

## Events Leading up to our Separation

The move to separate was a result of many years of gradual decline in the Reformed Faith within the **Presbyterian Church of Australia**. As early as 1891 the Westminster Confession of Faith (the Church's official Confession of Faith) was scorned by the Editor of *The Presbyterian*, the major church paper of the time. The Editor's words were:

*"That venerable document will not in our opinion stand patching... it is ill fitted to represent the theological sentiment of our day as the cathedral is ill fitted for our Protestant worship"*

In 1901, a Declaratory Act was passed, which, while not amending the Westminster Confession of Faith, toned down the distinctive Calvinistic doctrines of the Confession. Additionally, it allowed liberty of opinion for ministers on a wide range of doctrines set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

In doing so, instead of amending the Westminster Confession of Faith, or disciplining those ministers who did not adhere to it, the Presbyterian Church of Australia made its doctrinal position ambiguous.

In 1936, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, in a private session, shelved charges levied against Dr Samuel Angus in order to ensure "the peace of the Church". Dr Angus not only denied the deity of Christ, but also denied the inspiration and authority of Scripture as defined in Chapter 1 of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

In 1967, Professor Lloyd Geering, the Principal of the Presbyterian Theological College in New Zealand was brought up on charges of 'doctrinal error and disturbing the peace and unity of the (Presbyterian) church'. During his church trial he claimed that the remains of Jesus lay somewhere in Palestine, and that the resurrection had been wrongfully interpreted by churches as a resuscitation of the body of Jesus. He also rejects the notion that God is a supernatural being who created and continues to look over the world.

Despite these views, Professor Geering was acquitted of the charges by the 1967 General Assembly. This acquittal can rightfully be considered the immediate cause of the separation from the Presbyterian Church of Australia.