

## Serving in the Body of Christ

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### **The tension**

Meeting each other in connection with our Reformed Theological Seminary we find ourselves in the realm of Christ's body. This expression is used in many places in the New Testament to indicate the Church.<sup>1</sup> Even the very word for 'church' (Kirche, kerk), from the Greek *kuriakos/kuriakè*, means 'belonging to the Lord', the *kurios*. These NT words are related to the OT expression, used for God's people as the congregation, or the assembly of the Lord, in Hebrew the *qahal 'edonai*.<sup>2</sup> The church is entirely, completely, His. And in a very compelling expression called *His body*.

From the very beginning it is nevertheless clear, that in His congregation the Lord is not the only one present. The body of Christ consists of people. We do not need an explanation of that fact. As soon as we come across the church we see people. I even might say we only see people: men, women, and children in a great number and of an enormous variety. We might deal with the church in many aspects only representing this human reality. Several theological disciplines exist – like religious sociology and psychology - that exclusively try to focus on the human presence and the human motives visible in the church.

Of course a human reality of the church is something that exists. In church history as well as in present day life the church shows this human face. It is not unknown to us and to our dealing with the church to use expressions like 'my church' or 'our church'. At this stage already it is possible to be aware of a serious tension that is visible there. Because my church is not mine, and our church is not ours. The church is the Lord's. The proper way to deal with this tension must become clear when we deal with the offices in the church.

#### **The office of shepherds, overseers, as well as believers**

Members of the church are office-bearers. A pastor is a minister - meaning servant - and an elder or a deacon no less are servants of Christ. They certainly are office-bearers. But also the members of the church are rightly said to bear the office of all believers.

It is essential to an office-bearer in the church that he never is on his own. The apostles were with twelve men. Having an office in the church without others is not possible. A church with only one officer (pastor, elder or deacon) cannot exist on its own. A pastor, a shepherd, sometimes finds himself in a lonely position, even when a church council does exist. If such loneliness appears we can easily conclude that the council of elders (and perhaps deacons) is not functioning properly. A pastor as a matter of fact is only one of the overseers. He never is the boss! For that matter even in the early church the principle was accepted, that the

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<sup>1</sup> See especially in Paul, Rom 12,5; 1Cor 10,16f; 12,12-20.27 and the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Deut 23,1-3; Josh 22,16-17 etc. etc.

church council, or the consistory, should exist of minimal three persons. Why? Because no church shall have power or dominion over another church, and no servant shall have dominion over another servant, as the *Church Order of Dort* formulates.<sup>3</sup> The old principle of lawful proceeding in the classic Roman society *Tres faciunt collegium*<sup>4</sup> also in the realm of the Christian church received legitimacy. Of course the consistory in the church nor the offices could ever function properly without the recognition of Christ the only Bishop of the church.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that on good grounds the idea of a human hierarchy in the church was rejected. And also, that no individual office-bearer can function on his own, nor can distance himself from a decision of the consistory, saying: 'I voted against that decision'. The decisions by the body of office-bearers are not presented as decisions of a majority. They in fact represent Christ, not a human entity. Perhaps now I must say: They *have to* represent Christ, and may not present a human decision.

With these last remarks it is clear that the tension, as already indicated, is not removed with a few pious expressions. We have to go into this tension on a deeper level, listening to the Word of God.

## **2. CHRIST IS THE HEAD AND OWNER OF THE CHURCH**

### ***The identity of the one church***

When we read in the Word of God, that the congregation is the body of Christ, and that Jesus Christ is the only Head of the church, we have to accept two things:

- that the church is one. Christ, our Head, has only one body. All confessions since the early church speak of the church in the singular number. We do not believe in *a* church, but in *the* church.
- that the church is not ours, but His.

In the apostolic writings of the New Testament we come across expressions about the church as the *people of God*<sup>6</sup>, and as the *temple of the Holy Spirit*<sup>7</sup>, but the main emphasis, especially in Paul's letters, is on the expression of the *body of Christ*. In this connection we immediately have to realize, that Christ cannot be mentioned without being aware of His connection in the Trinity of God. The church at any time is also church of the Triune God. Still being the church primarily means being the church of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the most important rule in the Church Order, issued by the Synod of Dort in 1619.

<sup>4</sup> A board can consist of three (or more)..

<sup>5</sup> See *Belgic Confession*, Art. 31, 'As for the Ministers of God's Word, they have equally the same power and authority wheresoever they are, as they are all Ministers of Christ, the only universal Bishop, and the only Head of the Church.' When spoken of the esteem that is demanded for the offices the ministers of the Word and the elders are mentioned in the same breath.

<sup>6</sup> Heb 4,9; 8,10; 11,25; 1 Peter 2,9-10.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor 3,16; 6,19.

<sup>8</sup> It is impressive in this connection to be reminded of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's expression: 'Christus als Gemeinde existierend' ('Christ existing as church'). See also J.W. Maris, 'De kerk tussen geheimenis en getuigenis'in: G.C. den Hertog en B. Kamphuis (Hg.), *Dietrich Bonhoeffer. De uitdaging van zijn leven en werk voor nu*, Barneveld 2006, 41ff.

In order to clarify this I like to use the word identity. The identity of the church cannot be found outside Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12,12 we read 'The body is a unit, though it is made of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. *So it is with Christ.*' Some translations wrongly add some words and say: '*So it is with the body of Christ.*' But the identity at stake is the identity of Christ. One body with many members, and the identity of the body is Christ Himself, who is the Head.

We immediately feel the tension again, because we observe the reality of the church, and we see people, sinners, and we see sin and brokenness, and we see indolence and unwillingness, we see stubborn characters, in members of the church as well as in office-bearers. If we, however, try to find the identity of the body, the church, along such lines, we are on the wrong track. The identity of the church is nowhere else to be found than in its Head. When we look at Christ, His entire body is included in Him.

As an example you might think of a passport. The photograph on this document only shows a head! Only about one fifth of the entire body of this person is visible! Yet in the head the decisive identity of this person is presented. Other names, stories or body characteristics are redundant. Speaking of the church as the body of Christ, the apostle Paul speaks of the congregation in which 'we in all things will grow up into Him who is the Head, that is Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.' (Ephesians 4,15-16).

### ***No ideal picture***

A wonderful, almost heavenly, picture of the church and of the servants of the church this is! But we still find ourselves on the earth... The church is no enclave in this world, surrounded by, but not infected by sin. In Ephesians 4 we heard of *growth*. We are not yet where we hope to arrive at. In many places in the NT we hear of saints, who at the same time appear to be sinners. We even come across warnings against false brothers<sup>9</sup> and against an office-bearer whose ambition it is to be the most important one.<sup>10</sup> We hear of a conflict between Paul and Peter that raised high.<sup>11</sup> In Corinth parties were organised, in which also office-bearers were involved. A special meeting with the apostles in Jerusalem was held not without reason – see Acts 15 - because nota bene a complete split appeared to be imminent in the one body of Christ.

We recognize such situations in the church of our time. We know the reality of divisions and separations in the church. Why is that? Because we, as office-bearers, including the office of being a member in the church, still are sinners.

Why was there an appeal to elders in the church to be examples of the flock?<sup>12</sup> Because the elders were not like that out of themselves. Motives from a worldly attitude could move them, one of those being greedy for money.

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<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor 11,26.

<sup>10</sup> 3 John,9.

<sup>11</sup> See Gal 2.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Peter 5,3.

Dangers like those, threatening the offices, also threaten the church. How vitally important it is, that servants of the church are able to discern between what in our inner motives comes from the flesh, from our own sinful nature, and what comes from the Spirit of God. Being able to make this practical distinction is a vital mandate for every Christian, but especially for each of the office-bearers in the church.

Carnal wishes and inclinations can become dominant in the church of Christ. We may think of the Church of Rome in the middle-ages, where the motive of power infected the entire ecclesiastical structure. We meanwhile have reason enough to think of our own church life. It can become a judgment within the church of Christ, when unspiritual motives are playing a prominent part in church life.<sup>13</sup>

In my country about 20 years ago a church report was published, in which – in order to serve the unity of the church – a distinction was made between the fundamental and the non-fundamental identity of the church.<sup>14</sup> Fundamental features can only be such as proceeding from Christ and His work, received through the Holy Spirit, in obedience to the Word of God. Not-fundamental are such things that result from human activity, human abilities. Such things may have been successful, but can also easily stand in the way of the work of our Lord.

Of course, for human efforts building up the church in faithful service we must be thankful, but human actions must not obscure the pre-eminence of Christ! We certainly have to search our hearts in the light of the Scriptures to this effect, distinguishing between what is ours, and what is His! Personal and ecclesiastical soul-searching, full of prayer and in the light of the Scriptures and of church history must be a task of us all. Being aware of what is going on in churches in general, I fear this spiritual exercise is hardly sought in our age. Amidst of all sorts of pain connected to being church of Christ we need to be brought back to Him, our Head. In Him alone, in communion with Him, we must seek cure and life, in order that also a sound church life will be found.

### ***A spiritual mission***

We have no reason to suppose as something automatic, that through the office-bearers that we have chosen and confirmed, Christ Himself will do what He wants. Many examples in the New Testament teach us how the church will be in danger if ministers, elders and deacons start going astray. Even the lampstand or the candlestick of a church, the legitimate existence as body of Christ, can be removed from its place.<sup>15</sup> The apostolic admonitions are most serious.<sup>16</sup> The *Belgic Confession* does not speak of the false church without serious ground. A false church does not come into being out of the blue, but as result of a process of

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<sup>13</sup> See e.g. 1 Cor 10 with the several warnings there, coming to a head in discipline around the Lord's Supper. Those warnings are written for us, and what is quoted about Israel's sin in the Old Testament even occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did! (1 Cor 10,6).

<sup>14</sup> 'Normatief' or 'niet-normatief'. See *Zoeken naar kerkelijke eenheid*, published by the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Amsterdam 2003, 28ff.

<sup>15</sup> Rev 2,5.

<sup>16</sup> Gal 5,2,4; Col 1,23; 1 Cor 10,12; 2 Cor 11,3 etc. etc.

degeneration within the true church of Christ. This can be a very slow process, in which at last the obedience to Christ is not any more decisive.<sup>17</sup>

Many things might be said about the claims for the pure identity of the church and of a congregation. Such claims are seen in the tradition, in the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our age. We come across the clamor of the right spiritual choices that were made when a separation or an independent existing congregation was formed. So easily we enter into discussions in which names are given to those that did not follow the same path as we did. Of course we will be right most of the time... Nevertheless, if our diagnosis of the failures of others is easily given, and at the same time the medicine we are in need of ourselves is held at a distance, our words are without meaning or power.

We ourselves must concentrate on the heavenly physician Christ, because we all, officers and members of the church, are in need of the medicine He provides. We must all be aware of the necessary spiritual orientation, the only one that is pure.

### ***Serving the church through faith in God and Jesus Christ***

We certainly are aware of the responsibility of office-bearers in the church. The Lord Himself gave them the room for their task, and the room to develop their duties according to their talents. This has been rightly characterized as the dynamic character of the church.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout the ages the Lord has called people to the responsibility of service, of an office-bearer. Clearly there is a legitimate dynamic development in those activities. The essential character that must be decisive in all this work has to do with the unity of the body and its growth, as growth towards the Head, as we saw in Ephesians 4, 15-16 and in Colossians 1,19. The unity with Christ, the Head, and the unity of the members in one body, lead to a general impression, in which all is given by the Lord Jesus Christ and in which the entire body submits itself under His authority. The Lord wants us, as people with our responsibilities, to be switched on, not to be switched off. This demands a living relationship between the Lord and us.

It is faith, that in this relation is decisive. This is not a formal relationship, no administrative appointment. We better look at the example of marriage: a relation in which the heart is at stake. In which you look each other in the eyes and ask questions to one another.

This is the way in which God wants to have communion with sinful people. And this must be a reality for office-bearers and for members of the church. It has consequences for the way each one in the congregation is connected to the others. It has to do with your own personal prayers and your personal Bible reading. From this background it is possible to be brother and sister of each other in the Lord, and to bear responsibility for the flock. How in this

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<sup>17</sup> See *Belgic Confession*, art. 29.

<sup>18</sup> W. van Vlastuin, *Katholiek vandaag*, Apeldoorn 2017, 225.

relation faith, hope and love are inseparable from each other! And how in this relation we are entirely dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup>

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are in their plenitude as the Triune God affected with man. The history of salvation, as visible from Genesis to Revelation, testifies to that divine Love. It is all from God! Already in Eden, after the Fall of man, God, still in His love searching man, called them: 'Where are you?'<sup>20</sup> Already at that very moment the history of God and man became salvation history. There was the ugly reality of guilt and the sentence of death, and yet there were, as a majestic surprise, God's searching eyes of grace. God wants men, how powerless, ungodly, sinners and enemies they are, to hear his voice of calling love!<sup>21</sup>

This double qualification of God's history with man, by 'guilt and grace', also qualifies the life of the church, and even the service of men in the church of God. This will be visible in our exercise of faith, in the justification of ungodly people, in our personal relation with the Word of God, in prayer, and in the conversation among believers in the church about knowing the Lord. The office-bearer who is conscious of his calling to provide spiritual leadership in the church, and to be an example amidst the flock, may exactly in this personal, humble exercise of faith find the well and the courage for his task! That means also, that he impossibly can be a person that is impressed by his personal importance. His privilege is, that he himself, lowly under the Word of God, is zealous to let the authority of that Word be felt in the congregation of Christ.

### **3. PRACTICAL AND SPIRITUAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CHURCH AND ITS OFFICERS**

#### ***No believing without confessing***

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul makes clear, that amidst the variety, visible in the church, yet the unity of the one body must be seen. This unity is closely connected to confessing Christ mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. 'No-one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says "Jesus is cursed" and no-one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.'<sup>22</sup> This connection between believing and confessing is clear throughout the New Testament.<sup>23</sup> What we believe also demands to be expressed, or openly confessed. It is more or less rational that the growth of the church of Christ during the first centuries became visible in both believing *and* confessing. The content of the faith as confessed was further formulated in the course of the ages, on the basis of believing and knowing the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>24</sup>

It started with the confession of Christ, and as an organic development faith and confessing went along. Of course such a development has to exist in our hearts also! And even from the

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<sup>19</sup> See Hans Maris, 'De drie-enige God in gemeenschap met ons. Over de heilige Geest en zijn werk', in H. ten Brinke, J.W. Maris e.a., *Geestrijk leven*, Barneveld 2006, 14-27.

<sup>20</sup> Gen 3,16.

<sup>21</sup> Such qualifications are given in Romans 5,6-10.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Cor 12,2.

<sup>23</sup> See for this connection between believing and confessing a.o. Rom 10,9-11; 1 John 3,23; 4,2; 15-16; 5,2.10.

<sup>24</sup> The study of the early confessions clearly testifies to this development. See e.g. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (1950), Third edition Harlow/New York 1972.

nature of faith – being a trust in God and in Christ, closely connected with the confession, the doctrine of the church – it is quite clear that no competition can exist between the authority of Christ, the Head, and the responsibility of believers in their attitude in the church.

Certainly, believers - and among them in the first line the office-bearers – are important. They know to be connected to the Lord Jesus in the same way as John the Baptist knew that, in his testimony: ‘He must become greater; I must become less.’<sup>25</sup> The same orientation on Christ is inherent to the catholicity of the church, and to the way our confession characterizes our faith.

### ***Christ’s denunciation of divisions in the church***

When in the church of Christ relations between members become tense, this may become a threat to the church. When such tensions become visible as parties– mostly recognisable when someone is followed as a leader of such a party – this almost ever goes together with blindness for the central position of Christ. The importance of some person, of his vision, his qualities, comes first. That parties in the congregation of Corinth were wrong, because groups in the church started saying ‘I belong to...’<sup>26</sup>, that illustrates also what is wrong in our time. In Paul’s rhetorical question over against this - ‘Is Christ divided?’<sup>27</sup> - he radically condemns the status of human leaders in the church.

Our eyes must not be fixed on the qualities of men. Not only because they can fall from their pedestal, but in the first place for the sake of Christ. For this reason the doctrine of the church, the confession, is so primarily important! The Reformation was so important, because the central position of the Word of God was rediscovered. The *Belgic Confession* rightly begins with the articles 2-7 about the foundation of faith, the Holy Scriptures. At the same time it is clear that the Scriptures are closely connected to Christ. Why is that? Because it is He, according to Calvin, who meets us ‘in the garment of Scripture’.

In a most authoritative study on the work of the Holy Spirit according to Calvin we learn in a elaborate way how Calvin explains that the relationship between Christ and the believers by faith is a relationship of life. The unity between knowledge and trust is contained in this relation.<sup>28</sup> In the German text the author uses the expression ‘die Gegenstandsbezogenheit des Glaubens’. In faith, its object is always put in the centre. You might say: this is the doctrine. But the doctrine of the church is not about a theory but always about knowing the Lord Jesus personally!

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<sup>25</sup> John 3,30.

<sup>26</sup> See 1 Cor 1,10-13; 3,1-9.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor 1,13.

<sup>28</sup> Werner Krusche, *Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin*, Göttingen 1957, 264.

We may be reminded of the apostle John's saying, that we have to test the spirits whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.<sup>29</sup> And then he adds, that the Spirit of God can be recognised, because 'Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.'<sup>30</sup> To acknowledge he has to do with knowing Him! How clear it is, then, that faith is not a pathway from us to God, but that God in Christ personally was and is coming to us, by grace. It is the way of the Son of God who humiliated himself and has come in the flesh. Knowing Him means the complete togetherness of what we confess and what we receive in our hearts.

### **Office-bearers, living by the Spirit of Christ, have no status of their own**

So life in the church, and in the work of its officers lead by the Spirit, is all about the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's testimony is significant: 'For me, to live is Christ'; '...to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings'.<sup>31</sup> Paul in the office of an apostle wants to be recognised by this confession, but how essential it is that servants of Christ in our age no less will agree with him!

Being connected to Christ by faith, through the Spirit of God, and this connection does not exist without remaining in what is written, exactly that is the very medicine against all human display of self-importance. 'Being puffed up' is Paul's expression for that sort of pride.<sup>32</sup> In Colossians 2 we find the same expression for being puffed up, when people are eager to speak about their own special spiritual experiences. The air with which they are puffed up is characterised by as 'carnal thinking'.<sup>33</sup> And such an unspiritual attitude means in fact 'losing connection with the Head'.<sup>34</sup>

In all this it must be clear that nobody is greater than another. An office-bearer is not more than a common church member. He certainly has a specific responsibility, but not a higher seat. The authority by which an office-bearer fulfils his task in the congregation is no other than the authority of the Word of God.

In the light of the Word it is clear that those who are used to pass the message of God on to His congregation, are nothing more than servants And the members that receive the message appear to bear the same name and the same position. As a matter of fact that is the position of slaves of Christ. And they all are blessed with the same blessing!<sup>35</sup> So we find in Revelations 1 that the old and venerable apostle John is nothing higher than the

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<sup>29</sup> 1 John 4,1.

<sup>30</sup> 1 John 4,2-3.

<sup>31</sup> Phil 1,21; 3,8-10.

<sup>32</sup> See 1 Cor 4,6.

<sup>33</sup> Col 2,18.

<sup>34</sup> Col 2,19.

<sup>35</sup> This is very clear in Rev 1,1 and 1,3.



congregation he serves.<sup>36</sup> His pulpit is not as high as that in some church buildings. It must be clear that the seats of ministers, elders and deacons are no seats of honour at all.

### ***Governing the church of Christ***

In ecclesiastical law the Reformed conviction always has been that it is about nothing else than the government of Christ.<sup>37</sup> How easily, however, decision making in the church appears to be a decision of 51% or more. In the process of decision making in church meetings it is recognisable that beforehand often some nose counting takes place, in spite of the fact that all decisions will be preceded by prayer.

My plea is not to abolish all voting in ecclesiastical meetings. The *Belgic Confession* speaks with reason of 'a lawful election'.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless there is need to reflect upon the spiritual process of decision making in an ecclesiastical meeting, be it a consistory, classis or synod. Office-bearers are supposed to be aware of their responsibility before God's countenance. That involves to submit ourselves before the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

It is fascinating to hear how that first church meeting in Jerusalem, described in Acts 15, proceeded. A meeting in the presence of the apostles with the elders of the church, and a number of church members present – a whole assembly<sup>39</sup>. The matter at stake was a conflict with the imminent danger that the body of Christ would be torn into two pieces! The question at stake was whether gentiles, coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, must be circumcised like the people of Israel and be required to obey the law of Moses.<sup>40</sup>

Much discussion arose.<sup>41</sup> Quite clear that the conflict was vehement, just as it had been in Antioch, where 'a sharp dispute and debate' already had been the reason to bring the matter before the apostles.<sup>42</sup>

Then Peter gave his testimony, about the vision of a large sheet with pure and impure animals God gave him to eat, and the following conversion of Cornelius, and how he had understood, that the Lord in Christ had opened the door of Israel to the gentiles.<sup>43</sup> That Peter in a later situation – mentioned in Galatians 2 – had to be brought back by Paul to the consequences of this open door for the congregation of Christ, is revealing..! It sometimes is not easy to follow the radical way of Christ and to abandon the importance or the sensitivity of our own person.

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<sup>36</sup> Rev 1,9.

<sup>37</sup> This is confirmed in a recent publication from the TUA in Apeldoorn: T.E. Boele-Noort en P.T. Pel (ed.), *Kerk en recht in balans. Aandacht voor de kwaliteit van de kerkelijke rechtsorde*, Apeldoorn 2021, 12f.

<sup>38</sup> *Belgic Confession*, art. 31.

<sup>39</sup> Acts 15,12 (NIV). The KJV has 'the multitude' as translation for '*pan to plèthos*'.

<sup>40</sup> Acts 15,5.

<sup>41</sup> Acts 15,7.

<sup>42</sup> Acts 15,2.

<sup>43</sup> Acts 10 and 11.

In this loaded situation of the decision making in Jerusalem a few things must be seen. After Peter's testimony<sup>44</sup> Paul and Barnabas also told how the Spirit of God had worked among the gentiles, after which the whole meeting became silent.<sup>45</sup> That effect also was the work of the Spirit of God. Two witnesses were present, giving the same testimony!

When James, elder and pastor of the congregation in Jerusalem - who apparently because of that serves as chairman – gave his concluding remarks, at which the Word of God was opened,<sup>46</sup> his given judgment at the same time was immediately convincing to all! James was no apostle, but that was not an issue. That he was the brother of Jesus is not mentioned either. In his apostolic letter he introduces himself as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>47</sup> And in this meeting in Jerusalem he spoke with no other authority than the Word of God. And he, hearing the given witnesses, realised: this is the way given us by the Holy Spirit. So we cannot do otherwise than all follow this way in one spirit.

It is most remarkable that no voting took place. The words of the chairman were in the ears of all those present as if these were the minutes with the decisions made, because the Holy Spirit blessed the hearts with this necessary unity. The parties were completely removed! Gone! No one speaks about the conflict any more! In the letter, that was sent to the congregation of Antioch, we read: 'It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...'<sup>48</sup>

No majority, secured in voting, but a common orientation on the Word of God, without any mental reservations. When we try to understand such a process, we are not seeking some theory of decision making, but the practical knowledge of the church being the body of Christ. Perhaps rather than discussing this we are in need of prayer.

I am convinced, brothers and sisters, that there is practical teaching in this subject, for being a church, for being related to each other in our Head, in deep humility, in obedience to the Lord alone, in a deep and firm conviction to be faithful exclusively to our great Saviour Jesus Christ, in Whom all things are ours.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Acts 15,7-11.

<sup>45</sup> Acts 15,12.

<sup>46</sup> Acts 15,15-18.

<sup>47</sup> James 1,1.

<sup>48</sup> Acts 15,28.

<sup>49</sup> 1 Cor ,21-23; Eph 1,23; Col 3,11, etc. etc.