PART THREE

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A REFORMED THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY
After our study of the sources of Reformed and ecumenical theology of ministry, we want to use this concluding chapter to supply a number of building blocks for a new theology of ministry from the perspective of the Reformed tradition. In this way, we shall try to combine the results of the analyses into a cohesive structure that can be helpful in finding the way forward for ecclesiology as well as for theory and practice of how ministries function within the church.

In the first instance, these building blocks originate in the Reformed tradition. Ecclesiology and theology of ministry are not the most important aspects of Reformed theology, but they traditionally form part of it and are connected with and result from the specific fundamental theological choices and emphases of the Reformed tradition in general. The most impressive example of this can be found in Calvin’s *Institutes*. The fourth book of the *Institutes*, containing his ecclesiology, and, in particular, the third chapter about theology of ministry is an integral part of his theology and not an appendix. For this reason, we purposely search for continuity and connection with this tradition. But we do not want to try to copy the models from the sixteenth century. That is not possible, especially because our analysis of Calvin’s theology of ministry demonstrated how his own thinking about this particular point often had a tentative and provisional character. We also found that other theologians and a number of early confessions of faith within the Reformed tradition emphasized different aspects of the theology of ministry. Being faithful to Calvin’s theology, therefore, does not consist of copying or merely defending his writings, but of working in accordance with his method; namely, looking for a theology of ministry that is in keeping with the time we live in, in agreement with the witness found in scripture, and in discussion with the theologians of the early church. Our time and place ask for a model that is contemporary. This means, for instance, that the structure of ministry that flourished in an environment of enlightened citizens with aristocratic tendencies will have to be adjusted to fit in with a culture in which all people have become more emancipated. We have restricted ourselves to the most fundamental elements in the Reformed theology of ministry that, in our opinion, must be preserved for future generations.

Other building blocks come from an analysis of ecumenical theology of ministry. That is not very surprising. Our study has tried to under-