reasons for a new confession within the ranks of the 'younger churches', namely that of '*het bewaren van de zuiverheid van der leer*'. For him the power of confession in this regard is built on the fact 'younger church' will in its history have to deal with heresy. In the view of Sevenster a good counter strike for heresy is found in confession. Or as he notes: '*(D)e kerk die nog maar pas tot openbaring gekomen is, sal toch zeker een - al is het nog maar zo'n korte - geschiedenis achter zich moeten hebben, eer de haeresie in haar midden optreedt en zij geroepen wordt om op grond van de Schrift daartegen te getuigen, en in haar belijdenis te waken voor de zuiverheid van de leer.*'⁶⁷³ This rings true for the historical reality of Belhar's formation as it was a context within which the DRMC deemed it necessary, on the basis of God's Word, to witness against heresy.

It is therefore no surprise that the Belhar and the theology behind it remains part of the URCSA.⁶⁷⁴ This is true for her structures, liturgy, church order, church polity, and her general theological accents.⁶⁷⁵ This is not necessarily the case within the other churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches and as such it is clear that, at times, there are

⁶⁷¹ For an overview of the formation of the *Belydende Kring* as well as its objectives, see Mokgoeba, ZE. 1984. 'Broederkring from 1974.....?'. In Govender, SP. 1984. *Unity and justice. The Witness of the belydende kring*. 13-18. Braamfontein: Belydende Kring.

⁶⁷² Leslie van Rooi, 'To Obey or Disobey?', In *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. July. 2008 Vol. XXXIV. No. 1. 182.

⁶⁷³ Gilhuis, *Ecclesiocentrische aspecten van het Zendingswerk*, 1955, 20.

⁶⁷⁴ For a discussion on the relation between the URCSA and the Belhar Confession, see RS. Tshaka, 'The essence of ecclesial authority in our treatment of Reformed confessions', In the *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal (NGTT)*, 46 no, 3&4, Sept-Des 2005, 587-596.

⁶⁷⁵ See in this regard, *Eenheid, Versoening, Geregtigheid. Preke rondom die Belydenis van Belhar (1986)*. Reeks: Toegerus vir dienswerk TD2/2. 'n Publikasie van die N.G. Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika. 1988. Paarl: Paarl Drukpers.

differences in the theological outlook of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.⁶⁷⁶

In conclusion the following can be stated: In a World Alliance of Reformed Churches study on confessions and confessing in the Reformed tradition it is noted that '(T)he Reformed churches have always been concerned to confess the Christian faith in a particular context in which they were placed'.⁶⁷⁷ This has been true for the Reformed tradition since the earliest of days of its awakening until this very day.⁶⁷⁸ This finds direct expression in the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. However, in this regard one can ask the question namely whether these (new) confessions bring unity amongst (Reformed) churches or whether they in fact result in the opposite: disunity - a characteristic, historically attributed to the churches of the Reformation. In the same sense this question can be asked with regard to the role that the Belhar plays in the struggle for unification between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

As noted in the previous section, Gilhuis is of the opinion that confession, in essence, brings about (church) unity. In line with this Margit Ernst notes that '(R)eformed confessions confess the *one* church, the *one* Lord, the *one* Hope - in short: the unity of the church. And furthermore, they call the members of their church to make the given unity of the church visible on earth'.⁶⁷⁹ This, in their understanding of a confession, would cluster a group of Christians together, which can also have as outcome the establishment of a faith community or the unification between congregations/churches in a bigger structure. As such confession has to do with visible unity. It remains to be seen whether this will ring true in the context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

5.14 Conclusion

In a very simplistic manner all South African political and historical problems have been attributed to racial and/or ethnic matters.⁶⁸⁰ It is therefore no surprise that in her history the DRC has explored solutions on how to deal with racial/ethnic issues. As such the development and establishment of separate and race-/culture-specific 'mission churches' under the direct guardianship of the DRC can be seen as a way in which this church dealt with the mentioned issue/problem of race and cultural diversity.

⁶⁷⁶ Piet Naudé points out that the influence of the Belhar Confession is also felt outside of the structures of the URCSA. See in this regard, Piet Naudé, 'The theological coherence between the Belhar confession and some antecedent church witnesses in the period 1948-1982'. In *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 24 (1), 2003. 156-179.

⁶⁷⁷ *Confessions and Confessing in the Reformed tradition today*, 1982, 3.

⁶⁷⁸ See in this regard EFK Müller, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirche*, 1903. Leipzig: A Deichert'sche Verlagbuchhandlung Nachf.; Lukas Vischer, *Reformed Witness Today*. A Collection of Confessions and Statements of Faith issued by the Reformed Churches. 1982. Bern: Evangelische Arbeitsstelle Oekumene Schweiz.

⁶⁷⁹ Margit Ernst, 'We Believe the One Holy and Catholic Church...: Reformed Identity and the Unity of the Church', In Alston & Welker (eds), *Reformed Theology, Identity and Ecumenicity*, 2003, 85.

⁶⁸⁰ See in this regard, Kuperus, State, *Civil Society and Apartheid in South Africa*, 1999, 23.

Regarding the motives for segregation in the South African society Lategan notes that the Afrikaner viewed racial purity as essential to its future. He continues stating that for the mission endeavours of the Afrikaans churches to be successful segregation strategies were of necessity.⁶⁸¹ Saying this it becomes clear that the DRC, as a dominant social agent in the South African society, had to deal directly with socio-political issues within her ranks. How the DRC dealt with these issues differed in accordance to the specific question(s) on the table and to which extent these issues impacted on the church. In line with this and due to the interlinked relation between the DRC and the Afrikaner nation over an extended period of time, issues impacting on the Afrikaner nation had to be addressed by the DRC.

This comes to a clear expression in the establishment and in 'maintaining' the DRMC and the DRCA. The unique reality of the history of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches is that the social dynamics as it played out in the broader context of South Africa had a direct impact on especially the structures of these churches, in a church juridical sense, as well as on their mutual relation. This comes to clear expression in the preceding sections and chapters. As such it can be concluded that church polity in general was the mould from which the DRC structurally resolved socio-political issues that impacted on the church. The impact of this on the DRMC and the DRCA is found in the struggle of these churches to celebrate their autonomy as churches under the Lordship of Christ. The strive for the ending of the different constitutions through which the DRC governed over the DRMC and the DRCA as well as the ending of the different Deeds of Agreement between the DRC and the DRMC and the DRCA is of great significance. As mentioned, the pressure to amend, and eventual end these documents came from the side of the DRMC and the DRCA. As such it can be pointed out that the autonomy of these churches came to expression through church juridical principles. This is clearly expressed in the formation of the URCSA.⁶⁸²

The historical influence of the DRC was not only felt within the mentioned ecclesial communities but also on the South African society in general - an impact that still holds strong in the present reality of South Africa. From a historical perspective the DRC can thus be viewed as a dominant social actor within the South African society. This had both positive and negative effects.

⁶⁸¹ 'In die hart van die Afrikaner leef daar drie gedagtes: Ten eerste, sodanige segregasie is in die beste belange van blank en nie-blank. Ten tweede, dis deel van die sosiale roeping van die Kerk en ten derde, dit is op Gods Woord en die leer van die Meester gegrond en dus volkome Bybels en christelik'. See D Lategan, 'Die Krisis in die Sendingkerk', In *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel*, Deel VII. March 1939. No. 3,107.

⁶⁸² In this regard I noted the importance, structure and underlying ecclesiology of the first church order of the URCSA. This document formed the church juridical basis of the URCSA.

In certain periods of her history the DRC was directly influenced by the 'dominant'⁶⁸³ factors as they played out in the socio-political scene of South Africa. How the DRC responded to these influences differed from time to time. On the other hand, it is also clear that the DRC, as a dominant agent within the South-African society saw it as her God-given role to advise the state as well as leaders/organisations actively involved in the milieu of the Afrikaner people in decision-making and at times persuading especially the state in formulating certain policies. Much has been written on the influence of the DRC policies relating to racial/cultural segregation and state apartheid in South Africa.⁶⁸⁴ To what extent the state was influenced by/open to the influence of the DRC, differed in accordance to different periods in the history of South Africa.

Throughout this and the previous chapters I have suggested that there is a very explicit relation between the DRC, the DRCM and the DRCA. This relation is based on the confessional basis of the mentioned churches in the 'formulas of unity'. It seems however that there are also differences between these churches. These differences seem to be on a theological level mostly and here specifically with regard to how these churches interpret the Word of God within their different social contexts/contextual experiences within South Africa. In this regard Naudé states that '(T)here is so much in common amongst members of the DRC family: we share the same Reformed tradition which came to Africa in 1652; we were one church for 230 years until 1882 (DRMC) and 1910 (DRCA); and until 1986 we stood in the same confessions. Yet, the distance is so great. The reason is the many faces of "Reformed theology" in South Africa which may in this case inter alia be explained by the radically opposing social locations (and subsequent theological foci and interpretation of reality) of the DRC and URCSA'.⁶⁸⁵

Since 1881 with the establishment of the first 'daughter churches' of the DRC unity between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches has been allusive, despite the fact that these churches have been in a process of church re-unification for almost three decades. As such these churches are still sharply divided according to race/ethnicity and thus hold true to the principles of the model followed in the establishment of separate, autonomous, indigenous 'mission churches'. It can be asked to what extent the theological

⁶⁸³ I am hesitant to use the word 'dominant' as I do not want to give the impression that it indeed points to the view of the majority of South Africans. As the political and economic power in the context of South Africa was confined to a small minority, the dominance of one or even two group(s) within the mentioned context can barely be seen as *the* South African outlook.

⁶⁸⁴ See in this regard 'Die Rassebeleid van die Afrikaner. Besluite van die Volkskongres. Bloemfontein, September 1944'. In *Op die Horison*. Jaargang VII. March 1945. No.1. 16-23; Kinghorn, *Die NG Kerk en Apartheid*, 1986; JA Loubser, *The apartheid Bible: a critical review fo racial theology in South Africa*, 1987, Cape Town: Longman.

⁶⁸⁵ Naudé, 'Reformed Confessions as Hermeneutical Problem', In Alston & Welker (eds), *Reformed Theology. Identity and Ecumenicity II*, 2007, 256. It needs to be noted that the date for the establishment of the DRMC is 1881 and not 1882 as given by Naudé.

identities - as outlined in the previous section - influence the process of church reunification between these churches.

| Chapter 6 |

Ecclesial autonomy as Interdependence? Some concluding remarks

‘Therefore we reject all human innovations and all laws imposed on us, in our worship of God, which bind and force our consciences in any way. So we accept only what is proper to maintain harmony and unity and to keep all in obedience to God’.⁶⁸⁶

6.1. Introduction

This study had as aim to point out the church juridical developments of the DRMC and the DRCA from a church historical perspective. By doing this the preceding chapters dealt with issues relating to the planting of ‘mission churches’ by especially the DRC, the governance of and in these churches through the different constitutions, Deeds of Agreement, the church orders, as well as the growth of the DRMC and the DRCA towards ecclesial autonomy. These and other matters have been evaluated from a Reformed ecclesial and juridical perspective, and brief concluding remarks were given in each of the preceding chapters.

Final conclusions are drawn in this chapter pointing towards the church juridical developments in the DRMC and the DRCA. By doing this, specific attention is given to the aspects of ecclesial autonomy from a church historical perspective with specific relevance to the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. This is complemented by a discussion of the already outlined interpretation of ecclesial autonomy as proposed throughout the previous chapters. Further remarks are made to highlight the significance of the proposed understanding of ecclesial autonomy and a specific focus on promoting an ecclesiology of vulnerability, as it stands in relation to the interdependence between churches, will follow. Due to the current importance of this discussion I continually remark on the relation between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches and here specifically the DRMC, the DRCA and the DRC. I end off this chapter, and this dissertation, with some brief remarks on the process of re-unification within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

6.2 Church juridical developments and the struggle for ecclesial autonomy in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA

In the preceding chapters it has been pointed out that, over the largest part of their histories, the DRMC and the DRCA took in a subordinate position in relation to the DRC. This found particular expression on a church juridical level as these churches were governed by

⁶⁸⁶ The Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 32, *the order and discipline in the church*. In Pelikan & Hotchkiss (eds), *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, Volume II, 2003, 421.

the DRC through especially the constitutions through which the establishment of these churches were regulated.

In this study these constitutions were evaluated and, as was pointed out, these documents took in a relatively unique position - a position that can seldom be justified by the mentioned historical church juridical tenets. Through a historical reading of these documents it was also found that their content developed and that, through these developments, the autonomy of the DRMC and the DRCA was more and more acknowledged by the DRC. However this may be it is clear that the stronghold of the constitutions stayed in tact almost until the unification of the DRMC and the DRCA in forming the URCSA.

Through the developments that occurred in the constitutions, and later also in the Deeds of Agreement and the different church orders, is found the church juridical developments of the DRMC and the DRCA. Amongst other things the developments impacted on the ecclesiology of the mentioned churches. As pointed out these developments culminated in the formation of the URCSA on the basis of a brand new church order.

I have pointed out that these developments in church polity went hand in hand with the seeking for and acknowledgment of the ecclesial autonomy of the DRMC and the DRCA. In this study it further became clear that a specific interpretation and the consequent influence of the so-called 'three selves theory' of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson on the family of Dutch Reformed Churches led to an understanding of the 'selves' as characteristics belonging to the essence of a church. As such the danger to promote each of the 'three selves' to an aim in itself became a reality with dire consequences in the mission history of the DRC.⁶⁸⁷ This had as direct outflow that the autonomy of the DRMC and the DRCA was measured by the 'three selves' and, as pointed out in Chapter 5, specifically at the hand of the principle of being self-supporting. The DRC acted as a 'mother church' evaluating the autonomy of the so-called 'daughter churches'. As such the 'three selves' became tools to evaluate the autonomy of the 'mission churches' and as such were validated within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. This directly impacted on the ecclesial identity and theological framework of the DRMC and the DRCA and consequently impacted on the relation between these churches and the DRC.

The major historical document that impacted on the theological motivation for the 20th century mission outlook of the DRC indicates that there was indeed a specific theological reasoning behind the model in planting autonomous 'mission churches'. As pointed out this motivation was further influenced by the socio-political context of the time. Van der Watt points out that Gerdener, one of the most influential Dutch Reformed theologians in

⁶⁸⁷ Bosch shows towards this danger by noting that '(T)en eerste bestaan daar die besliste gevaar om enigeen van hierdie drie "selwe" tot doel in sigself te verhef, asof 'n kerk se sêlfonderhoud, sêlfregering en sêlfuitbreiding tot sy wese behoort'. See DJ Bosch, 'Die Selfonderhoud van die Inheemse Kerke. Is dit vir ons waarlik 'n saak van erns?', in *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal*, Sept 1962, 482.

missiological circles at the time, had a clear-cut understanding of the content and outcome of this model for the planting of churches. In this regard Gerdener points out that these churches should be culturally exclusive, it should be endemic, and they should grow towards autonomy under the guardianship of the 'mother church'.⁶⁸⁸ With this as aim the DRC accepted the responsibility to act as guardian over the 'younger churches' and for this purpose a position of domination, which intentionally played out on a church juridical level, was implemented. In this regard a thorough examination of the documents that formed the basis for the establishment of the DRMC and the DRCA as well as other documents used for the governance of these churches was done in the previous chapters.⁶⁸⁹

From these historical references it is clear that guardianship - both in the social and in the ecclesial spheres - was clearly defined as a process of uplifting the people pre-determined to belong to the coloured and the black races of South Africa - the so-called heathen - to adopting a lifestyle based on western standards and norms. It was perceived that this process of upliftment would best be served through racial/cultural segregation.⁶⁹⁰ On the ecclesial sphere the role of the DRC became clear. It was believed that by having the DRC as guardian the DRMC and the DRCA would be helped on the road towards reaching a position of ecclesial autonomy - the outlined aim of the mission policy (1935).

Due to its importance in this study the following section deals with the specific historical understanding of ecclesial autonomy as it played out in the ecclesiological context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. I further point towards the impact of this particular understanding of ecclesial autonomy on the relational history of the DRC, the DRMC and the DRCA. In this regard I make comments on the relation between the local and national church to point out how the specific understanding of ecclesial autonomy impacted on the DRMC and the DRCA. Here I specifically indicate how the proposed understanding of ecclesial autonomy compares to the historical reality of the mentioned churches. I further indicate what the impact of an ecclesiology of vulnerability will have on the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

One must understand the mission outlook of the DRC to understand the notion of autonomy within its ranks. This outlook does not stand free from the influence of socio-

⁶⁸⁸ *'Die ideaal van selfstandige kerke behels vir hom (Gerdener) hoofsaaklik drie fasette: dit moet afsonderlike kerke wees, gegrond op etnisiteit en taal; dit moet inheemse kerke wees wat wortelskiet in die Afrika-bodem en derdens moet die kerke onder die voogdyskap van die moederkerk geleidelik ontwikkel tot onafhanklikheid'.* In this the influence of the theology of Gustav Warneck on that of Gerdener is clear. See Gideon van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener. Koersaanwyser in die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk se Sending en Ekumene*, 1990, 65. Gerdener was the most influential theologian on mission at the time that the first Mission policy of the DRC was formulated (1935).

⁶⁸⁹ For further references, see chapter 3.

⁶⁹⁰ See in this regard Van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 172. Van der Watt further notes that '(B)y die aanbreek van die twintigste eeu was segregasie en voogdyskap praktiese politiek, in sowel die Engelse kolonies as die twee Boererepublieke'. See Van der Watt, *GBA Gerdener*, 1990, 172.

political stimuli within the historical context of South(-ern) Africa. The struggle for the acknowledgement of ecclesial autonomy by the DRMC and the DRCA should be understood within this framework.

It should however be mentioned that this struggle for ecclesial autonomy is not unique to the context of the DRMC and the DRCA. The history of the DRC itself clearly points out that this church was also involved in a struggle for autonomy for a large part of its history. It needs to be pointed out that this struggle was largely against the direct control over and interference of the government of the Cape Colony with the affairs of the DRC.⁶⁹¹ As such this struggle was not so much a struggle to realise autonomy from another church as was the case between the DRMC and the DRCA in relation to the DRC. Due to the theme of this study and its relevance it suffices to note that the search and struggle for ecclesial autonomy is a well-known theme in the history of the churches at the Cape.

As such it quickly becomes clear that the theme of ecclesial autonomy runs like a golden thread through the missional history of the DRC, the DRMC and the DRCA.⁶⁹² This was a very specific understanding and interpretation of ecclesial autonomy that had as effect the notion that the autonomy, for the DRMC and the DRCA, was something to aspire towards or something that had to be reached. This in essence meant that these churches underwent certain developments on their road towards full ecclesial autonomy. It is interesting to note that Breedts points out that the issue and concept of ecclesial autonomy in the ranks of the DRMC and the DRCA were issues that were discussed frequently at mission conferences. In this regard he notes that the specific understanding and impact of ecclesial autonomy in the ranks of the 'mission churches' were debated and the following questions relating to the authority of the church councils, the financial position of the congregations, amongst others, came to the fore. Or as Breedts states:

Kan die Sendingkerk deur die teenswoordige masjinerie homself regeer? Is die Kerkrade bevoeg om outonoom te wees? Beteken selfstandigheid los van die Moederkerk? Kan daar selfstandigheid wees sonder finansiële onafhanklikheid? Wat is die uiteindelik doel van die Moederkerk met die Sendingkerk? Moet dit maar so semi-selfstandig voortgaan of moet dit selfstandige inheemse kerke word wat hul eie sake drywe, hulle self uitbrei, hulle eie leraars oplei, ens?'.⁶⁹³

⁶⁹¹ For an overview of the history of the DRC specifically relation to the struggle towards autonomy of the DRC over and against the direct control of the colonial government over this church see JD Vorster, *Die kerkregtelike ontwikkeling van die kaapse kerk onder die kompanjie. 1652-1795*. Published doctoral dissertation. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch Universiteit. 1956; EPJ Kleynhans, *Die kerkregtelike ontwikkeling van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika. 1795-1962*. Published doctoral dissertation. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University. 1973.

⁶⁹² The focus of this section will be on the histories of the DRMC and the DRCA and as such this section follows the general trend of the dissertation.

⁶⁹³ JMN Breedts, 'Brandende Vraagstukke in die Suid-Afrikaanse Sendingveld', In *Op die Horison*, Jaargang I, January 1939, No.1, 16.

As pointed out the place and role of the so-called ‘three selves theory’ in this regard can and should not be underestimated.

It can thus be concluded that the histories of the DRMC and the DRCA testify of a gradual growth towards autonomy in as much as it was allowed and acknowledged by the DRC. This meant that ecclesial autonomy was something that was to be obtained and thus in practice not something that the church possessed from the very beginning. As indicated in Chapter 4, and as I further indicate in this chapter, this notion is contradictory to Reformed church polity.

As mentioned above, the relation between the DRMC, the DRCA and the DRC was stipulated through the different governing documents and here specifically the different constitutions and the Deeds of Agreement. In the developments as depicted in these documents is found the historical church juridical developments of the DRMC and the DRCA. It needs to be mentioned that, apart from the fact that the church polity and church juridical developments of the mentioned churches is expressed in these documents, these documents also stipulated the relation between these churches amongst each other, as well as the relation between the individual congregations within the DRMC and the DRCA respectively. In the following section I give attention to how the relation between the mentioned congregations found expression in a synodical structure.

6.3 The relation between the local church and the general synod in historical perspective within the family of the Dutch Reformed Churches

Any discussion on the relation between the local and national church (general synod) within the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches should be done from a local/congregational level. This is so because of the fact that the key to understand the structures of the DRMC and the DRCA is found in their establishment in 1881 and 1910 respectively. Without going into too much detail the significance of the establishment of the mentioned churches is pointed out.

The histories relating to the establishment of the DRMC and the DRCA are well-documented especially in the missional journals and documents of the DRC.⁶⁹⁴ The importance of their establishment is a different issue - one that I have given much attention to in this dissertation. Firstly I have pointed out that the model for the planting of churches followed by the DRC placed great emphasise on cultural separateness between the faith communities in line with the socio-political rhetoric of the time. Secondly I noted that, concerning the establishment of the DRMC at least, the establishment of a separate church came about as a strategy to organise the growing number of loosely grouped congregations better in a more structured manner. As such a high premium was placed on the formation of a Synodical

⁶⁹⁴ One of the key texts used in this dissertation, namely Chris Loff's study of the history of the DRMC, is indeed one of the view documentations on the history of the mentioned church from within its ranks. See in this regard Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*. 1998.

structure in line with Reformed church polity. Regarding the milieu of the DRCA it is clear that, from the very beginning, the aim was to have a separate ministry for the black converts with the eventual outcome being the planting of a 'mission church' separate from the DRC.⁶⁹⁵

By taking the abovementioned into account, one should also remember that, with the establishment of the DRMC and the DRCA came about a schism in the DRC.⁶⁹⁶ With the establishment of these churches' congregations that consisted of mostly coloured and black members, they would no longer form part of the structurally unified DRC. As such the establishment of synodical structures for the DRMC and the DRCA came at a very high cost namely the structural unity of the DRC. The significance of this split is that it took place despite the fact that these churches had the same dogma, polity, structure, confessional basis, liturgy, etc. The only real difference was that the membership of the DRC, the DRMC and the DRCA consisted of peoples with different cultural backgrounds and identities. In a historical sense it should be noted that, although there were other reasons, this was seemingly the main reason for a split in the DRC.

Furthermore it becomes clear that, from reading historical documents relating to the establishment of the DRMC and the DRCA and as pointed out in the preceding chapters, the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches placed a high premium on the establishment and authority of the synodical/general synodical structure. As soon as these congregations had been united in a denomination, the machinery for the synodical functioning of the new church was put into place. However, it needs to be mentioned that the authority of the synodical structure - as ascribed to it in Reformed church polity - of these churches was not always acknowledged. In this regard the synods of the DRMC and the DRCA did not always have the authority to make decisive decisions regarding the governance of these churches and the moderamen at times consisted of representatives of the mission bodies of the DRC, including individual members of the Inland Commission for Mission. The history of the DRMC and the DRCA is therefore one characterised by a strong strive towards full self-governance and the acknowledgement of the authority of their respective synods in line with Reformed church polity.

The value of a synodical structure for the DRMC and the DRCA is further expressed in the unification of the synods of the so-called 'black mission churches' to form a general synodical structure in the DRCA, and the unification of DRMC and the biggest part of the DRCA to constitute the URCSA that had from the very beginning a general synodical

⁶⁹⁵ In chapter 2 I have discussed the apparent difference(s) between the establishment of 'mission congregations' and eventually 'mission churches' in the Cape in relation to how things played out in the interior of South Africa.

⁶⁹⁶ In this regard Piet Naudé points out that it is essential to remember that for about 230 years the DRC was a structurally united church with a culturally diverse membership. See Piet Naudé, 'Reformed Confessions as Hermeneutical Problem: A Case study of the Belhar Confession', In Alston & Welker (eds), *Reformed Theology. Identity and Ecumenicity II. Biblical Interpretation in the Reformed Tradition*, 2007, 257.

structure.⁶⁹⁷ The importance of synodical structures is also evident in the history of the DRC and in this regard the high value of structural unity in the ranks of the Reformed Church comes to expression. Due to a court order in November 1862, the DRC was divided into four autonomous synods. This legally remained the case from 1862 until 1962.⁶⁹⁸ However, throughout this period these synods searched for ways to work together and as such to express their relatedness and their unity. This was done as part of a process of striving to unite the DRC into a general synod.⁶⁹⁹ As noted, this general synod eventually came into being in 1962.⁷⁰⁰ Therefore it can be said that over their histories the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches placed a high premium on synodical structures and that these churches acknowledged the significance of these structures in their governance. However this may be, the question can be asked why this process of church re-unification did not impact on the family of Dutch Reformed Churches as a whole.

Subsequently I will now look into the relation between the DRC, the DRMC and the DRCA in a historical perspective.

6.4 Ecclesial autonomy as Independence?

As pointed out throughout this dissertation, the historical relation between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches is one characterised by subordination from the side of the DRMC and the DRCA and control over these churches by the DRC. This inequitable relationship found particular expression on a church juridical level.

This historical relation between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches stayed in tact for decades after the establishment of the DRMC and the DRCA. This is despite the fact that the relationship between the mentioned churches underwent different phases of development specifically relating to the ecclesial autonomy of the DRMC and the DRCA. These developments found a particular expression on a church juridical level. However, what stands central and which I tried to point out in this study is that the relation between the mentioned churches is one characterised by guardianship and paternalism from the side of the DRC over the DRMC and the DRCA. This notion of guardianship and paternalism was expressed on different levels both within and outside the structures of the

⁶⁹⁷ Although the DRMC consisted of only one synod (and therefore did not have a general synodical structure) it is interesting to note that there was indeed a time in the history of this church during which the possibility to form a general synodical structure with two synods was investigated. See in this regard *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1986, 108-121. From documentation it is clear that possibilities in this regard were looked into since 1970. However, the 1986 synod of the DRMC decided against the separation of the DRMC into two synods. Thus the DRMC would, from its establishment until its unification with the DRCA, consist of only one synod. See, *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1986, 810.

⁶⁹⁸ For a good historical overview in this regard see FE O'Brian Geldenhuys, *In die stroomversnellings. Vyftig jaar van die NG Kerk*, 1982.

⁶⁹⁹ See in this regard, EPJ Kleynhans, *Die kerkregtelike ontwikkeling van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika. 1795-1962*, 1973, 322-338.

⁷⁰⁰ *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1962, 22-26.

DRMC and the DRCA and it set the tone for the ecclesial relation between the mentioned churches and the DRC.

The DRC based its model for church planting, the development and growth of the DRMC and the DRCA, as well as its understood relatedness with the mentioned churches on skewed missiological and perceived Reformed church juridical principles adjusted to fit the specific socio-political context that these churches found themselves in. The degree to which the DRMC and the DRCA were subjected to the guardianship of the DRC differed in accordance with the specific period. Depending on standing agreements between the synods of the Dutch Reformed Churches and the synods of the DRCA and the DRMC a growing amount of church juridical liberties coupled with the growing acknowledgment of the autonomy of the mentioned churches took place. As such the DRMC and the DRCA were gradually allowed to develop in their own right and this led to the continuous aspiring of these churches for the acknowledgement of their autonomy.⁷⁰¹ One of the effects of this gradual growth towards autonomy was that the DRMC and the DRCA at certain stages in their histories understood their autonomy to be equal to independence from the DRC. Independence was thus aspired for. When taking into account the history of these churches one can understand that this could have been the case. In this regard the effect of the model for the planting of churches as followed by the DRC should not be underestimated. One other factor that impacted directly on the DRMC and the DRCA in their strive towards the acknowledgement of their autonomy as well as on their growing feeling of reaching independence from the DRC can be found in the socio-political history of South Africa.

As noted, this strive towards autonomy found a particular expression in the unification between the DRMC and the biggest part of the DRCA to constitute the URCSA in 1994 with a brand new church order that attempts to express the Reformed confessions and specifically the Belhar confession.⁷⁰² However this may be the question namely how does the URCSA understand its relation with the DRC and the other churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, arises.⁷⁰³ At the heart of this question is the search for how the URCSA understands/defines ecclesial autonomy and how this affects the relation between the URCSA and the other churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. Here one

⁷⁰¹ MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel is of the opinion that '*(D)ie NGK het die Sendingkerke in 'n staat van onmondigheid gehou...*'. See MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel, *Die Doleansiekerreg*, 2008, 255.

⁷⁰² The fact that this church came into being on 14 April 1994, less than two weeks prior to the first democratic elections held in South Africa on 27 April 1994, is indeed of great significance. In this regard the church was the forerunner in proclaiming a new dawn on South Africa testifying that unity amongst the peoples of South Africa was indeed in line with its interpretation of Scripture. With this the DRMC and the DRCA not only finally and decisively broke with apartheid theology in its ranks, but also showed that the cultural boundaries erected in civil society on the basis of church apartheid, was indeed a heresy and that it should be rejected by structurally and politically breaking down the manmade borders and divisions.

⁷⁰³ As noted in the preceding chapters, the other churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches - excluding the DRC and the URCSA - are the DRCA (the congregations that did not unite in forming the URCSA) and the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA).

should note that from a missio-historical perspective it is clear that some of the eventual effects of the so-called 'three selves theory' on the 'younger churches' at times had as outflow a very specific understanding of the 'self'. As noted it seems as if there were stages in the history of the DRMC and the DRCA where these churches understood autonomy to mean that they had to prove their independence from other churches on different levels and here especially from the DRC.⁷⁰⁴ As such ecclesial autonomy was understood as synonymous to independence and here, from the side of the DRMC and the DRCA, independence from the DRC. It is clear that this can have both positive and negative effects on the churches themselves. What is also clear is that this had a direct effect on the relation between (these) churches. The question can be asked whether this outlook on autonomy as independence rings true for the URCSA.

6.5 Ecclesial Autonomy as Interdependence

In chapter 4 I opted for a specific understanding of ecclesial autonomy found in the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ over His church pointing towards the effect of this theological concept on the relation between churches. In this understanding, ecclesial autonomy is something that every church possesses and that is inherently part of a gathering of believers. As such it is also inherent to the structures of a constituted church and thus it should find particular expression in ecclesial structures. Because Christ gathers His church, the completeness of a church is found in this very relation with Christ. This does not deny the fact that a church undergoes certain patterns of growth and developments in structure, polity, and financial liberty. However, these developments can never be measurements or indicators of ecclesial autonomy as they do imply the essence of being church. As such, ecclesial autonomy, as a theological construct, does not have the same meaning as completion in a juridical sense.

The proposed interpretation and understanding of ecclesial autonomy leaves no room for an inadequate interpretation of autonomy where churches' relations are hindered and where autonomy points to separateness, 'unrelatedness' or independence. The history of the church has pointed out that such an understanding of autonomy in an ecclesiological sense leads to a splintering in churches. Just as there can be no distinction between 'older' and 'younger' churches or 'missional' or 'mission' churches, there is also no founding for a distinction between 'autonomous' and 'semi-autonomous' churches. I made an effort to point out in the previous chapters that this is alien to an understanding of ecclesial autonomy where Christ stands in the centre as Lord over His Church and where the relation between churches is found on the basis of Christ's Lordship.⁷⁰⁵ Bosch agrees with this when he states the following: *'(B)elangriker as die kerke se onafhanklikheid is dus die verhouding*

⁷⁰⁴ See in this regard See DJ Bosch, 'Die Selfonderhoud van die Inheemse Kerke. Is dit vir ons waarlik 'n saak van erns?', in *the Dutch Reformed Theological Journal*, Sept 1962, 485.

⁷⁰⁵ As is the case in this dissertation, the use of these terms should be limited to historical use in an effort to clearly point out the skewed principles behind these terms.

van wedersydse afhanklikheid van verskillende dele van die één Liggaam van mekaar...'.⁷⁰⁶

As such, ecclesial autonomy brings about a sense of deep relatedness or mutual interdependence between churches.

This understanding of ecclesial autonomy has definite implications. It points towards a self-understanding where Christ is the Head of the church and where the church stands in a very specific relation to Christ as its Lord. Thus the relation between churches is in essence determined by this confessed reality. These relations point towards interdependence and an equal relationship under Christ's governance. This should be expressed in every sphere of the being of the church including its outlook on mission, its doctrine, structure, and polity. This has as basis the deep relation that Christ has with His Church. Instances where the one church deliberately governs over the other - as was the case within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches - directly deny Christ's Lordship and His governance over His Church. As such this type of guardianship should be rejected.

This relatedness between churches can best be expressed by interdependence over and against a sense of independence.⁷⁰⁷ It can be argued that an understanding of ecclesial autonomy that expresses the direct relation and interdependence of churches sets the tone for what can be called an ecclesiology of vulnerability.

6.6 Towards an ecclesiology of vulnerability

In an article on the vulnerability of the Church, Koffeman asks the following questions: What does it mean to take vulnerability seriously in ecclesiology? Is something like a 'vulnerable ecclesiology' possible?⁷⁰⁸ These questions can only be answered if the term is more clearly defined. In this dissertation the notion of an ecclesiology of vulnerability is closely connected with the interdependent relation between churches. As such an ecclesiology of vulnerability points towards an ecclesiology characterised by reliance, openness and brokenness. It thus directly impacts on an understanding of being church as a church embodying such an ecclesiology is characterised by vulnerability, interrelatedness, brokenness and a continuous growing toward completion in Christ.

According to Nico Koopman 'ecclesial vulnerability is based on the vulnerability of the triune God to whom she (the Church) witnesses, as well as in the vulnerability of human beings'.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁶ See DJ Bosch, 'Die Selfonderhoud van die Inheemse Kerke. Is dit vir ons waarlik 'n saak van erns?', in *the Dutch Reformed Theological Journal*, Sept 1962, 485.

⁷⁰⁷ As noted in this as well as in the preceding chapters, ecclesial autonomy too often leads to a sense of independence. My proposed understanding of ecclesial autonomy, however, leaves no room for independence. In fact, I argue for the opposite namely that ecclesial autonomy should be an expression of interdependence.

⁷⁰⁸ Leo Koffeman, 'The vulnerable nature of the church – ecclesiological observations'. To be published paper.

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⁷⁰⁹ Nico Koopman, 'Vulnerable church in a vulnerable world? Towards an Ecclesiology of Vulnerability. In *the Journal of Reformed Theology*. No 2 (2008), 240'. Koopman notes that 'faith in the triune God comes to

As such it is no surprise that Koopman is of the opinion that 'vulnerability belongs to the essence of the church'.⁷¹⁰ In this regard he points out that '(T)he vulnerability of God is manifested in the relations of interdependence between Father, Son, and Spirit. It reaches its culmination point in the cross of Jesus Christ, and it comes to expression in the compassion, sympathy, concern, and solidarity of the triune God with a suffering world. From this vulnerable God - whose essence is that of vulnerability in Christ, and whose mission to the world culminates in the vulnerability of the cross - the church receives her essence, identity, and mission'.⁷¹¹ As such a church is both vulnerable and it testifies to a broken or vulnerable world. It knows sin and it knows holiness.

Taking this as a point of departure it is necessary to say that the identity of a vulnerable church, built on a vulnerable ecclesiology has direct implications for the structures of the church and as such also on the polity of a church. This will be pointed out later through a reading of Koffeman. It further impacts on the relation between churches and specifically on how this relation comes to expression - also on a congregational level. The relation between the church and the world, or the public role of the church, is further impacted on by the vulnerable nature of a church expressed in and through its ecclesiology. In essence it can thus be said that these questions directly relate to an understanding of being church and as such it relates to the central theme of this dissertation. Taking this into account I want to give attention to the mentioned aspects highlighting its impact on my proposed understanding of the autonomy of the church.

6.6.1. A vulnerable ecclesiology and the Interdependence of the Church

In line with Koopman, Reinders points out that vulnerability is part of the essence of being human.⁷¹² From an ethical and an anthropological perspective and in the light of his research Reinders is of the opinion that care and not independence, should be one of the fundamental features of being human.⁷¹³ For Reinders this means that care is an integral part of the acknowledgment that one is never independent.⁷¹⁴ It can be said that the notion of interdependence is central to Reinders's ethics. But, as is the case in this dissertation, Reinders opts for a specific understanding of interdependence, namely one that expresses

clearest expression in the life of service, humility, and self-sacrifice, and in the eventual death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.' See Koopman, 'Vulnerable church in a vulnerable world?'. In the *Journal of Reformed Theology*. No 2 (2008), 241.

⁷¹⁰ Koopman, 'Vulnerable church in a vulnerable world?'. In the *Journal of Reformed Theology*. No 2 (2008), 241.

⁷¹¹ Koopman, 'Vulnerable church in a vulnerable world?'. In the *Journal of Reformed Theology*. No 2 (2008), 243-244.

⁷¹² See in this regard, J (Hans) Reinders, *Wat niets kan worden, stelt niets voor. Mensen met een ernstige verstandelijke handicap in het licht van de hedendaagse gezondheidsethiek*. 1996. Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit.

⁷¹³ Reinders, *Wat niets kan worden, stelt niets voor*, 1996, 10.

⁷¹⁴ Reinders, *Wat niets kan worden, stelt niets voor*, 1996, 10.

the vulnerability and brokenness of, as well as the coming to full humanness of human beings in relation to others. A human being is therefore never complete, never whole, without its deep relatedness to other human beings.

Connecting this anthropological perspective to an ecclesiological perspective it becomes clear that this rings true for my understanding of ecclesial autonomy and the interdependence between churches. As such I agree with Koopman that Reinders's research relates directly to an ecclesiology of vulnerability in as much as it expresses a relational ecclesiology and koinonia between believers. As pointed out, such an ecclesiology has a direct impact on the notion of ecclesial autonomy.

The key to understanding the vulnerable nature of the church as expressed in ecclesiology is through an understanding or interpretation of the interdependent relation between churches. The following statement was expressed in previous chapters and indicated throughout this chapter: ecclesial autonomy is manifested in an interdependent relation between churches. This interdependent nature of the church needs to come to an expression and, as pointed out, particularly in an ecclesiology characterised by vulnerability - something that belongs to the essence of the church in the words of Koopman.⁷¹⁵ If this is the case it becomes clear that churches - and indeed also local congregations - should never try to function as independent entities but, as Reinders' perspective of human beings points out⁷¹⁶, as interdependent - never fully autonomous - bodies that form part of the one body of the one Christ.

According to Koffeman there are many ways to understand this vulnerability. He mentions the aspects of physical vulnerability (vulnerability related to the perceived size and power of a church), moral vulnerability (the moral vulnerability of the members of the church and also the violentness as is expressed in the structures/polity of the church), communicative vulnerability (open for fair criticism and debate, and ready to learn from new experiences - the value of this is that 'it resists being caught up in the mentality of perpetrator and victim') and compassionate vulnerability (the public witness and mission of the church in relation to a vulnerable world).⁷¹⁷ One can therefore conclude by saying that, for Koffeman, vulnerability in the church is not something abstract, it is something that can indeed be experienced and structurally expressed. For him an expression of this vulnerability is particularly found in the liturgy.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁵ Koopman, 'Vulnerable church in a vulnerable world?'. In the *Journal of Reformed Theology*. No 2 (2008), 241.

⁷¹⁶ 'True humanity is not defined by independence and rationality, but by the willingness to enter into relationships with others'. See Koopman, 'Vulnerable church in a vulnerable world?'. In the *Journal of Reformed Theology*. No 2 (2008), 245.

⁷¹⁷ See Leo Koffeman, 'The vulnerability of the church - ecclesiological observations'. To be published paper. 3 & 4.

⁷¹⁸ For Koffeman the liturgy should be the point of departure of ecclesiological thinking. See Koffeman, 'The vulnerable nature of the church - ecclesiological observations'. To be published paper. 11.

Taking this into account and relating it to the history of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches - a history characterised by amongst others inequality, subordination and guardianship - it becomes clear that these understandings of vulnerability speak against some of these historical realities.

This notion of interdependence finds explicit expression also in the current research of Koffeman. In his latest church juridical publication, *Het Goed Recht van die Kerk*, Koffeman refers to four quality markers of the church namely that of inclusivity, authenticity, conciliarity, and integrity.⁷¹⁹ For Koffeman the marker of inclusivity is directly related to that of (compassionate) vulnerability as it specifically impacts on the relation between churches as well as on the relation between the church and the world.⁷²⁰ When evaluating the history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches through these markers it soon becomes clear that these churches followed a different path in relation to the proposed understanding of vulnerability. As such it can indeed be said that the understanding of church or the ecclesiology as followed by the family of Dutch Reformed Churches stands in contrast to the proposed ecclesiology of vulnerability.

Both Koffeman and Koopman point out that their understanding of vulnerability and inclusivity - in as much as these two concepts relate to each other - belongs to the essence of the church. As such the interdependent and vulnerable nature of the church has a direct impact on the outlook on mission, structure, and theological identity of the church i.e. in the ecclesiology of the church. If this is not the case Koffeman warns that our ecclesiology might become too abstract, if not docetic.⁷²¹

A vulnerable ecclesiology should find expression in church polity. This has direct implications for the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches and, as indicated in the following section, also impacts on the current process of church re-unification within the ranks of the mentioned churches.

In the light of the abovementioned some remarks are made on possibilities of church planting, an understanding of unity in the church as well as on the possibility of diversity in confession in the light of and understanding of an ecclesiology of vulnerability and Koffeman's marker of inclusivity. In this regard I also mention the other three quality markers namely that of authenticity, conciliarity, and integrity as proposed by Koffeman in as much as it relates to the topic of discussion.

⁷¹⁹ See LJ Koffeman. *Het goed recht van de Kerk. Een theologische inleiding op het kerkrecht*. 2009. Kampen: Uitgeverij KOK.

⁷²⁰ Koffeman, *Het goed recht van de Kerk*, 2009, 164.

⁷²¹ Leo Koffeman, 'The vulnerable nature of the church – ecclesiological observations'. To be published paper.

6.6.2 The planting of autonomous churches - how does this look?

The notion that Christ alone governs His Church has direct implications for the planting of churches and specifically on the relation between the 'planter church' and the 'planted church' historically also articulated in the expression 'younger church' and 'older church'. Reformed church polity points out that the idea that a planted church should progress towards autonomy is not biblically motivated. The fact that a church is autonomous from the very beginning is, on the other hand, founded on the relation between Christ and the Church or the Lordship of Christ over the Church. This Reformed principle should be acknowledged when it comes to the planting of churches. As noted in Chapter 4 this does not deny that the *ecclesia completa* does not undergo necessary developments - a process that will reach a culmination in Christ's second coming.

This has clear implications for the relation between the 'planter church' and the 'planted church' as well as on the calling of the church. In this regard Koopman notes that '(T)he mode in which the vulnerable church fulfils her calling, participates in God's mission in the world, and thus Christian ethics and public theology is that of vulnerability, humility, and servanthood.'⁷²² This notion rings true for Koffeman as he points out that an *inclusive church* knows no boundaries - not between churches nor between cultural, economic and other historically formulated boundaries.⁷²³

As indicated in the previous sections, ecclesial autonomy points to the deep relatedness between churches under the Lordship of Christ. This 'relatedness' can best be expressed in the interdependence between churches and it should be articulated on different levels. Koffeman makes it clear that a church can never be fully inclusive. For him this is clearly expressed in a historical perspective. The only way that churches can best strive to be fully inclusive is, according to him, found in the relation between churches and as such he places a high priority on the expression of this relatedness.⁷²⁴

One of the most direct implications of the proposed understanding of ecclesial unity as flowing from an acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ found expression in striving towards the unity of the church both on a local as a global level. It is of interest to note that one of the decisions of the very influential Synod of Middelburg (1896) makes mention of this reality stating the following: '*Hoewel die Sinode van Middelburg die kweking van eiesoortige kerke op die sendingveld bepleit het, het hy hom dus ook ondubbelsinnig oor die*

⁷²² Koopman, 'Vulnerable church in a vulnerable world?'. In the *Journal of Reformed Theology*. No 2 (2008), 250.

⁷²³ 'Deze inclusiviteit komt dus mede tot uitdrukking in een steeds weer grenzen overschrijdende missionaire en diaconale betrokkenheid'. See Koffeman, *Het goed recht van de Kerk*, 2009, 164.

⁷²⁴ Koffeman, *Het goed recht van de Kerk*, 2009, 200.

*wesenlike eenheid van die kerk, oor rasse- en volksgrense heen, uitgespreek.*⁷²⁵ With this the Synod of Middelburg expressed its firm believe in the unity of the Church under the Lordship of Christ by pointing to the fact that this should be expressed structurally/visibly. Where the relatedness of churches are particularly expressed in their confessions, structures, dogma, etc, one can come to no other conclusion but that these churches should express their relatedness on a structural level. This rings especially true for the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

A vulnerable ecclesiology thus impacts on the abovementioned issues. As such it should be fully expressed in the polity of a church - particularly in Reformed church polity. As such the underlying principles of church polity, should express the vulnerable nature of the church. This vulnerability should direct the church to the outside as Koffeman points out: '*Als gestalte van de catholica is de kerk gericht op de wereld*'.⁷²⁶ As such it cannot but impact on the structure, dogma and polity of the church. In the following sections the impact of this on the being of the church is highlighted.

6.6.3 Unity in Diversity?

This of course brings us to the question of diversity and specifically the impact of our very diverse reading and interpretation of the Bible and how this impacts on our understanding of church unity. As noted, an acknowledgement of the deep and tangible relatedness between churches under the Lordship of Christ leaves room for diversity on different levels. Here it is once again important to take into account the relation between Christ, as Lord over His Church, within the Trinity of God as implied by the research of Koopman. One cannot interpret the immense significance of the confession that Christ is Lord without linking it to the Doctrine of the Trinity. Reformed Christians have always understood that diversity is present and celebrated in the unity of the Trinity.

In previous sections I pointed out how Voetius understood the formation and structure of a new church and what the significance is of the 'younger churches' developing their own 'theology', confessions, etc. As Voetius points out, the same can be said of the structure of new churches.⁷²⁷ Founded in the belief that Christ governs His Church, this once again points out the denial of any form of governance, hierarchy, or guardianship of an 'older church' over a 'younger church'.

⁷²⁵ Van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 40. For the full text of the synodical minutes see *Rapport van Deputaten tot de Zending aan de Generale Synode van die Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*, bijeenroeping tegen 11 Augustus 1896 naar Middelburg. Leiden: Boekdrukkerij van D. Donner.

⁷²⁶ Koffeman, *Het goed recht van de Kerk*, 2009, 184. Own Italics.

⁷²⁷ See in this regard Voetius, G. 1910. *De Plantatione Ecclesiarum. Tractaat over De Planting en de Planters van Kerken*. Translated by D. Poll. Groningen: Firma Bouwman & Venema; Van Andel, HA, 1912. *De Zendingsleer van Gijsbertus Voetius*. Kampen: JH Kok.

I have tried to express that, within their histories, the DRMC and the DRCA have undergone unique developments especially regarding their theology. These can be attributed to the context within which these churches were moulded as well as external theological influences from contexts similar to that of the DRMC and the DRCA. I am also of the opinion that these theological developments arose from the relation between these churches and the DRC. As such this subordinate position greatly impacted on the self-understanding of these churches, which eventually found expression in their theology. In itself this development can be positive. However, these 'theological differences' should not be the cause of further division within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches to the extent that these churches alienate themselves from each other. Here the vulnerable and interdependent nature of the church should be taken into account.

The family of Dutch Reformed Churches has an immense deal of commonalities. These churches, to a certain extent, share a common history. The binding factor is their rootedness in the (South) African context. As such the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches should enrich each other - also with their nuanced differences. Willie Jonker reminds us that churches should be careful not to let their diversity lead to brokenness and separation. Unity within the church is much more important than the differences that exist between members.⁷²⁸ Koffeman makes it clear that relation between churches on a broader/ecumenical level is of extreme importance. However, he also points out that, '(O)nly a church, which is capable to actively and creatively deal with the questions of unity and diversity, confessionality and contextually, etc. also in its internal life, may play a positive role in ecumenical life'.⁷²⁹ This of course brings a lot of challenges to the table of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

6.6.4 Diversity in Confession?

The theological differences within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches seem to find a culmination in the Belhar Confession.⁷³⁰ As noted in the previous chapters and as seen from documentation regarding the process of church re-unification between the churches within the mentioned family of churches, the incorporation of the Belhar Confession within the structures of the united church remains a contentious issue. Regarding the place and role of confession in the Reformed tradition, Eberhard Busch reminds the family of Dutch Reformed Churches by expressing the following:

In brief, in their confessions the Reformed confess not their denominational distinctiveness, but rather, in their concrete location and with their own

⁷²⁸ See Jonker, *Aandag vir die Kerk*, 1965.

⁷²⁹ Koffeman, 'The urge for unity. Local and Supralocal churches in the Dutch Reformation'. In Koffeman & Witte, *Of all Times and of all Places*, 2001, 88.

⁷³⁰ These differences should in my view not be overestimated. I believe that this is uniquely pointed out in the content of the Belhar Confession when compared to a reading of the DRC document *Kerk en Samelewing: 'n Getuigenis van die Ned. Geref. Kerk*. 1986. Pretoria: Algemene Sinodale Kommissie.

understanding, they confess a universal church. They consider themselves as part of that church, without making themselves coincident with it, much less taking over other churches. In this manner a church thinks in spiritual freedom with regard to its own confession. It does not confess its being Reformed, but rather confesses itself, as Reformed, to the one church of Christ.⁷³¹

One should therefore not forget that confession, as understood in the Reformed tradition, acknowledges the direct governance of Christ over His church and therefore calls for unity amongst churches. It is therefore no surprise that the Belhar Confession ends off with the core confession of the ecumenical church, namely that Jesus is Lord.⁷³² This comes to a full expression in an ecclesiology built on vulnerability - an ecclesiology that takes the vulnerable nature of the church seriously. In this regard the Belhar Confession expresses the vulnerability of the church in a particular way. The three central tenets of this confession namely that of unity, reconciliation and justice testify that the church is in essence vulnerable and in this way this confession tries to stay faithful to the call of God.⁷³³ Botman points out that *'(D)ie belydenis van Belhar is nie soseer die getuienis van die regte geloof nie, maar van 'n geloofwaardige manier van lewe as 'n gereformeerde Christen in Suid-Afrika'*.⁷³⁴ He continues by commenting on the context within which this confession was born as well as on its content, stating that:

*(D)ie Belydenis van Belhar gaan verder egter op hierdie saak in en verklaar dat sodanige situasie, dit wil sê waar die evangelie self op die spel is, nie alleen op die wyse waarop regeer word van toepassing is nie. Dit is ook van toepassing in enige situasie van verontregting, uitbuiting en vyandigheid. In só 'n situasie (en nie slegs onder formele wetgewing nie) word, volgens die Belydenis, God geopenbaar as die God van geregtigheid wat die saak van die arme en die verontregte sy eie maak. Hierin funksioneer die "besondere openbaring" van God (ook), aldus die Belydenis van Belhar.*⁷³⁵

In line with Botman and in the wake of the theological underpinnings of the Belhar Confession Koopman reminds us that '(T)he church serves a vulnerable God. The church

⁷³¹ Eberhard Busch, 'Reformed Strength in Denominational Weakness', In Alston & Welker (eds), *Reformed Theology, Identity and Ecumenicity*, 2003, 26.

⁷³² See in this regard The Confession of Belhar

<http://www.ngkerk.org.za/VGKSA/documents/BelharConfession.doc>

⁷³³ 'Faithfulness to God implies that we recognise our vulnerable essence as church - a vulnerability that is based in the vulnerability of the God whom we worship, and in the vulnerability of the people that he has created. Faithfulness implies that we give priority to the most vulnerable ones. It also means that we fulfil our calling in all walks of life in the mode of vulnerability.' See Koopman, 'Vulnerable church in a vulnerable world?'. In the *Journal of Reformed Theology*. No 2 (2008), 254.

⁷³⁴ Russel Botman, 'Gereformeerdeheid en die Belydenis van Belhar (1986)?'. In WA Boesak en PJA Fourie, *Vraagtekens oor Gereformeerdeheid*, 1998, 96.

⁷³⁵ HR Botman, 'Gereformeerdeheid en die Belydenis van Belhar (1986)?'. In WA Boesak en PJA Fourie, *Vraagtekens oor Gereformeerdeheid*, 1998, 111.

consists of vulnerable human beings. The vocation, mission, ethics, and public theology of such a church are determined by the notion of vulnerability'.⁷³⁶ This calls the church to not only proclaim its vulnerability but also to serve in vulnerability. Or as Koffeman notes: '*Kerk bestaat nooit eenvoudigweg voor zichzelf, maar vanuit haar oorsprong voor de anderen, voor de mensheid, voor de wereld*'.⁷³⁷

This is echoed by Smit when he points out that the Belhar confession and its immense impact on especially the URCSA should also be expressed outside the structures of this church and how specifically the church's life and its understanding of its identity and its church order in the world.⁷³⁸ Smit then poses the questions namely to what extent has the URCSA expressed its confession and ecclesiology in its public life.⁷³⁹

With this in mind I now turn my attention to the aspect and process of church re-unification within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. Brief remarks will be made in this regard.

6.7 Church re-unification in the family of Dutch Reformed Churches and the road ahead - some remarks⁷⁴⁰

It should be noted that the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches have been in a process of re-unification for close to three decades. The momentum for this process is found in the general synodical decision of the DRCA in 1975 to reject apartheid as unbiblical and to strive towards unity with the other churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. This was followed by a similar decision by the synod of the DRMC in 1978. It is of interest to note that the decisions relating to church re-unification in these churches are coupled with a strong rejection of apartheid under the premise that it was in contradiction with Biblical principles. In this manner the DRMC and the DRCA showed that a rejection of state apartheid cannot but coincide with a rejection of church structures that are built on these very principles of separation. However, valiant efforts towards church re-unification have not realised within the broader family of Dutch Reformed Churches. An exception to this is found in the unification between the former DRMC and the biggest part of the DRCA in forming the URCSA in 1994.

Throughout this dissertation I have referred to the similarities and dissimilarities between the mission history of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches and the histories of other churches and mission organisations in South(-ern) Africa and, as noted, there are a lot of

⁷³⁶ N Koopman, 'Vulnerable church in a vulnerable world?'. In the *Journal of Reformed Theology*. No 2 (2008), 246.

⁷³⁷ Koffeman, *Het goed recht van de Kerk*, 2009, 189.

⁷³⁸ DJ Smit, 'Bely en Beliggaam', In P Coertzen, *350 Years Reformed*, 2002, 370.

⁷³⁹ DJ Smit, 'Bely en Beliggaam', In P Coertzen, *350 Years Reformed*, 2002, 370.

⁷⁴⁰ It should be noted that my focus in this section will fall on processes pertaining to the DRC, the DRMC and the DRCA, and the URCSA as this falls within the scope of my dissertation. With this I do not deny the reality that the Reformed church in Africa (RCA) is also included within this process of church re-unification as it is one of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

similarities. On the basis of the unique socio-political context in the history of South Africa, I also showed that there are a number of differences. Perhaps the major difference between global developments and developments in South Africa relates to the process of re-unification between the mentioned churches. The difference is of course found in the fact that, on a global level, the planting of churches by churches or mission societies from e.g. Europe or Northern America happened on 'mission fields' that were situated on continents other than that of the 'sending church'. In the context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches it is clear that the four different churches that constitute this family of churches are in the same geographical area(s).⁷⁴¹ This fact should be remembered in any discussion or deliberation on the possible re-unification of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

To this fact another can be added. All the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches share in the theological foundation of the Reformed church over all times and places. This is signified in the common Reformed confessions that form the confessional basis of all the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. Van der Merwe agrees with this and he consequently states the following: '*(I)n ons besinning oor hierdie saak dien ons eerstens daarop te let dat die moeder- en dogterkerke, kragtens hul historiese verband en gemeenskaplike belydenisgrondslag, wesenlik een kerk is.*'⁷⁴²

How this notion of unity found expression in history and how it is viewed today, remains a contentious issue. It should, however, be noted that all the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches have committed themselves towards church re-unification with the other Churches within the family.⁷⁴³ Secondary issues relating to the structure of this new church and its confessional basis, however, plague the re-unification process.⁷⁴⁴

It is interesting to note that the unequal financial relation especially between the DRC and the URCSA comes to the fore in recent dialogues over church re-unification. As such the effects and paradigm of the 'three selves theory' are still visible to a certain degree in the

⁷⁴¹ 'Nêrens in die wêreld bestaan daar 'n parallel vir hierdie situasie waar 'n Ouere Kerk sy sendingveld binne sy eie grense het en 'n Jongere Kerk binne hierdie gemeenskaplike grense kon sien groei nie.' See JH Smit, *Die amp van die sendingleraar in die jongere Kerk*, 1974, 157.

⁷⁴² Van der Merwe, *Gesante om Christus Wil*, 1967, 66-67.

⁷⁴³ See in this regard the decisions taken at the recent Achterberg conferences between the DRC, the DRCA, the RCA and the URCSA:

http://ngkok.co.za/achterberg2/Re-unification_Process_Achterberg_II.pdf

<http://ngkok.co.za/achterberg/Achterberg%20Declaration%202006.pdf>

http://ngkok.co.za/achterberg/StandpunNGKASandpunte_RakendeKerkeenheid_Acheterberg.pdf

<http://ngkok.co.za/achterberg/TheChurchTheRcaWantsToSee.pdf>

⁷⁴⁴ It should however be mentioned that at the time this dissertation was finalised, the General Synod of the URCSA (2008) decided to call a moratorium on all unity discussions between this church and the other churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. See in this regard the pastoral letter of the URCSA General Synod sent to the ministers and congregations of this church. <http://www.ngkerk.org.za/VGKSA/News.asp>

context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. Although this unequal relation can be attributed to socio-economic factors relating to the history of South Africa, Bosch is of the opinion that, in the ecclesial context, one should be careful not to measure the financial relations between the DRC and the other churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.⁷⁴⁵ In this regard the family of Dutch Reformed Churches should be careful not to let history repeat itself. This calls on the DRC, the DRCA, the RCA and the URCSA to take the calling for unity within their ranks even more seriously. As indicated, this calling finds particular impetus from the acknowledgment of Christ's Lordship over His Church. Or as Visser 't Hooft notes:

*Wanneer er slechts één Koning is, wanneer verlossing betekent deel hebben aan het ene Lichaam, dan kan geen kerk zich er bij neerleggen, dat Gods volk verstrooid en het Lichaam gebroken is. Niet ter wille van groter doelmatigheid in hun praktische taak, niet ter wille een gezamenlijk front tegen gemeenschappelijke vijanden, maar ter bevestiging van haar trouw aan de Koning, wiens Koninkrijk niet tegen zichzelf verdeeld kan zijn, moeten de kerken de moeilijke pelgrimstocht aanvangen om te komen tot een zichtbare en tastbare eenheid.*⁷⁴⁶

The vulnerable nature of the church dictates that interdependence and unity should find expression in the structures of the church. As indicated in previous sections this has direct implications for the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. The whole ecclesiology of the mentioned churches should reflect the vulnerable nature of the church. As such the polity of a church should thus reflect the 'humility and servanthood' that Koopmans speaks about.⁷⁴⁷

To a very real extent an ecclesiology of vulnerability pre-determines the process of reunification to the extent that it impacts on the pillars of this process, which should also be characterised by the mentioned 'humility and servanthood' as well as a sense of brokenness and longing or need for the other. It can be argued that this asks of the churches involved to not only deal with their histories, but also to constructively build their new identity learning from the mistakes of the past. Enough room should be left for theological variation within the unified church as these variations will enrich the church. As such the churches involved should clearly understand that they grow together and in doing so, they will further develop their direct relation with Christ.

⁷⁴⁵ See DJ Bosch, 'Die Selfonderhoud van die Inheemse Kerke. Is dit vir ons waarlik 'n saak van erns?', in *the Dutch Reformed Theological Journal*, Sept 1962, 485. In this regard he notes that the model for church organisation and the organisation machinery taken over by the church on the mission field might not fit into the framework of life and being in the context of the 'younger church', and as such might not be valued in the same light as western organisational features.

⁷⁴⁶ WA Visser 't Hooft, *Het Koningschap van Christus*, 1947, 105.

⁷⁴⁷ Koopman, 'Vulnerable church in a vulnerable world?'. In the *Journal of Reformed Theology*. No 2 (2008), 250.

In a previous section I pointed out that Koffeman shows that the church should always orientate itself to the outside. In view of the abovementioned this serves as a reminder for the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches in the post apartheid era. Koffeman challenges the mentioned churches to realise that their calling is still to search for inclusive form(s) of being church.⁷⁴⁸

Smit agrees with this and points out that that which is confessed by the church should indeed be embodied in every sphere of church and even broader. In this regard he shows to the impact of Belhar on the family of Dutch Reformed Churches stating a church that embodies this confession in every sphere of daily life. Or as Smit states: *'(K)onkreet sou dit hiër beteken - vir 'n kerk wat die Belydenis van Belhar beliggaam - dat geroepenheid tot vryheid, geleefde eenheid, ware versoening, ontfermende geregtigheid en verantwoordelikheid aan Christus as Heer die alledaagse, ook openbare lewe en getuienis van die kerk behoort te stempel.*⁷⁴⁹

It is important that the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches should not repeat the mistakes of the past on the road towards re-unification. An ecclesiology of vulnerability built on the notion of ecclesial autonomy as interdependance can aid these churches in realising their relatedness and their intrinsic unity.⁷⁵⁰ That this vulnerability should however find expression in the ecclesiology, doctrine, and structure of the mentioned churches is a pre-requisite. Koffeman warns that if this is not the case the church runs the risk of nullifying the message that it proclaims.⁷⁵¹

6.8 Conclusion

Throughout this study I have discussed some missional developments relating to church planting and, by doing this, showed towards the South(-ern) African reality and especially the reality of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. Specific reference was given to the histories of the DRMC and the DRCA. I have tried to show that although there are historical similarities between global developments and local occurrences, the missional outlook as expressed in the relation between the DRC and her 'mission churches'

⁷⁴⁸ Koffeman, *Het goed recht van de Kerk*, 2009, 199. For Koffeman this also relates to the internal workings of the church and particularly in the inclusive nature of the church when taking into account the gender and sexual orientation of members. *'Inclusiviteit van de kerk betekent ook dat vrouwen in de kerk dezelfde rechten en mogelijkheden hebben als mannen en dat iemands seksuele oriëntatie geen argument is bij de toekenning van rechten en plichten'*. See Koffeman, *Het goed recht van de Kerk*, 2009, 199.

⁷⁴⁹ 'DJ Smit, 'Bely en Beliggaam', In P Coertzen, *350 Years Reformed*, 2002, 371.

⁷⁵⁰ Flip Theron points out what the effect of vulnerability has on a church. Taking the history of the DRC as point of departure he points out that it asks of the church to look differently to the world pleading that the church (specifically the DRC) has to adopt to a changing context. See in this regard, PF Theron, 'From moral authority to insignificant minority: The precarious state of the Dutch Reformed churches in post-apartheid South Africa'. In the *Journal of Reformed Theology*. No. 2 (2008). 228-239.

⁷⁵¹ Koffeman, *Het goed recht van de Kerk*, 2009, 187.

took on a unique mode. This unique development cannot but be interpreted in the light of the socio-political context of South Africa in the time period dealt with in this study. Any interpretation of the historical events in these South African Reformed churches should take this into account. In this regard the establishment of separate 'mission churches' grew in the wake of social developments and that, on the basis of a specific understanding of 'effective evangelism', the Scriptural basis for unity was relativised. Remarks on unity and church re-unification within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches cannot but be interpreted on the basis of this reality.

Regarding the process of church re-unification between the DRC, the DRCA, the RCA and the URCSA, these churches should guard against repeating the mistakes of the past and as such the lessons learned should be remembered. This can best be done by understanding the histories of the mentioned churches. The churches should deal with their past(s) in a responsible manner and through this they should give expression of their identity as Reformed churches. In this regard Margit Ernst notes the following:

How we understand ourselves has a great impact on how we relate to others, how we understand and act out our relationships. This is true not only for individuals, but also for communities and here in particular, for communities of faith. To enter into a relationship, into a dialogue, means to bring into this relationship what and who we are – what we have in common with our partners and what distinguishes us from them.⁷⁵²

The DRC, the DRCA, the RCA and the URCSA should acknowledge their differences and particularly the way these differences play out in their theology and confession. In this regard Ernst is of the opinion that this will guide faith communities to realise their relatedness as members of the One Body of the One Christ. Ernst notes that '(T)he more the churches that are engaged in interconfessional dialogues are aware of their own identity, not as a particular confession or denominational, but as representatives of the one church, the more these churches will be willing to learn from each other and, most importantly, from the scriptures, what the already given unity of the church means for them'.⁷⁵³ This remains a challenge to the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

These churches are called to be faithful to the Word of God. And as Koopman notes, '(A) faithful church will prove to be a relevant church'.⁷⁵⁴ For Koopman '(F)aithfulness to God implies that we recognise our vulnerable essence as church – a vulnerability that is based in

⁷⁵² Margit Ernst, 'We Believe the One Holy and Catholic Church...: Reformed Identity and the Unity of the Church', In Alston & Welker (eds), *Reformed Theology, Identity and Ecumenicity*, 2003, 85.

⁷⁵³ Ernst, 'We Believe the One Holy and Catholic Church...: Reformed Identity and the Unity of the Church', In Alston & Welker (eds), *Reformed Theology, Identity and Ecumenicity*, 2003, 95.

⁷⁵⁴ Koopman, 'Vulnerable church in a vulnerable world?'. In the *Journal of Reformed Theology*. No 2 (2008), 253.

the vulnerability of the God whom we worship, and in the vulnerability of the people that he has created'.⁷⁵⁵

As pointed out in this concluding chapter it can be argued that the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches should strive towards embodying an ecclesiology of vulnerability. This vulnerability should find a particular expression in the inherent relatedness of and interdependence between the mentioned churches. This relatedness can best be expressed in the structural re-unification of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

⁷⁵⁵ Koopman, 'Vulnerable church in a vulnerable world?'. In the *Journal of Reformed Theology*. No 2 (2008), 254.

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