# Table of Contents

## Foreword and Acknowledgements

15

## Introduction

19

- The Importance and Limitations of a Biography
  1. Subject and Background
  2. Existing Biographies
  3. Method

## 1 The World Opens Up, 1900-1924

31

- Introduction
- A Family with Status and Traditions
- Gymnasium: A Little Philosopher
- A Student in Leiden: Questions and Answers
- The Marriage of Two ‘Children of the Sun’
- An Enthusiastic Youth Worker is Formed

## 2 The School of International Encounter

67

- Working with Youth and Students, 1924-1939
  1. Introduction
  2. Secretary of the YMCA in a Wounded Europe
  3. Ambassador for the YMCA
  4. A Bridge Builder between Europeans and Americans
  5. Secretary of the WSCF in a Europe Once Again under Threat
  6. Christian Realism instead of International Idealism
  7. A ‘German Revolution’?
  8. Not Called to Mission Work
  9. Secretary of the Emerging World Council of Churches
  10. The Charismatic Student Leader

## 3 Church Unity in Wartime, 1939-1945

147

- Introduction
  1. The First Year of the War in Geneva: Isolation or Hub?
  2. Interpreting the War
  3. Visser ’t Hooft, Karl Barth, and the Public Statements of the Church
  4. Natural Theology: A Stumbling Block or a Common Base?
  5. Ecumenical Work among Refugees and Prisoners of War
3.7 Church Unity in the Face of the Annihilation of the Jews 177
3.8 One Church, One Europe: Dietrich Bonhoeffer 188
3.9 The Memorandum of Von Trott zu Solz 192
3.10 The Hesitant Voice of the Ecumenical Movement 196

4 From ‘Spiritual Contact’ to Political Involvement 201
The Swiss Road, 1942-1944
  4.1 Introduction 201
  4.2 ‘Holland outside Holland’ 202
  4.3 From Conduit to Government Advisor 206
  4.4 Visit to London, 1942 217
  4.5 Organising the Swiss Road 221
  4.6 Visser ’t Hooft and the Dutch Resistance 223
  4.7 Topics on the Swiss Road 227
  4.8 In Defence of the Civil Resistance 233
  4.9 The Liberation of the Netherlands and the Parliamentary Inquiry 241
  4.10 Coach for the Government 248

5 Towards a World Council of Churches 251
Reconciliation and Reconstruction, 1945-1948
  5.1 Introduction 251
  5.2 Assisting Recovering Churches 253
  5.3 Stuttgart 1945: ‘Help Us, So We Can Help You’ 257
  5.4 Dealing with the Past: Niemöller as Ecumenical Prophet 265
  5.5 ‘We Do not Wish to Call Wrong Right’ 269
  5.6 Diplomacy Based on a ‘Genuine Meeting of Minds’ 272
  5.7 A Study Centre at Bossey: Towards a New Science of Ecumenism? 274
  5.8 Amsterdam 1948: A ‘Responsible Society’ 278
  5.9 Two Rejections Become Two Challenges 285
  5.10 The Firm Pragmatist 287

  6.1 Introduction 291
  6.2 ‘Atta’ at Home and ‘Le Patron’ at the World Council 293
  6.3 The Vision 301
  6.4 Evanston 1954: Hoping ... but for What? 306
  6.5 The World Council as Watchman 311
    I A Difficult Topic: Israel and the Palestinians 314
II  A Moderate Approach: Apartheid in South Africa 319
III  Through the Eye of a needle: The Cyprus Crisis 323
IV  Procedural Problems: The Cuba Crisis 327

6.6  The Indispensability of Mission 329
6.7  ‘Angry Young Churchmen’ 337
6.8  New Delhi 1961: A Crowning Success and an Estrangement 339
6.9  No Ecumenical Consensus on Ecclesiology 345
6.10  The Theologian as Diplomat 357

7  The Cold War, the Unity of the Church and Eastern Orthodoxy, 1948-1966

7.1  Introduction 361
7.2  Building on Old Contacts 362
7.3  Theology and Practical Reality 366
7.4  A Third Way between East and West 368
7.5  What Can the Churches Do for Peace? 371
7.6  A Strategic Thinker in Toronto 375
7.7  Searching for Saints in Russia 376
7.8  The World Council Enriched? 386
7.9  Debating Policy 389
7.10  The Controversial Bridge Builder 397

8  Roman Catholic Contacts


8.1  Introduction 401
8.2  A Source of Irritation: The Roman Catholic Failure to Appreciate the Work of the World Council 403
8.3  Ecclesiological Explorations and the Looming Danger of the Super Church 405
8.4  Visser ’t Hooft and Willebrands: Two Agendas 408
8.5  Rhodes 1959: Rules of the Ecumenical Game Violated 411
8.6  Two Dutchmen in Strategic Positions 414
8.7  Vatican II: ‘Nostra Res Agitur’ 419
8.8  The Continuous Efforts at Mutual Convincing 425
8.9  The Papal Visit 1969: ‘Mon nom est Pierre’ 435
8.10  The Architect of Faltering Dialogue 437

9  Obsolete Institutionalism?

The Twilight Years, 1966-1985

9.1  Introduction 441
9.2  A Farewell that was not a Farewell 442
9.3  Uppsala 1968: The Turning Point 452
9.4  Utrecht 1972: Do Ecumenical Institutions Have a Future? 459
9.5  A Pilgrim Welcome among the Elite, but Lost in Mass Tourism 469
9.6  Nairobi 1975: Disappointed and Isolated 471
9.7  A Member of the Groupe de Bellerive 477
9.8  Eighty Years Old: An Angry Old Man? 480
9.9  Emancipation and the Fatherhood of God 486
9.10  The World Council and the Roman Catholic Church Once Again 489
9.11  ‘Not Afraid of Death’ 503
9.12  The ‘Elder Statesman’ of the Ecumenical Movement 509

10  In the Mirror of Rembrandt and the Perspectives of Others 513
10.1  Introduction 513
10.2  Honouring ‘The Man of all Jobs and Odd Jobs’ 514
10.3  The Mirror of Rembrandt 516
10.4  ‘Mein Sach’ auf Nichts gestellt’ 524
10.5  Accolades and Critiques on the Occasion of his Death 528

Taking Stock 535
An Assessment of a Life Lived for the Unity of the Church

Sources and Literature Consulted 545
1  Archives and Unpublished Primary Sources 545
2  Oral Sources 545
3  Digital Sources 546
4  Published and Unpublished Works by W.A. Visser ’t Hooft 546
5  Published Sources and Secondary Literature 556
6  Newspapers and Magazines 570
6.a  Persons Quoted 570
6.b  Other References 571

Index 573
Index of Names 573
Index of Subjects 580
Index of Geographical Names 593