

3.2 The Institute for the Advancement of Calvinism, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, Potchefstroom, 2520, Republic of South Africa

Though as yet of recent origin and with limited resources, this institute has already become a significant landmark for Calvinistic thought.

1. *Brief History*

This institute was established in 1966 and succeeded the previous *Calvinistic Foundation* founded in 1962. From then onwards, until June 1974 pioneering work was conducted by its first director, Prof. S.C.W. Duvenage. This can be regarded as a meritorious task taking into consideration the fact that Prof. Duvenage did this work in a part-time capacity with no full-time secretarial help.

The present full-time director has taken over from July 1974. Premises were made available in the Ferdinand Postma Library of the Potchefstroom University and the services of a part-time typist procured.

From the beginning of 1976 an extra part-time secretary was appointed to take charge of a new responsibility of the IAC, viz. to act as the Clearing House of the International Conference of Reformed Institutions for Christian scholarship.

The steadily increasing volume of work of the Institute necessitated the appointment of a third (full-time) secretary in March 1979. At the same time the IAC also moved from its premises in the Ferdinand Postma Library to a house at 21 Jooste Street, adjacent to the University.

2. Aim

The IAC tries to render service in the kingdom of God by way of conducting research and issuing publications on Calvin and the sixteenth-century Reformation as well as on present-day reformational thought. Our desire is to do this concurrent with the Reformed principles of *sola Scriptura* (according to the Bible alone), *sola fide* (in faith alone), *sola gratia* (through grace alone) and finally: *solī Dei gloria* – to the glory of God alone. Our propagation of Calvinism is founded on the conviction that this view of life, by virtue of its absolute obedience to Scripture, is the most radical and consistent Christian point of view.

3. Administration

The IAC is directed by a Council on which the following bodies are represented: the Council of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, all the faculties of the University, the Departments of Philosophy and Philosophy of Science (“Wetenskapsleer”) at the same university, the Afrikaans Calvinistic Movement and the *Koers*-Association. Unlike most other academic institutes the IAC therefore is of an interfaculty nature which also includes the representation of non-academic bodies. The rector of the Potchefstroom University is the *ex officio* chairman of both the Council and the Executive (consisting of five selected members of the Council) of the IAC.

4. Research

Apart from regular research required, *inter alia*, for its publications (see below), until now the IAC has involved itself with two research projects.

4.1 Calviniana research

Bibliographical research on Calviniana (books, articles etc. by Calvin and on Calvin and Calvinism) was conducted by Dr D. Kempff, the results of which were published in *A bibliography of Calviniana: 1959-1974* (published by the IAC in South Africa and E.J. Brill, Leiden, the Netherlands). As the title suggests, this work serves as a companion to two previous bibliographies of this nature: that of A. Erichson: *Bibliographia Calviniana* (1900) and W. Niesel: *Calvin-Bibliographie, 1901-1959*.

This research has resulted in a complete catalogue of all books and arti-

cles on Calvin and Calvinism procurable in different South African libraries being made available in the IAC Centre.

Furthermore a continuous effort is being made to enlarge the existing Calviniana collection which is already extensive at the Ferdinand Postma Library. A well-equipped arsenal of study material is an absolute prerequisite for the proper functioning of our institute!

4.2 The impact of Calvinism in South Africa

In 1977 a second research project with the above title was initiated. The bibliographical phase of this project has already been concluded and will soon be published in a four-volume bibliography *Die inslag van die Calvinisme in Suid-Afrika. 'n Bibliografie van Suid-Afrikaanse tydskrif-artikels*. (The impact of Calvinism in South Africa. A bibliography of South African periodical articles.)

A start has already been made with the second phase of the project comprising a survey of the historical background as well as the fundamental principles of Calvinism. This survey is divided into the following subsections, allocated to the participating researchers:

- * The influence of Patristic thought on the sixteenth century Reformation (with special reference to the influence of Augustine on Calvin).
- * The Reformation of the sixteenth century (with special attention to Calvin).
- * The characteristics of post-Reformational (seventeenth-century) thought.
- * The impact of Calvinism in South Africa from its original settlement (1652) up to the end of the eighteenth century.
- * The impact of the Calvinistic view of life during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

We regard the study of original sources as of utmost importance to keep our research authentic. However, the IAC does not aim at reviving the past in an anachronistic way with the help of historical research. Because of many possible deviations during more than four centuries of development of Calvinistic thought it is important to get to the primogenitor. Far be it from us to canonize John Calvin, but our intention is to build on the firm foundation of most of his ideas which clearly re-echo Biblical revelation. In this way the IAC endeavours by means of unswerving loyalty to Scripture to be a power station of a reformational world-view in the contemporary world.

The third phase of the project *The impact of Calvinism in South Africa* will deal with the influence of Calvinism on different spheres of life, e.g. ecclesiastical life, education (at primary, secondary and tertiary levels),

politics, family life, ethical relationships, cultural organizations, judicature, economics, communication (press, radio, film and television) and the worlds of art and recreation.

The purpose behind this research programme is to prove the assumption that it was exactly the Calvinistic view of life which moulded the Afrikaans-speaking Europeans to become what they are today. This view of life underlies many viewpoints and attitudes of South African Afrikaans-speaking people. The question is what the typical authentic quality is that the Afrikaners have given to Calvinism in various spheres of life.

As the research programme unfolds, the intention is that the results will be disseminated by way of articles and monographs. The publication of a comprehensive synopsis may mark the completion of the whole research project.

5. Publications

In the series *Wetenskaplike Bydraes* (Scientific Contributions) of the Potchefstroom University for CHE, the IAC publishes the F-series. It includes the following:

5.1 F.1: *IBC-Studiestukke* (IAC Study Pamphlet Series)

Articles on topical matters, composed and fully elucidated from a Calvinistic-Biblical point of view by authorities in their respective fields, are circulated monthly in pamphlet form (approximately 15-20 pages in length). One hundred and forty of these study pamphlets on a great variety of topics (see IAC Catalogue - available free of charge) have thus far been published in Afrikaans and English. (Three of the twelve issues per annum will in future be published in English.) At present about 6 000 copies of these studies are sent free of charge to recipients in South Africa and in various other countries.

5.2 F.2: *IBC-Brosjures* (IAC Brochures)

Ten different titles of brochures on a variety of issues by both South African and overseas writers have been published up to date. The numbers in this series are offered at a very low price (covering only printing and administrative costs), because the IAC is a non-profit institute.

5.3 F.3: *IBC-Versamelwerke* (IAC Collections)

These are more comprehensive works (100-300 pages), again on quite a variety of topics. Four of the ten numbers published in this series were in English and the rest in Afrikaans. Two more volumes in English are in preparation, one of them an international Bibliography on Christian scientific endeavour. (For more information, please consult the IAC Catalogue.)

5.4 F.4: *Calvyncauserieë* (Calvin causeries)

Commencing in 1973 this series includes seven numbers at the moment. At least ten more are scheduled for the near future. These causeries are annotated bibliographies of books and articles on Calvin (and Calvinism). The idea is to evaluate the study material available on a specific subject (e.g. Calvin's point of view on ethics, music, education, pastoral care, culture, economics, science, anthropology etc.) for a broader cross-section of people and to evoke the interest of students and scholars in these topics.

5.5 F.5: *Studies oor die inslag van die Calvinisme in Suid-Afrika* (Studies on the impact of Calvinism in South Africa)

This series will contain the results of the above-mentioned research project on the impact of Calvinism in South Africa.

6. Conferences, seminars

Apart from the already mentioned work done at the IAC in the field of research and publication, it also arranges study conferences, seminars etc. from time to time.

In September 1975, for instance, it prepared and acted as host to the First International Conference of Reformed Institutions for Christian Higher Education at Potchefstroom.

Examples of local gatherings are the study conference on *The living Word of God in science and practice* (June 1978) and the Calvin Research Congress planned (in co-operation with other institutions) for August 1980 in Pretoria.

7. International Clearing House

The above-mentioned First International Conference on Christian

Scholarship requested the IAC in 1975 to establish and run a *Clearing House* for Christian Higher Education. It began to operate in 1976. At the Second International Congress (Grand Rapids, USA in August 1978) the IAC was approached to continue the administration of the *Clearing House* for a further period of three or four years.

The aim of the *Clearing House* is to establish and build out international contacts with institutions such as universities, colleges, theological seminaries and a variety of organizations practising Christian scholarship, as well as with likeminded individuals at secular institutions.

Its task is also to exchange and disseminate news, achievements, publications about these institutions and about individual scholars. This is done primarily in a quarterly publication called the *Circular (of the international conference of institutions for Christian scholarship)*. Subscription is free of charge at the IAC Centre.

In these and other ways the *Clearing House* tries to provide some form of continuity between the three-yearly international conferences and to build an academic fellowship amongst Christian scholars in all the disciplines all over the world.

Small in its inception and with limited resources, but *dynamic* in the power of its expansion of great ideals – that is how I would like to summarize this introduction to the IAC. This institute at the southern tip of Africa has the potential – if the resources are available and staff employed – to become a bulwark of radical Biblical thought and action in the future.

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