

**ECCLESIOLOGY IN DIALOGUE: A CRITIQUE OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH IN THE THOUGHT OF G. C. BERKOUWER**

Author: **Bruce R. Norman**, Ph.D., 1991

Adviser: Raoul Dederen

This dissertation deals with the concept of the nature of the church in the thought of G. C. Berkouwer as indicated in the following chapter sketches.

Chapter 1 briefly outlines the historical and theological development of thought about the nature of the church, function, and the inter-relationship of the two. The most relevant elements of the church's nature are identified, described, and analyzed in both Roman Catholic and Reformed thought.

Chapter 2 presents biographical, methodological, and theological backgrounds of Berkouwer. These provide the framework within which one must understand Berkouwer's view of the nature of the church.

Chapter 3 describes and analyzes Berkouwer's understanding of the nature of the church. It interprets the manner in which the Dutch theologian relates the church's essence to its function.

This study ends in chapter 4, with a critical appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of Berkouwer's position on the nature of the church. It is concluded that his model for solving the tension between the church's essence and her function is inadequate because it fails to take into account all of the pressing questions which need to be addressed by contemporary ecclesiology. Finally, some of the tensions of the Dutch theologian's view on the nature of the church are raised as fruitful areas for further investigation.