

# Clarion

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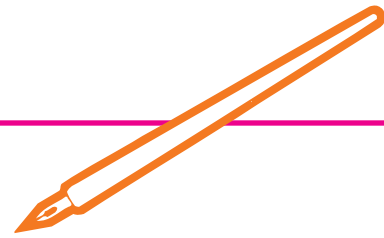


*The Reformers*

Numbers

10:1-10

By R. Aasman



## The Four Teenaged Reformers

When King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, he immediately set in motion a systematic program to assimilate the people of Judah into Babylonian culture and religion. We read in Daniel 1:3-6:

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service. Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

Here we see that Nebuchadnezzar took from Judah some of the youngest, brightest and most talented youths of noble descent and he was going to have them trained in the ways of the Babylonian culture. His reason for this was simple but devious. Being bright and of noble descent, these youths were the leaders and instructors of tomorrow.

Once they were thoroughly trained in Babylonian culture and religion, they could lead and brainwash the rest of the covenant people as they were being led into exile in Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar's grand scale seduction did not stop at the education of the Hebrew teenagers. He planned to use food and drink to pervert their minds. As we all know, God's children acknowledge that their food and drink are a blessing from the Lord. They even ask God and thank Him for their daily bread in their prayers. In the same way, pagans considered that it was their gods who blessed them with their food and drink. In their eating and drinking, they actually worshipped their gods. Thus the food and drink which came from Nebuchadnezzar's table represented an essential part of Babylonian religion. When the boys from Jerusalem received food and drink from the king's table, they were called upon to worship the idols and gods who had made this food and drink possible. If they gave in to that, then they would soon forget who it truly is that gives daily bread to his children. They would honour the gods of Babylon instead. This was a further attempt by Nebuchadnezzar to brainwash God's people to forget their God.

The attack of Nebuchadnezzar climaxed in the changing of the youths' names. Instead of having names which contained the name of the Lord their God, they were given names which contained the names of Babylonian gods. In other words, these young people were being claimed for the honour of pagan gods. This was a subtle but full-blown attack by Satan through Nebuchadnezzar to claim these young peo-

ple as children of darkness. Satan hoped that through them, the leaders of tomorrow, future generations would be led astray: blind guides leading God's covenant people into ever deepening darkness. By these means, Satan was aspiring to the death of the church of God. At that point it would not make much sense any more for the coming of the Christ.

This should send a shiver of concern and fear down our spines today. We see here one of Satan's most sinister weapons: go after the youth of the church. Adults may be fairly well entrenched in the Christian faith. But young people are so impressionable and vulnerable – and they are the adults, the parents, the teachers and the office bearers of tomorrow! If Satan can draw the youth away from the Lord, then as they grow up and start raising families of their own and have leadership roles in the church and school, then more and more families and members of the church will fall away from the Lord.

Now we wonder: would Satan try such a dirty, rotten trick today? Of course he would: he would do whatever he could to break up the church of Jesus Christ. The question that has to be considered and answered by us is whether Satan, per-

haps even behind our backs, is making inroads into the lives of our children and young people. Do we know where our children are: not just physically but spiritually and emotionally? What influences the lives of our children? Who controls their minds? What lives in their hearts?

Antichristian forces are all around us: in

secular education, on the TV, in books and magazines, on the Internet, and in the kinds of friends they have. Do we really know what is going on in their lives? Do we know whether they are getting into pornography? Do we keep track of whether they are making friends who encourage them to seek their pleasures in the things of this world? Do we know what is really important to them – could it be that the most important things in their lives are their careers and future incomes? Do we pay attention to whether they are being influenced by humanistic principles when they go to a secular school such as college or university? Let us be even more pinpointed here. Do we know about our children's relationship with the Lord: whether they read the Bible and pray regularly? Do we have discussions with them on a regular basis and see that they are prepared to stand up for the name of Jesus in the face of challenge and opposition? We may think the church is more secure today than it was in the days of Daniel. But the fact is, Satan is as fully committed as he ever was to attack the church by leading the youth astray. So the question remains important and critical: do we know what is going on in the lives of our children?

What happened in the case of Daniel who was facing tremendous temptation and pressure from Nebuchadnezzar? We read in Daniel 1:8, "But Daniel resolved not to defile

**Do we know where our children are: not just physically but spiritually and emotionally?**



himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way." By the grace of God, this young teenage boy resolved not to give in to Nebuchadnezzar's plan to assimilate God's people into paganism. He would not

## What's inside?

On October 31st, we remember that 482 years ago, Martin Luther pounded a dozen or so hammer blows that shook the world. Luther's posting of his 95 Theses against the sale of indulgences was the catalyst that sparked the Reformation. This issue pays some attention to the theme of the Reformation.

The Reformation was a restoration of doctrine and of worship. Integral to our doctrine and worship are the sacraments. The teaching and practice of the sacraments was reformed as well. In this issue we pay attention to both sacraments: Dr. N. H. Gootjes concludes his writing on baptism; Dr. R. Faber writes about John Calvin on admission to the Lord's Supper.

Continuing the theme of Reformation, Rev. R. Aasman's editorial tells about four young reformers of two and a half thousand years ago. As well, Prof. J. Kamphuis concludes his treatment of the Westminster Confession of Faith by surveying its contents. We thank the Rev. J. Mulder for translating these articles.

Reformed churches are faithful in the call to go out to preach the gospel and help the needy of the world. We publish the concluding part of a speech held by Dr. J. de Jong that deals with the relationship between preaching and diaconal work on the mission field.

We are very pleased to introduce a new column, "Living by the Doctrines of Scripture." On a regular basis, the Rev. P. G. Feenstra will be filling a page or so to help you continue steadfastly in the sound doctrines of the Word of God. We wish Rev. Feenstra the Lord's blessing as he seeks to fulfil this work he has taken upon himself.

Early in the month of October, the Lord took to Himself one of his faithful servants, the Rev. D. Vanderboom. He preached the gospel and taught the Reformed faith for many years. We are very pleased to include a meditation he wrote some 25 years ago on the theme of Reformation. May these words penned by one now with the Lord Jesus Christ edify you.

GvP

give thanks to pagan gods for his food and drink. He was basically saying: You can destroy my beloved Jerusalem, you can take me away from my parents and you can give me a pagan name, but you can never make me deny my Lord and his Christ. Daniel was risking his life here. But God was gracious and He preserved Daniel and his three friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah by convincing the guard to let them have vegetables and water which were not offered to idols. Moreover, Daniel and his friends grew in wisdom and knowledge. This was God's plan and preparation to use them in the future to overcome the power of Satan against God and His people. They were the four reformers – teenaged reformers – who opposed Satan's plan and remained faithful to the Word of God alone. Through their faithfulness, the covenant people received clear direction to repent from their sins and to long for the day that the Lord would bring them back to Jerusalem.

The ultimate victory over Satan, sin and death has been won through our Lord Jesus Christ. In his perfect obedience, He paid for our sins and obtained for us the glorious liberty of the children

of God. All who cling to Him in faith and seek their salvation in Him alone, will find safety in the continual attacks of Satan who goes around like a prowling lion seeking someone to devour. But of course that also means that we have to be discerning in our faith. We have to see the dangers. We must be aware of the dangerous decline of morals in our society. We must see how the love of money and the love of man himself has become the god of this age. As parents and children we must have open communication together. Not only should parents see what is going in the lives of their children but children must feel free to discuss whatever is on their minds with their parents. Together we need to turn in faith to Jesus Christ for help in the terrific struggle against Satan and temptation. Together we need to turn to God and his Word to give us the guidance on how we should live. This is ongoing reformation in the church of Jesus Christ. This is how we may trust that not just the present generation, but also our children and our children's children will serve the Lord with their whole life and look forward to the city whose architect and builder is God. C

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#### EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: C. Van Dam  
 Managing Editor: G.Ph. van Popta  
 Language Editor: J.L. van Popta  
 Coeditors: R. Aasman, J. De Jong, J. Geertsema,  
 N.H. Gootjes, G.Ph. van Popta

#### ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION  
 46 Sulphur Springs Road, Ancaster, ON L9G 1L8  
 Fax: (905) 304-4951  
 E-Mail: clarion@compuserve.com

#### ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.  
 One Beghin Avenue  
 Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5  
 Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202  
 Email: clarion@premier.mb.ca  
 World Wide Web address: <premier.mb.ca/clarion.html>

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### IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – The Four Teenaged Reformers — R. Aasman . . . . .	486
Treasures, New and Old – Reformation Day — D. Vanderboom . . . . .	488
In Memoriam – Rev. D. Vanderboom — J. Visscher . . . . .	489
The Promises at Baptism — N.H. Gootjes . . . . .	490
John Calvin on Admission to the Lord's Supper — R. Faber . . . . .	492
Notes On The Westminster Confession — J. Kamphuis . . . . .	494
Letters to the Editor . . . . .	497
Word and Deed: Reflections on the Relationship between Mission and Mission Aid (second of two parts) — J. De Jong . . . . .	498
Living by the Doctrines of Scripture – Steadfastly continuing in sound doctrine — P.G. Feenstra . . . . .	500
Press Release . . . . .	502
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty . . . . .	503

By D. Vanderboom

## Reformation Day

*I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings from of old – Psalm 78:2*

Reformation is a work and gift of God's grace in Christ Jesus. It holds a calling as well, the calling that we follow the LORD in his reformational work. Psalm 78 is a teaching poem in which Asaph reminds Israel of God's work of reformation and exhorts it to stay in the way of the reformation He has given. He says he will open his mouth in a parable and utter dark sayings from of old. The two parts of this sentence mean the same: a parable is a dark saying which the teacher urges his hearers to contemplate in order to understand it.

What, now, is the content of Asaph's saying? It is that the LORD has worked reformation – a return to Him, to his Word, to his service according to his Word – through David. That was something new. For a long time, while Ephraim held a leading position in Israel, God dwelt in his sanctuary in Shiloh. However, the unfaithfulness and apostasy of the Old Testament church went so far that the LORD in his anger rejected Ephraim and his dwelling place in Shiloh. But then the LORD awoke and brought redemption. He chose his servant David, Judah and Jerusalem, and Mount Zion. This new


work, this gift of reformation, was told by the fathers and had to be remembered by the children in their generations, so that God's people would not become a rebellious generation again, but would remain faithful to the LORD. Faithfulness meant following David and his house and worshipping the LORD in Zion, His new dwelling place.

Christ quoted this text when He began to preach the gospel in parables. In doing so He fulfilled not only this word, but the whole psalm. In Him, David's great Son, God was working the Great Reformation of biblical history. He was creating something really new. Because of its apostasy, God was about to reject the earthly Jerusalem with its leaders and temple. God had chosen Jesus as his Anointed, Jesus who preached a return to the LORD and his Word and in whom God was bringing eternal salvation. God was about to make the congregation of Christ his new dwelling place. Following the Lord, the faithful congregation would leave the old way and go along with God's new work in Christ.

The New Testament church, however, also fell away from God in apostasy. It did not serve the LORD according

to his Word. Then, in the sixteenth century, the LORD showed his grace in the great Reformation through his servants Luther, Calvin, and others. He worked a return to Him and to his Word and true service. Also in those days the command of the LORD was that his children follow Him on his way and join the reformation, leaving the old way of apostasy and unfaithfulness.

Other reformations followed through the years. Each time God's children had to turn from ways of apostasy and return to the Word of the LORD. They proved that they understood Asaph's parable. Do we understand it, too? We, too, must recognize the works of the LORD in the reformations of biblical as well as New Testament church history. We must remember them and faithfully abide by them and in their line. God's command is that we abide by his Word and by his service according to his Word.

This meditation was originally published in *Lasting Food*, 1975 (p. 311). The Rev. D. Vanderboom was released from suffering and taken up into glory on October 2, 1999. 

### *To the Name of our Salvation*

*To the name of our salvation  
Laud and honour let us pay,  
Which for many a generation  
Hid in God's foreknowledge lay,  
But with holy exultation  
We may sing aloud to-day.*

*Jesus is the name we treasure,  
Name beyond what words can tell;  
Name of gladness, name of pleasure,  
Ear and heart delighting well;  
Name of sweetness passing measure,  
Saving us from sin and hell.*

*'Tis the name for adoration,  
Name for songs of victory,  
Name for holy meditation  
In this vale of misery,  
Name for joyful veneration  
By the citizens on high.*

*'Tis the name that whoso preacheth  
Speaks like music to the ear;  
Who in prayer this name beseecheth  
Sweetest comfort findeth near;  
Who its perfect wisdom reacheth  
Heavenly joy possesseth here.*

*Jesus is the name exalted  
Over every other name;  
In this name, when'er assaulted,  
We can put our foes to shame:  
Strength to them who else had halted,  
Eyes to blind, and feet to lame.*

*Therefore we in love adoring  
This most blessed name revere,  
Holy Jesu, thee imploring  
So to write it in us here,  
That hereafter heavenward soaring  
We may sing with angels there.*

Text: Found in some late medieval breviaries, beginning with one of Antwerp, Printed in 1496.  
Trans: Based on one made by Neale in his *Medieval Hymns*, 1851, but with considerable alterations.

~ *In Memoriam* ~

*Dirk VanderBoom*

*November 14, 1915 ~ October 2, 1999*

by J. Visscher



Dirk VanderBoom was born into a ministerial family on Nov. 14, 1915. His great grandfather had been a minister of the gospel. His father also became a minister, and it was in Uithuizermeeden, in the northern most part of the Netherlands, where his father pastored, that Dirk VanderBoom was born. In the years to follow his father would accept a number of calls and the family would move from place to place.

After receiving his education in these various places, he met and courted Lynette Admiraal and they were married on April 6, 1943. The Lord subsequently blessed their wedded life by giving them five children: Michelle, John, Richard, Marian and Patricia.

Life in the VanderBoom household; however, proved to be far from uneventful. After the Second World War, Dirk went to work for the Shell Oil Company and soon they sent him off to Venezuela. Lyn and the children followed some months later. Together they lived in Latin America from 1946 - 1950.

During this time, however, Dirk became more and more convinced that the Lord was leading his life in quite a different direction. In 1950 he returned to the Netherlands with his family and enrolled as a student at the Theological University in Kampen.

Being a family man, the pressure was on for him to complete his theological education in as short a time as possible. The result was that he graduated in 1954 and thereafter accepted a call to the combined charge of Alkmaar and Broek op Langedijk.

He ministered in the Netherlands until 1957 when he was called to serve a newly instituted church in Canada called Aldergrove, later Cloverdale. There is little doubt that

his Latin American experience whetted his appetite for foreign lands and was used by the Lord to direct him to a new land.

The result was that in January of 1957 the VanderBoom family came to British Columbia. Here they stayed until 1964 when a call came from Orangeville, Ontario. It was accepted. The VanderBoom family was on the move again, from West to East. They remained in Orangeville until 1967 when another call led them to Burlington. They remained there until 1970 when the Church at Toronto beckoned.

Ministering in Toronto brought our brother closer and closer to his retirement years. At the same time there also grew in his heart a desire to return to the West Coast of Canada. Hence when Langley called him in 1977, he did not have to weigh the matter for very long. Once again it was moving time. Until he officially retired in 1983, he served this congregation in the Fraser Valley.

Retirement, however, never meant inactivity for our brother. He had his hobbies and he had his preaching. Almost every Lord's Day you could hear him proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ in one of the churches.

But then last year illness struck. In spite of it he carried on and kept matters largely to himself. Nevertheless, in May of this year his health left him no options. He had to give up his beloved work of preaching. In the following months illness slowly drained away his strength. Last Saturday morning, October 2 at 2:30 a.m. the Lord decided that his earthly task was done and called him home. Dirk VanderBoom went to be with his Master. He died three days after reaching his last heart's desire,

namely to be 45 years in the ministry of the Gospel.

He will be deeply missed by his wife, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, friends, colleagues and the congregations that he pastored. He will be remembered as a loving husband and father, as a humble servant of the Lord, and as a powerful preacher of the Gospel. God gave him a keen mind as was evidenced by the fact that he was able, in the midst of his many ministerial duties, to do post graduate work at Knox College and be awarded the degree of Master of Theology. He served his Master well but he would be the first to dismiss the praise and say that it was all grace upon grace.

The Rev. D. VanderBoom was also active in the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches. Besides serving congregations in the East and West, he was delegated to numerous ecclesiastical assemblies, participated in many committees and was elected as the Chairman of General Synod 1980. He also served on the Board of Governors of the Theological College, and for a time was its Chairman. He even taught briefly at the College after the Rev. F. Kouwenhoven passed away. He was involved in *Clarion* and before it in *CRM* (Canadian Reformed Magazine). All in all, he was an active minister in the churches and for a number of years before his death was also privileged to be the Nestor (the oldest minister in the federation whose wisdom and eloquence was highly respected).

Farewell – Husband, Father, Grandfather, Friend, Pastor, Colleague, Brother. You have entered into the joy of your Master. Soli Deo Gloria!



# The Promises at Baptism

(Second of Two Parts)

By N.H. Gootjes

*The Form for Baptism states, among other things, that the Holy Spirit assures us that He will dwell in us and make us living members of Christ. Does the Form mean here a promise for the future or a reality that the Spirit is actually dwelling in the baptized child? In the previous instalment we saw that Calvin teaches both. In this concluding article we will begin discussing the views of Ursinus, an important theologian behind the Heidelberg Catechism. After that, we present the conclusion to our question.*

## Ursinus

Ursinus continued in the direction set out by Calvin. He maintained that children born of those who believe are included in the covenant and in the church of God unless they exclude themselves. They are, therefore, also disciples. The Holy Spirit teaches them in a manner adapted to their capacity and age.<sup>1</sup>

Ursinus elaborated on the fact that the benefits of remission of sins and regeneration belong to the children, for this is the language of the covenant. This is supported with references to Scripture such as: “to be God to you and to your descendants after you” (Genesis 17:7, to which are added Matthew 19:14, Acts 2:39, 3:25; 1 Corinthians 7:14, Romans 11:16). Ursinus concluded that baptism ought to be administered to infants of believers as well

for they are holy, the promise is unto them, the Kingdom of heaven is theirs. God who is certainly not the God of the wicked, declares that He will also be their God.<sup>2</sup>

That is the covenantal argument. Ursinus, however, added a second line of defense. He, too, appears to imply that infants of believers have the Holy Spirit. He defended that infants are disciples since they are born within the church and are taught in a manner suited for them. He pointed not only to Acts 2:39 but also to Acts 10:47: “Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”<sup>3</sup>

Ursinus clarified his position at a later point in his explanation, where he

confronted the Anabaptist objection based on Mark 16:16, that only believers can be baptized. He argued that infants may have the Holy Spirit and can be regenerated by Him. Two texts are adduced to defend that infants can be regenerated: John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15), and Jeremiah is called sanctified before he was born (Jer 1:5). This is applied to the infants of believers. “If infants now have the Holy Ghost, He certainly works in them regeneration, good inclinations, new desires, and such other things as are necessary for their salvation.” This statement is surprising, for it is too general. Ursinus, too, knew that not all baptized children are regenerated. Therefore he added: “Or at least, he supplies them with everything that is requisite for their baptism.”<sup>4</sup> He is referring to the Holy Spirit who works regeneration.<sup>5</sup>

## Does Scripture teach that the Holy Spirit dwells in infants to regenerate them?

We can notice a shift in argumentation. Calvin emphasized the covenant as basis for infant baptism. Marginally, he added that the Holy Spirit may even have begun working faith and regeneration in children in the womb, without making this an argument for infant baptism. For Ursinus it is clear that even infants can have the Holy Spirit to regenerate them. He used this as a valuable support for infant baptism.

## Scriptural basis

The question must be considered whether this defense of infant baptism is correct. Does Scripture teach that the Holy Spirit dwells in infants to regenerate them? There are several problems attached to this position. First of all, it is striking that the proof texts given for this opinion come from the wrong period, so to speak. The promise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers is a promise with a date attached to it. It did

not occur in the Old Testament, for Joel prophesied: “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy . . .”, Joel 2:28ff. According to the apostle Peter, this prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, after Jesus Christ’s ascension. From that time onward, the Holy Spirit comes on those who believe in Jesus Christ, Acts 2:38.<sup>6</sup> The texts used to prove the indwelling of the Holy Spirit date from an earlier period in God’s salvation work. The text from Jeremiah speaks about the Old Testament dispensation and the text about John the Baptist precedes Pentecost by more than 30 years. They lived in a different period when different rules applied.<sup>7</sup>

Let us also look at the two specific texts that were mentioned in support. Concerning John the Baptist, the angel said to his mother Elisabeth that her son would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. This is obviously not a general statement that can be applied to many children of believing parents, but a specific statement about one particular child, John. Moreover, it is not obvious that this refers to regeneration in general. Actually, Calvin himself, in his commentary on this passage, goes in a different direction when he remarks that “the greatness and excellence of his (John’s) office are extolled.”<sup>8</sup>

That is, indeed, the intention of this statement. The word “great” speaks of John’s significance for the Kingdom of God<sup>9</sup> and not about his personal regeneration. John will be inspired by the Holy Spirit to be a prophet<sup>10</sup> and John’s life proves that he was a prophet.

The other text mentioned in support of infant regeneration is Jeremiah 1:5, where God speaks to Jeremiah: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you. . . .” The Holy Spirit is not explicitly mentioned in this text, but it speaks of consecration, or holiness. What kind of holiness is meant? A traditional opinion says that this holiness has to do with removal of (original) sin, it can be found in the church fathers.<sup>11</sup> In his Institutes, Calvin appears

to follow this. But the same Calvin correctly emphasizes Jeremiah's prophetic office in his commentary.<sup>12</sup> The text speaks of setting apart and consecrating for a special office.<sup>13</sup> Jeremiah is prepared for his office as a prophet.<sup>14</sup>

We must conclude that there is no Scriptural basis for the position, tentatively held by Calvin and more forcefully by Ursinus, that a special work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit could serve as a basis for infant baptism. The two examples of Jeremiah and John the Baptist do not speak of regeneration and renewal.

### The promise at baptism

This brings us back to the Form for Baptism. Was such a special activity of the Spirit in infants taught in the Form for Baptism, when it mentioned the promise of the Holy Spirit?

The answer is no. There is not a trace in the Form for Baptism of the speculation found in 16th Century reformed theologians that the Holy Spirit works regeneration in babies before or just after birth. It does not support infant baptism with this view that appeared marginally in 16th Century theology. Rather, the Form bases itself squarely on the main argument from Scripture: the covenant. This term occurs prominently in the Form:

- God the Father testifies and seals to us that He establishes an eternal covenant of grace with us. . . .
- Since every covenant contains two parts, a promise and an obligation. . . .
- We must not despair of God's mercy nor continue in sin, for baptism is a seal and trustworthy testimony that we have an eternal covenant with God.
- The Lord spoke to Abraham, the father of all believers, and thus also speaks to us and our children, saying, I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you (quoting Gen 17:7).
- Infants must be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of his covenant. . . .
- You have heard that baptism is an ordinance of the Lord our God to seal to us and our children his covenant. . . .

Infant baptism is not based on the possibility that the Spirit may have regenerated the infant before it is baptized, but on the reality of the covenant. According to God's institution, infants of believers belong to the covenant. Therefore they must be baptized.

That brings us back to the question raised at the beginning, the promise at baptism, in particular the promise of the Holy Spirit. How should we explain the statement that the Spirit assures us that

He will dwell in us and make us living members of Christ, imparting to us what we have in Christ, namely the cleansing from our sins and the daily renewal of our lives? The answer is simple. The Form does not state that the Spirit actually dwells in all baptized children. It does not speak of an existing situation. Rather, this is presented as a promise for the covenant people of God.

That is in complete agreement with Scripture. The promise of indwelling is first mentioned in Acts 2:39: "For to you is the promise, and for your offspring. . . ." It is conditional on repentance and faith: "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins may be forgiven" (Acts 2:38). It is also mentioned in Romans 8:9-11, there, too, it is conditional on faith.<sup>15</sup> When the Form for Baptism speaks of the indwelling and sanctifying work of the Spirit it speaks of promises. These are great gifts of the covenant offered by God and grasped with the hands of faith.

**In baptism, our triune God  
promises Himself and all  
his benefits to us.**

The same promissory character can be seen in the way the Form speaks about the meaning of being baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son. The promise that "He will provide us with all good and avert all evil or turn it to our benefit" is fulfilled in those who believe (Rom 8:28 speaks of "those who love Him"). And the covenant promise of the Son is the forgiveness of sins, and is fulfilled through our union with Him, as Romans 6:5 says: "If we have been united with Him in his death. . . ."

The Form for Baptism follows Scripture in presenting the statement about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as promises. In baptism, our Triune God promises Himself and all his benefits to us. These are splendid gifts, granted by God and accepted in faith.

<sup>1</sup>Z. Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* (tr. G.W. Williard; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 366.

<sup>2</sup>Ursinus, *Commentary*, 367.

<sup>3</sup>Ursinus, *Commentary*, 368.

<sup>4</sup>Ursinus, *Commentary*, 370. Ursinus added a reference to Peter's word in Acts 10:47: "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." It must be remarked, however, that this text cannot support infant faith. The reference is to speaking in tongues and praising God, something that does not take place prior to infant baptism.

<sup>5</sup>Kakes argues that Ursinus accepted the possibility of infant faith, but that for him this was not a basis for infant baptism, for the real basis for baptism was regeneration and the gift of the Holy Spirit, see his *De doop in de Nederlandse belijdenisgeschriften*, 114.

<sup>6</sup>This explains the special fillings with the Spirit as recorded in Acts: they are the result of faith in Jesus Christ; see N.H. Gootjes, "De doop met de Heilige Geest", 154ff.

<sup>7</sup>See also C. Trimp, *Woord, water en wijn* (Kampen: Kok, 1985), 58f.

<sup>8</sup>J. Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Gospels* (tr. W. Pringle; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) vol. 1, 17f. Calvin acknowledges that the plentiful influence of the Spirit in John was an extraordinary gift of God. At the end, however, Calvin makes this general: "Let us learn by this example that, from the earliest infancy to the latest old age, the operation of the Spirit in men is free."

<sup>9</sup>So S. Greijdanus, *Het heilig evangelie naar de beschrijving van Lucas*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Van Bottenburg, 1940), 30.

<sup>10</sup>H.A.W. Meyer, *The Gospel of Luke* (R.E. Wallis, tr.; Winona Lake: Alpha Publications) 236 and A. Plummer, *The Gospel according to S. Luke* (5. ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1922) 14, identify this function as the Nazirite, but Greijdanus agrees with Lagrange that John's position was different, see his *Lucas I*, 30f. It includes at any rate the prophetic office, Luke 1:15 appears to mean that his work as a prophet began in the womb, and that his leaping in the womb is his first prophecy, see Meyer, *The Gospel of Luke*, 236; Greijdanus, *Lucas*, I, 31; J. Van Bruggen, *Lucas* (2. ed.; Kampen: Kok, 1996) 38.

<sup>11</sup>B.N. Wambacq, *Jeremias* (BOT; Roermond en Maaseik: Romen, 1957) 28.

<sup>12</sup>J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the book of the prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations* (repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) I, 35f.

<sup>13</sup>C.F. Keil, *Jeremiah* (tr. C.F. Keil; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 39f. That is the reason why the verb is no longer translated as 'made holy' but as 'consecrated' (RSV, NRSV, NASB) and as 'set apart' (NIV). These translations prevent misunderstandings as found in Calvin.

<sup>14</sup>See the commentaries on Jeremiah by A. Van Selms, *Jeremia*, vol. I (Callenbach: Nijkerk, 1972) 5; J.A. Thomson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 145 and B.J. Oosterhoff, *Jeremia* vol. I (Kampen: Kok, 1990) 90.

<sup>15</sup>Mark the use of 'if' in v. 9: "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you" (NIV). This 'if' is not inserted to make the Roman believers doubt whether they have the Spirit, see the end of v. 12, 15f. But it does tie the indwelling of the Spirit to the belief in Jesus Christ, see v. 9b: "And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. See the commentaries of J. Calvin, *Romans* (tr. J. Owen; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 290; S. Greijdanus, *De brief van den apostel Paulus aan de gemeente te Rome* vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Van Bottenburg, 1933) 363; C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975) 387f. J.D.G. Dunn disagrees, *Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988) 444, but that is caused by his view on the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

# John Calvin on Admission to the Lord's Supper

By R. Faber

According to the *Heidelberg Catechism*, rightful attendance at the Lord's Supper is the responsibility of two parties: the individual believer and the instituted church. The initiative of the individual is expressed in the question, "who are to come to the table of Lord?"; that of the church in the words, who "are to be admitted?" While the first question deals with proper self-examination, the second concerns the duty of the ordained officers in preserving the purity of the sacrament. This combination of personal reflection and church discipline in the *Catechism* was anticipated in the church order of Geneva, composed by John Calvin and his ministerial colleagues in 1537. In it we read that the elements should be received "under such good supervision that no one dare presume to present himself unless devoutly, and with genuine reverence for it. For this reason, in order to maintain the church in its integrity, the discipline . . . is necessary."<sup>1</sup> Proper attendance at the table results from the execution of individual and corporate responsibilities.

In preparing for the supper celebration, the individual is required to examine himself. 1 Corinthians 11:28-29 commands this important self-examination, and includes the warning that he "who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment unto himself." To prove *others*, however, is not the duty of the individual. Calvin notes that Scripture does not "bid us investigate whether there is anyone in the multitude whose uncleanness pollutes us (*Institutes* 4.1.15)." About admission to the table he writes: "individuals ought not to have the authority to determine who are to be received and who are to be rejected. This cognizance belongs to the church as a whole and cannot be exercised without lawful order (4.1.15)." In other words, while every believer must be certain that he partakes of the elements in a worthy manner, it is also the task of the overseers to ensure that the body and blood of the Lord is not

profaned. This distinction does not imply that Christian discipline is of no concern to the individual; rather, while the responsibility for discipline is individual, the exercise of it at the table is corporate. To maintain the purity of the sacrament, the individual and the church have respective duties.



Colossians 1:24 teaches that the church is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church and Christ are one, writes Calvin, since "Christ will not and cannot be torn from His church with which He is joined by an indissoluble knot, as the Head to the body."<sup>2</sup> Therefore "no one can bow down submissively before Christ, without also obeying the church."<sup>3</sup> Of course it is the Lord Jesus Christ who alone gathers and defends his church, yet as the Head, He exercises his authority through the body, his church, to which He has granted the keys to the kingdom of heaven (Matt 16:19; 18:17-18; John 20:22-23).

According to Calvin, the first goal of ecclesiastical authority is to promote the glory and honour of God, which is illustrated in the celebration of the sacrament (*Inst.* 4.12.5). The church must exercise oversight especially at this occasion, Calvin writes, for the body of Christ "cannot be corrupted by such foul and decaying members without some disgrace falling upon its Head (4.12.5)." Scripture commands God's people to be holy as He is holy. 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 in-

structs the congregation to remove the old leaven of malice and evil, and "to celebrate the festival . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Therefore, the 1537 church order states, "it behooves us to be on our guard that this pollution" of unworthy attendance at the table, "which abounds with such dishonour to God, be not brought amongst us by our negligence (50)." This does not mean that the table cannot be disgraced by hypocrites like Judas – it is the serious warning to self-examination which reminds such people that their false speech and behaviour are known to their omniscient Creator and their own hearts. The scope of corporate discipline does not reach beyond public profession and conduct.

Calvin writes that discretion in admission to the table should be exercised "through the jurisdiction of the church"; the sacrament "may not be profaned by being administered indiscriminately" (*Inst.* 4.12.5). Therefore, great responsibility rests upon the ordained officers who must be "of sound doctrine and of holy life, not notorious in any fault which might both deprive them of authority and disgrace the ministry [1 Tim. 3:2-3; Titus 1:7-8] (4.3.12)" of the word and sacrament. For the minister "to whom its distribution has been committed, if he knowingly and willingly admits an unworthy person whom he could rightfully turn away, is as guilty of sacrilege as if he had cast the Lord's body to dogs (4.12.5)." The *Heidelberg Catechism* observes that if those are admitted to the table whose confession and life reveal ungodliness, then "the covenant of God would be profaned and his wrath kindled against the whole congregation (Q.A. 82)." Since the consequences of unlawful participation in the sacrament are so dire, the Genevan church order concludes that "it is necessary that those who have the power to frame regulations make it a rule that they who come to this communion be approved members of Christ (50)."



Approved members of Christ are those whose confession and life show that they belong to Him, that they “participate in his body and blood” in faith. Christ instituted the supper only for his believers, to confirm the faith of those who by grace have been saved through hearing his Word. Since the sacrament is the “word made visible”, it reinforces the gospel. Therefore, unlike the sacrament of baptism, which may be administered to those who do not understand, God “does not similarly hold forth the Supper for all to partake of, but only for those who are capable of discerning the body and blood of the Lord, of examining their own conscience, of proclaiming the Lord’s death, and of considering its power (*Inst.* 4.16.30).” Since faith is a prerequisite for admission to the table, he whose confession and conduct reveal that he is *unbelieving* “should for a time be deprived of the communion of the supper until he gives assurance of his repentance (*Inst.* 4.12.6).” Martin Bucer, the main author of the church order of Cologne, notes that the Lord Jesus “celebrated the supper only with the twelve and only after he had preached so much; He did it only once, for which reason we assume that the Lord’s Supper should only be celebrated by those who submit entirely to Christ, confirm to have a thorough knowledge of the evangelical doctrine, fully believe this, and do not publicly prove the reverse.”<sup>4</sup> Since only approved members of Christ may approach the table of the Lord, the ordinances of Geneva (1541) state that on the Sunday preceding the celebration, announcement should be made that those who are strangers or new-comers “may be exhorted first to come and

Each individual in his own place must prepare himself to receive [the sacrament] whenever it is administered in the congregation.

It is not the office of each individual to judge and discriminate, in order to admit or reject as seems good to him; for this prerogative belongs generally to the church, or better, to the pastor with the elder whom he ought to have for assistance in the government of the church.

If there is nothing in heaven or earth of greater value and dignity than the body and blood of our Lord, it is no small error to take it inconsiderately and without being well prepared.

From Calvin’s Short Treatise on the Holy Supper



present themselves at the church, so that they be instructed and thus none approach to his own condemnation.”<sup>5</sup> In short, “no one is to be received at the supper unless he first have made confession of his faith.”<sup>6</sup>

**To maintain the purity of the sacrament, the individual and the church have respective duties.**

Proper celebration of the supper promotes not only the honour of God and the purity of His church, but also the unity which only the members of Christ’s body share. This unity is based upon the bond of love that exists between the Lord Jesus Christ and the believers through the power of the Holy Spirit. The *Heidelberg Catechism* states that to eat the crucified body and to drink the shed blood of Christ means that we are “united more and more to His sacred body through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us (76).” The bond of love between Christ the head and the church his body produces a ‘horizontal’ bond between the members themselves. 1 Corinthians 10:17 states that “because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” Therefore, writes Calvin, as in a “a mirror”, so in the supper “we may see that God not only dwells among us, but that He also dwells in everyone of us.”<sup>7</sup> The celebration of the supper manifests the one body of Christ.

The unity of Christ’s body displayed in the supper celebration affects the duty not only of the overseers, but also of the individual believers. In the

process of self-examination, the believer must ask “whether, as he is counted a member by Christ, he in turn so holds all his brethren as members of his body; whether he desires to cherish, protect, and help them as his own members (*Inst.* 4.17.40).” The Lord’s supper is a feast of fellowship that encourages the true believers to cultivate charity and concord, as befits members of the one body. The Geneva Catechism, composed by Calvin in 1537, explains why the unity expressed at the table concerns also the individual believers: “there could be no sharper goad to arouse mutual love among us than when Christ, giving Himself to us, not only invites us by his example to pledge and to give ourselves to one another, but as He makes Himself common to all, so also makes all one in Himself.”<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Riemer Faber is professor of classics at the University of Waterloo.

<sup>1</sup>Articles Concerning the Organization of the Church and of Worship at Geneva, 1537. Library of Christian Classics, Vol. 22 (Tr. J. Reid), 48. Quotations of Calvin’s *Institutes* are from F.L. Battles’ translation in the Library of Christian Classics, Vol. 21, 22 (Philadelphia, 1960).

<sup>2</sup>Commentary on Ezekiel 13:9.

<sup>3</sup>Commentary on Isaiah 45:14.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted from G.J. van de Poll, *Martin Bucer’s Liturgical Ideas* (Assen, 1954), 82-3.

<sup>5</sup>Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances, 1541. Library of Christian Classics, Vol. 22 (Tr. J. Reid), 67.

<sup>6</sup>Ordinances for the Supervision of the Churches in the Country, 1547. Library of Christian Classics, Vol. 22 (Tr. J. Reid), 79.

<sup>7</sup>Sermon on 1 Tim 3:14-15 in *Corpus Reformatorum* 53.314.

<sup>8</sup>Quoted from I.J. Hesselink, *Calvin’s First Catechism* (Louisville, 1997), 35.

# The Westminster Confession<sup>1</sup>

(Fourth of Four Parts)

By J. Kamphuis

In the previous article, Prof. Kamphuis showed how the Westminster Confession of Faith came to be written. Now follows a survey of its contents.

In conclusion, we would like to give a brief survey of the contents of the Westminster Confession, and then also raise the question whether there are no phrases in this confession which, in spite of everything with which we agree, are indeed questionable. Then we can also consider how we have to react in such instances.

## 1. Brief survey of the contents

This survey must indeed be very brief. For we are dealing here with a very extensive confession with thirty-three chapters, each sub-divided again into a number of articles.

Chapter 1 speaks about the *Holy Scripture*. Then follows in Chapter 2 the confession of the *Triune God*, while Chapter 3 deals with *his eternal decree*.

After Chapters 4 and 5 have spoken about *creation* and God's *providence* and in Chapter 6 about the *fall, sin and the punishment of sin*, Chapter 7 which is for us an especially striking chapter follows. It deals with the *covenant* (the covenant of works as well as the covenant of grace, and the distinction and the unity between the covenant in the old and new dispensation). Chapter 8 is a fitting and suitable continuation which speaks about *Christ, the Mediator*.

The confession continues in Chapter 9 speaking about *the free-will* and in Chapters 10 through 18 successively about *effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, saving faith, repentance unto life, good works, perseverance of the saints*, and the *assurance of grace and salvation*.

Then in Chapter 19 *the law of God* is extensively dealt with, and related to this in Chapter 20, *Christian liberty*. In the subsequent chapters the Westminster Confession deals further with specific commands of the law. First, Chapter 21

pays attention to *religious worship, and the sabbath-day*, in Chapter 22 the topic is *lawful oaths and vows*, in Chapter 23 the God-ordained *civil magistrate*, and in Chapter 24 *marriage and divorce*.

Next the confession speaks in Chapters 25 and 26 about the doctrine of *the church and the communion of saints* and then in Chapters 27 through 29 the doctrine of *the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper* is dealt with, and in Chapter 30 *church censure*. This part is closed off with an exposition on *synods and councils* in Chapter 31.

The closing chapters confess concerning *the state of men after death, and of the resurrection of the dead* (Chapter 32), and the final chapter speaks of the *last judgment*.

All these Reformed confessions reflect a great unity of faith

This is quite a dull and dry record of titles! But if you will take the time to consider all the topics which are dealt with, you will clearly see that what we in our churches have divided over *three* confessional documents, is here taken together and dealt with in one continuous document. Considering the topics discussed in the first large part of this confession, there is indeed some similarity with our Belgic Confession (although there is here and there some difference in the order). In this Confession topics are also discussed which are dealt with in the Canons of Dort, for example, the perseverance of the saints and the assurance of salvation, which we confess separately in Chapter V of the Canons of Dort. And in the middle section of this confession (Chapters 19-24) many subjects are dealt with which we confess in the third part of our Catechism where the law of God as a rule for our life of gratitude is explained in the Lord's Days 34-44. In the closing articles of the Westminster

Confession on the church, the sacraments, the resurrection of the body and the last judgment, there is again an obvious resemblance with Articles 27-37 of the Belgic Confession.

## 2. The specific character of the Westminster Confession

A Reformed confession, but one with its own identity! That is, of course, true of every confession. We touched upon that already a few times: among the Reformed churches there exists a rich variety of confessional documents (more so than among the Lutherans and especially in the Roman Catholic church). Still all these *Reformed* confessions reflect a great unity of faith. When we now apply that to the Westminster Confession then that means in the *first* place that we should be happy about that. *We can learn from each other!* There are undoubtedly several instances where "our" Three Forms of Unity (especially the Belgic Confession and the Catechism) show that they are closer to the *beginning* of the Reformation. In a simple and clear way the Good News of Jesus Christ is confessed over against Roman Catholic heresies and Anabaptist errors. The Westminster Confession was born at a later date. In its choice of words and in its slightly scholarly way of reasoning it resembles more our Canons of Dort. But this also has an advantage! This confession reflects a serious study of important matters which could be dealt with again as a result of the Reformation. But it took a while before certain convictions became generally accepted so that they specifically could be dealt with in the Confession. All confessions dating from the time of the Reformation speak about justification by faith, "the free will" and the total depravity of the natural man. That is (so to speak) something taken for granted. But it took time and continued study of Scripture before eyes were opened to see the crucial importance of the



## THE BELGIC CONFESSION

The first of the doctrinal standards of the Canadian Reformed Churches is the Confession of Faith. It is usually called the Belgic Confession because it originated in the Southern Netherlands, now known as Belgium. Its chief author was Guido de Brès, a preacher of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, who died a martyr to the faith in the year 1567. During the sixteenth century the churches in this country were exposed to the most terrible persecution by the Roman Catholic government. To protest against this cruel oppression, and to prove to the persecutors that the adherents of the Reformed faith were no rebels, as was laid to their charge, but law-abiding citizens who professed the true Christian doctrine according to the Holy Scriptures, de Brès prepared this confession in the year 1561. In the following year a copy was sent to King Philip II, together with an address in which the petitioners declared that they were ready to obey the government in all lawful things, but that they would "offer their backs to stripes, their tongues to knives, their mouths to gags, and their whole bodies to fire," rather than deny the truth expressed in this confession.

Although the immediate purpose of securing freedom from persecution was not attained, and de Brès himself fell as one of the many thousands who sealed their faith with their lives, his work has endured and will continue to endure for ages. In its composition the author availed himself to some extent of a confession of the Reformed Churches in France, written chiefly by John Calvin and published two years earlier. The work of de Brès, however, is not a mere revision of Calvin's work, but an independent composition. In the Netherlands it was at once gladly received by the churches, and adopted by the National Synods, held during the last three decades of the sixteenth century. After a careful revision, not of the contents but of the text, the great Synod of Dort in 1618-19 adopted this confession as one of the doctrinal standards of the Reformed churches, to which all office-bearers of the churches were required to subscribe. Its excellence as one of the best symbolical statements of Reformed doctrine has been generally recognized.

covenant and the history of the covenant. The Westminster Confession may in this respect reap in the harvest of what others had been sowing!

This Confession speaks in its first articles respectfully about the Scripture and its authority. The authority of Scripture is not based "upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof." That is why the Bible has to be received as the Word of God. More so than in our article 5 of the Belgic Confession, the Westminster Confession deals extensively with *the reason* why we acknowledge the divine authority of Scripture. It mentions in this context the testimony of the church, the heavenly nature of Scripture and the majesty of style, but *decisive* is the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness "by and with the Word in our hearts."

On the other hand, the Westminster Confession speaks more soberly about the holy Trinity than our confession does in Articles 8 and 9 but it is certainly not less Scriptural. The majority of sections show an overriding resemblance with the confession to which we here in Canada are bound as our christian and ecclesiastical standard of faith.

But there are points of doctrine where the Westminster shows its own colour. Sometimes you notice that *the specific situation* from which this confession originates played a significant role. That's why the fourth commandment and the observance of the day of the Lord (Chapter 21) gets much attention, much

more than in the Heidelberg Catechism. This can be easily explained when you keep in mind the situation at that time! In the Anglican Church of those days, Sunday was no day of rest and sanctification in the assembly of God's people. It had turned into a day of debauchery. That's what the Reformed people, the Puritans, protested against. But the question can be raised whether the Westminster Confession did not get a slightly legalistic trait from this. For as it is, this Confession says with regard to the Lord's Day, that it is God's command for "all men in all ages . . . not only to observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations; but also are taken up, the whole time, in the public and private exercises of His worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy."

There are points of doctrine where the Westminster Confession shows its own colour . . . questions could be raised.

Another point is that the Westminster Confession in the chapter on the covenant occasionally uses terms which do indeed raise questions. It is a beautiful thing that this Confession expressly speaks about the covenant God had with man already before the fall into sin. Here one can ask whether the term covenant of *works* is the right

choice in distinction from the covenant of *grace*. This wording leads so quickly to the dangerous idea that before the fall into sin Adam could have earned eternal life *by his own performance*. We should say that also then it was God's *favour* to promise Adam eternal life in the way of obedience. But such a questionable wording does not have to be a stumbling block, because the Westminster Confession is also very clear in confessing that establishing the covenant was a deed of God's good pleasure and "voluntary condescension." What this confession says further on is a bit more difficult. In Chapter 7 it states that in his covenant God freely offers life and salvation unto sinners, requiring of them faith in Him, *while God promises to give His holy Spirit to all those that are ordained unto eternal life to make them willing and able to believe*. Speaking about God's promises in this way the question can be raised whether we do not run the danger of making a distinction between a *general* promise of salvation and a *specific* promise only to the elect.

And so more questions could be raised. The Westminster Confession in Chapter 25 makes somewhat of a distinction between the invisible church (the total number of God's elect) and the visible church (consisting of all those who profess the true religion and their children). That visible church is then the same as "the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation."

## THE BELGIC CONFESSION

### TRUE CHRISTIAN CONFESSION Containing the Summary of the Doctrine of God and of the Eternal Salvation of Man

#### ARTICLE 1

##### THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD

We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth<sup>1</sup> that there is only one God,<sup>2</sup> who is a simple and spiritual Being;<sup>3</sup> He is eternal,<sup>4</sup> incomprehensible,<sup>5</sup> invisible,<sup>6</sup> immutable,<sup>7</sup> infinite,<sup>8</sup> almighty,<sup>9</sup> perfectly wise,<sup>10</sup> just,<sup>11</sup> good,<sup>12</sup> and the overflowing fountain of all good.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom 10:10.

<sup>2</sup> Deut 6:4; 1 Cor 8:4, 6; 1 Tim 2:5.

<sup>3</sup> Jn 4:24.

<sup>4</sup> Ps 90:2.

<sup>5</sup> Rom 11:33.

<sup>6</sup> Col 1:5; 1 Tim 6:16.

<sup>7</sup> Jas 1:17.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Kings 8:27; Jer 23:24.

<sup>9</sup> Gen 17:1; Mt 19:26; Rev 1:8.

<sup>10</sup> Rom 16:27.

<sup>11</sup> Rom 3:25, 26; Rom 9:14; Rev 16:5, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Mt 19:17.

<sup>13</sup> Jas 1:17.

#### ARTICLE 2

##### HOW GOD MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN TO US

We know Him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most beautiful book,<sup>1</sup> wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many letters leading us to perceive *clearly the invisible things of God*, namely, His eternal power and deity, as the apostle Paul says in Rom 1:20. All these things are sufficient to convict men and leave them without excuse. Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word<sup>2</sup> as far as is necessary for us in this life, to His glory and our salvation.

<sup>1</sup> Ps 19:1-4.

<sup>2</sup> Ps 19:7, 8; 1 Cor 1:18-21.

## THE BELGIC CONFESSION

### ARTICLE 3

#### THE WORD OF GOD

We confess that this Word of God *did not come by the impulse of man*, but that *men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God*, as the apostle Peter says (2 Pet 1:21). Thereafter, in His special care for us and our salvation, God commanded His servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit His revealed Word to writing<sup>1</sup>; and He Himself wrote with His own finger the two tables of the law.<sup>2</sup> Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ex 34:27; Ps 102:18; Rev 1:11, 19.

<sup>2</sup> Ex 31:18.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim 3:16.

### ARTICLE 4

#### THE CANONICAL BOOKS

We believe that the Holy Scriptures consist of two parts, namely, the Old and the New Testament, which are canonical, against which nothing can be alleged. These books are listed in the church of God as follows.

The books of the Old Testament: the five books of Moses, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The books of the New Testament: the four gospels, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles; the thirteen letters of the apostle Paul, namely, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon; the letter to the Hebrews; the seven other letters, namely, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, Jude; and the Revelation to the apostle John.



We will mention one more point. In Chapter 32 the Westminster Confession correctly refutes the doctrine that the soul of man after death dies or sleeps. This confession is also in line with Scripture when explaining that immediately after death the great separation takes place: the believers being received into heaven waiting there for the full redemption, and the unbelievers being cast into hell and utter darkness, being reserved to the judgment of the great day. However, confessing that the soul returns to God who gave them, the Westminster uses as argument that the soul has an *immortal subsistence*. Now it may be true that in theology very often has been spoken about “the immortal soul”, but that still does *not* make it *right!* It is contrary to Scripture which clearly teaches that God alone has immortality (1 Tim 6:16), and that we, when we die in the Lord, will *receive* immortality when the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised. (1 Cor 15: 52-54).

### 3. How to proceed?

On certain points the Westminster Confession (which as a whole reflects beautifully the language of Scripture) may indeed be questioned. And considering the points which we mentioned – and other ones could still be added – we may be happy that we do not have the same difficulties with our Three Forms of Unity.

Does that now mean that we have to reject as sister Churches those churches which already for ages adhere to this Confession, and thus have professed the Name of God and of the Lord Jesus?

It is my firm conviction that this is not the case.

I will briefly give you three grounds for this conviction:

In the *first* place, if we did that we would completely deny our own history as Reformed Churches. For the Reformed Churches have *always* acknowledged as sister churches in Christ such churches which have confessed the Reformed faith with the words of the Westminster Confession. If we want to break with that past we have to come up with very solid grounds!

*Secondly*, we mentioned above that we do not have to ask such critical questions of the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort (confessions to which our officebearers and churches are bound) as we did with respect to the

Westminster Confession. That does, however, not mean that we can call *our* confessional documents divine and perfect (“godelijk-volmaakt”) in all formulations. We may say that in all points of doctrine they are in harmony with God’s Word. But that does not mean that you affirm every formulation as being completely correct and never allow any emendation. To mention only one example, Dr. C. Trimp has argued extensively that the term “outward preaching” in the Canons of Dort Chapters III/IV, 12 (see also III/IV, 11) has good qualities, especially in the struggle against the Arminians. But he also stated that the distinction “outward” (namely for the preaching of the Word) and “inward” (for the decisive work of the Holy Spirit) is nevertheless a faulty one. For according to him it can so easily be used to minimize God’s mighty work in and through His Word coming from *the outside* to us, and consider the preaching of the Word as something which is *just* “outward” and as such not that important.<sup>2</sup>

**We may say that in all points of doctrine they [the Three Forms of Unity] are in harmony with God’s Word. But that does not mean that you affirm every formulation as being completely correct and never allow any emendation.**

I agree wholeheartedly with Prof. Trimp on this point. When the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands modernized the language of the confession they did change this formulation, which was well meant but could be abused. Often the question is: what is *meant* with a certain word or formulation? What is the point they want to profess (with perhaps imperfect words)? That is the way we read our own confessional documents. With Holy Scripture always in the background. We take into account the often limited possibilities to confess God’s multifaceted truth and we ask for the *meaning* of what has been expressed by those particular phrases. But if that is true of “our” confessions then we should also use the same standard when considering the confessional documents of churches with whom we are one in the faith.

And in the *third* place: also when there will be certain points where there will always be some difference<sup>3</sup>, then it should be considered whether it is not commendable to discuss *such specific* points with each other in a brotherly fashion with the prayer that the Spirit of the Lord will guide us together so that we may both grow in the knowledge of faith. With regard to these points it should be possible to find each other peaceably and harmoniously in a common formula which does not carry the baggage of past difficulties. In such a statement of faith these churches, together respectfully listening to the Word of God, which is the truth for all times, could make an attempt to reach an agreement serving the upbuilding of the church of the Lord and the praise of his holy Name.

It would be such a delight that when churches meet with one another (as now is the case in the International Conference of Reformed Churches) there would be an opportunity not to criticize each other and then thereafter quickly return each to his own home, but to serve each other on our way to the future of our Lord. He guided us in the past and brings us together in order that we also confess together the Name of Christ, Head of His people and King of His congregation so that the world may believe that the Father has sent His Son (John 17:21)

<sup>1</sup>The following articles originally appeared in Dutch in *Rondom Het Woord*, 38:11; 39:1,2,3 (1984/85) and were written by Prof. J. Kamphuis of Kampen, The Netherlands. They were freely translated and adapted to our Canadian situation by Rev. Johannes Mulder of Burlington, Ontario who was assisted by others. Prof. J. Kamphuis approved of our translation and adaptation.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. C. Trimp, ed., *Bezielde Verband*, (Kampen: Van den Berg, 1984) 226.

<sup>3</sup>This could perhaps happen most often when the Westminster Confession in its chapter on synods (Chapter 31) states that decisions, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, *not only* for their agreement with the Word of God, *but also* for the power whereby they are made. We note with gratitude that also in this Confession agreement with the Word of God is *the* decisive factor, but it is a bit difficult to understand that immediately after that agreement with God’s Word, the authority of the ecclesiastical assembly is mentioned! At this point it shows how difficult it is to shake hierarchy, while the Westminster Confession did totally eliminate the episcopal system of church government!



## Organ Workshop

By A. Blokhuis

### Ministry of Music

ON April 14/99, an invitation was sent to:

Credo Christian School, Woodbridge  
Covenant Christian School,, Flamborough  
John Calvin Christian School, Burlington  
Timothy Christian School, Hamilton and  
Rainbow Christian Kindergarten

The invitation read:

**ORGAN CONCERT**  
for  
**ELEMENTARY STUDENTS**  
By  
**WILLEM VAN SUIJDAM**

On Tuesday, May 4/99 at 1:00 p.m. a large contingent of bright, eager, enthusiastic students filled the front-right section, by the organ, of "Ebenezer Canadian Reformed church" at 607 Dynes Rd., Burlington.

### Why? You might ask.

It seems that the number of people seriously interested in the "study" and "playing" of the church organ is steadily declining. (Some of our congregations are presently a without resident organist.) Our intent therefore is to stimulate and foster interest, enthusiasm and love in the sharing with and by all those known as the "Flock of Christ, our Lord."

Mr. Willem Van Suijdum proved to be very generous with his time and considerable talents, not only as an organist, but also as a capable teacher. What was billed, an informal concert, he turned into a wonderful **"Introductory Workshop."** He have examples in isolating notes ranging from the single muted "Finch or Cardinal" to the drone of a large contingent of "Bagpipes." He demonstrated the Horns, Flutes, Woodwinds, String Instruments, Thunder, just short of "fireworks." He demonstrated how notes could be used singly, as well as in groupings and showed how to "Tone paint and Blend" in order to affect or create moods and feelings. He laid bare the capabilities of the organ in which we, the listeners, may lay bare before our Lord, what lives in our heart and soul.

The organ used in this manner allows us to hear the "Cool, Verdant, Life-giving Waters." We may also hear the "Outreaching Flames of the Holy Spirit" and through this same listening, be gently led through "Pastoral Vales with Joy and Laughing or moved to tears" made aware, the Shepherd leads us.

Music! What a marvellous ministry! Remarkable, since we only got as far as Psalm 1!

The children were given ample opportunity for questions and input. (They suggested Psalm 1 as their favourite Psalm. Talk about "From the mouth of babes"! They were allowed to view the organ up close and ask questions about it.

Questions such as, "What is the difference between a piano and an organ? Some of the answers were surprising, believe me.

"How many of you are taking piano lessons?" Forty or so hands shot up.

"How many of you are taking organ lessons?" One and one half hands hesitantly were raised.

During the play demonstrations, the young students were mesmerized. They moved and bobbed, swaying with the music, delightful! What wonderful sense of rhythm God has placed in all of us!

Joyfully I may report that Alvina Kampen is encouraging workshops, organizing and arranging worksheets and handouts, to assist teachers in their tasks of fostering love for the "Ministry of Music" as it applies to all God's children, young and old.

Dear brothers and sisters, hear my appeal. Not only allow, but encourage your children to learn to play the organ. Fill their hearts with joy, so that our hearts also may be filled with the "Sound of Dedicated Music."

### Is it easy to play the organ?

This question is dependent upon who you ask. J.S. Bach would have responded, "There is nothing to it. You only have to hit the right notes at the right time and the instrument plays itself."

L. Von Beethoven responded differently. "An organist who is master of his instrument should be placed at the head of all virtuosi."

Let us remain humble and recognize that our talents are a gift from God Creator and are not to be squandered on self but are to be used first, to glorify Him and secondly to be used in the sharing, up-building and edifying of each other.

*Mr. A. Blokhuis schedules organists for the worship services in the Canadian Reformed church in Burlington-Waterdown, Ontario.*

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address.

They should be 300 words or less.

Those published may be edited for style or length.

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address and phone number.



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# Word and Deed: Reflections on the Relationship between Mission and Mission Aid

(Second of two parts)

By J. De Jong

## Practical Considerations

*What follows is the second part of an address given at the Mission Aid Conference hosted by the church of Hamilton on August 28, 1998. In the first part (published in Clarion 48:19) Dr. De Jong dealt with the biblical data on the relationship between word and deed and how Reformed churches have worked this out in mission and mission aid. Now Dr. De Jong turns to practical considerations.*

In my convocation speech I argued that we need to keep the classical division of labour as set forth by Amersfoort 1948. There is no need for us to overturn the whole apple cart of history, and start all over, even if our opportunities for mission are different today than they were fifty years ago. I have even tried to defend some positive sides to Synod 1951's decision. After all, the Liberation (1944) sought to maintain the church polity of the Doleantie, with its stress on the autonomy of the local church. Yet given the close connection between word and deed in Scripture, and also the role of the deed as an integral part of the reality of the gospel, I think we need to foster every effort to bring these two into greater harmony. Let's distinguish, but not separate. Let's accept a division of office, but a harmony of purpose.

In my view the component that was lacking already in 1948 was the diaconal element. In the report to Synod 1951 the brothers said with regard to the supporting work:

Perhaps the deacons could be involved in this as well; without advising this, we consider this and other related issues to belong, also in their further delineation, to the freedom of the local churches. The best rule seems to be that a society is formed with local representations.

Such an organization should be independent in its work.<sup>1</sup>

My view is that the study committees of 1948 were too reticent about the role of the deacons in the supporting role of mission aid, and even in the role of developmental aid. Is there also not a role for the deacons in the outworking of the diaconal component of the mission enterprise on the field? To be sure, deacons are stewards in the household of God, (1 Tim 3:15). They are household servants. But this household is not limited by time or place, and furthermore, is also a household that always lives with a view to the world in which it lives and subsists.

**How can we expect a vital link between word and deed to grow in the indigenous church if it is not clearly visible in the sending church, and in the way the sending church projects itself in a given missionary setting?**

This is also confirmed by looking at the mission mandate in Matthew 28:18,19. It is obvious that the central task of this mandate is to preach the word. Literally, the mandate reads: "Go and make disciples of all nations." Then in the original there follow two present participles which indicate an ongoing action as to the way this is done: ". . . baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." It is impossible to exclude the "deed" factor from this mandate, since it says: *all* that I have commanded you – that is, all things from the first table of the law, and also from the second table of the law.

And how can one teach without a living example? How can the diaconal congregation be formed on the mission field without being nurtured by the diaconal congregation on the home front?

I agree that the deed is a fruit of the word. We need to follow the pattern of Lord's Day 33 in the preaching of the gospel. Only by repentance and conversion does one come to a life of genuine gratitude to God. First comes the word as preached; then as a fruit of that word: deeds of thanksgiving. This is absolutely essential in order for the deed to be a deed of love! But my point is: does not the proclamation itself illustrate the vital connection between word and deed in the way it is brought? How can we expect a vital link between word and deed to grow in the indigenous church if it is not clearly visible in the sending church, and in the way the sending church projects itself in a given missionary setting?

I also believe we need to retain the distinction between the special offices and the office of all believers.<sup>2</sup> These are God-given patterns in the congregation. But in a living congregation these two sets of people are never at odds or in conflict regarding terrain, but they are working together harmoniously for the upbuilding and the smooth functioning of the body (Eph 4:12, Col 3:18). Therefore I would like to eliminate all sense of conflict or battle with regard to terrain or territory among these categories. Each needs to know his office, but in the context of that office we need to foster a harmonious word and deed ministry which is all part of the mission of the gospel.<sup>3</sup>

Much has been written and said about the relationship between mission and mission aid, and the exact configuration of these two in the missionary enterprise. If we would want to have an exact task description we need to be clear what exactly we are speaking



about. What is mission aid? Some see it as the basic things the missionary needs to do his work, that is the help for the missionary. There were with Jesus several women who ministered to Him, (Luke 8:3) and Paul had a host of helpers.<sup>4</sup> In this sense there can be an element of aid which belongs to the mission enterprise itself. These are the essential support services that the missionary needs in order to have a viable functioning post. I would even think here of the possibility of an aid worker being part of the mission – let's say, a mission worker.

Then comes the broader component of mission aid: medical and educational services, and beyond this, emergency aid and technical support services to help people in their economic circumstances, that is, the developmental component. This is mission aid in the broader, and perhaps more popular sense. Also here in Canada this has largely been left to congregational initiatives, outside the authority of the consistory. We have promoted the development of separate organizations just as these exist in the Dutch situation. Yet also for this dimension, insofar as it may be connected with mission projects, is this not a form of mission aid, and is there not room for a greater diaconal role from the church councils? Could not deacons be an integral part of steering committees that represent various sectors of mission aid and developmental work?

The issue today is one of streamlining and coordination. In a speech like this I cannot claim to work out all kinds of details. Yet I can say that Prof. Trimp has been quite explicit about his view as to the way this should go, and I can find myself in his suggestions. Why cannot these sorts of diaconal aspects also not be discussed and regulated by our deacons, and dealt with at our ecclesiastical assemblies?<sup>5</sup> For example, why cannot certain specific diaconal needs for mission projects be decided by the office bearers – including deacons – at the classis, and if need be the regional synod? Then all the cooperating churches have the opportunity to be involved and to have their say, and also to give their approbation to the project.

What about the relationship between the deacons and the organizations? Who must take the leading role here? In my view this depends on the nature of the project. Aid projects more immediately connected with the missionary enterprise should have a greater

input from deaconries acting through ecclesiastical assemblies. Broader projects, including those involving developmental aid, require the expertise of an outside organization. People should be allowed to be reasonably sure that their money is going to a project that has been responsibly planned and that has reasonable chances of actually providing genuine assistance in a given situation. Our projects should also be presented in this way. As Reformed Christians we need to avoid the extremes of the horizontalism prevalent in the World Council of Churches, and the verticalism or narrow, spiritualized mission work characteristic in some quarters of evangelicalism.<sup>6</sup>

**Given that fact that the average church member deals with a limited budget, there is something to be said for prioritizing our projects in order to bring out more acutely the close connection between word and deed.**

Here we can benefit from close cooperation between deaconries and aid organizations. Here in Canada we are currently living in a context in which there are quite a few young (and not so young) people that are coming forward to offer some of their time and resources for one or other mission or mission aid or developmental aid project. There is room for all of this, and there is no doubt we all should do what we can, as long as things are done in a responsible way, and the basic priorities of Christian duty are not forgotten. Given that fact that the average church member deals with a limited budget, there is something to be said for prioritizing our projects in order to bring out more acutely the close connection between word and deed. There is also something to be said for aiming at the more long term goals in our missionary endeavour. Mission and mission aid, as well as developmental aid is like anything else: the more you put into it, the greater the effect in the long run. And as Christians – perhaps more than as business people – we should be concerned about the long run.

Obviously the work we do will need the expertise of outside agencies in

many situations. But if we can begin to develop the expertise to handle some of our own aid projects, as well as some of our own developmental projects in and around our own mission areas, we have a greater opportunity to continue to foster the close relationship between word and deed, and to show the integral unity of these two in more long term ways. This to my mind most effectively seeks to proximate Paul's reference to the "equality" or "fair balance" in 2 Corinthians 8:14.

Admittedly this does not answer all the questions that one might have here. Perhaps the discussion can bring out more details, and I look forward to your input to refine my own views. But, in accordance with my stated objective, I hope I have provided you with a certain 'hulp dienst' in this address.


<sup>1</sup>De verhouding . . . , 14.

<sup>2</sup>The submission of D. Griffioen and H. Venema at the 1995 Mission Conference in Zwolle (*Zending in beweging*) tend to blur this distinction somewhat. I can find myself more in agreement with the more reserved remarks of M. te Velde, cf M. Te Velde "Reactie" in *Zending in beweging*, 115-123.

<sup>3</sup>Cf C. Trimp, "Ambtelijke en maatschappelijke hulpverlening" in *De Reformatie* Vol. 57 no. 26 (April 3, 1982) 410-413.

<sup>4</sup>We may think of Phoebe, Gaius, and the mother of Rufus, (Rom 16), Prisca and Aquila as obvious non-ordained helpers. Besides these we have (most likely) ordained figures like Timothy, (Phil 2: 22), Crescens, Titus (2 Tim 4:9), Silvanus, (1 Pet 5:12) and Luke, (2 Tim 4:11). Others are: Onesiphorus, Trophimus and Erastus, (2 Tim 4: 19) Artemas, Tychichus, Zenas the lawyer and Apollos, who may or may not have been ordained. In the list of Rom 16, we may note that some are distinctly isolated as workers (*kopioses*): Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis. Gaius is identified as host (*zenos*) to the church, and Erastus as a city treasurer (*oikonomos*). Stephanus and Fortunatus and Achaichus are termed men worthy of recognition, (1 Cor 16:17). These men might well have been *presbuteroi*.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. C Trimp, *Zorgen voor de gemeente. Het ambtelijke werk van ouderling en diaken toegelicht* (Van den Berg, Kampen, 1986) 219-234.

<sup>6</sup>See on this J.J. Tigchelaar, "Liefde in daden. Over de verhouding van woord en daad in de zending" in J.P. Versteeg et. al. (ed.) *Gij die eertijds verre waart . . . Een overzicht van de geschiedenis en taken van de zending* (De Banier, Utrecht, 1978) 217-240. In the same volume see A. Moens, "De daad bij het woord", *Ibid*, 289-342. According to Tigchelaar the unity of word and deed is also to be found in the concept of the kingdom of God and its manifestation on earth. It all concerns the *presentia Christi*, cf. 225. 

## Living by the Doctrines of Scripture

# Steadfastly continuing in sound doctrine

By P.G. Feenstra

Many Christians tend to think of religion in the more practical terms of morals and ethics. What you believe is not deemed to be as important as living a good, clean and morally pleasing life. Nevertheless, all our actions must be based on the doctrines of Holy Scripture.

It is important that we understand the place of doctrines within the life of the church. When we publicly professed our faith, we stated that we wholeheartedly believed the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian church. We were asked, "Do you promise by the grace of God steadfastly to continue in this doctrine in life and death, rejecting all heresies and errors conflicting with God's Word?" Similar vows are made by parents at the baptism of their children. They promise to instruct them in the true and complete doctrine of salvation. The Lord will not hold us guiltless if we do not uphold what we promised. Already in the Old Testament God warned his people: "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not be slack to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin in you. You shall be careful to perform what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth" (Deut 23:21,23). With this issue of *Clarion* I am starting a monthly column on doctrine that, if it pleases God, will help you, the reader, continue in the doctrines you vowed to uphold.

### Promoting sound doctrine

The doctrines on which we base our faith must be sound. Sound doctrine, that is to say Biblical doctrine, produces spiritually healthy living. From the letter of Paul to Titus it is readily apparent how the Lord is concerned that the true

and complete doctrine of salvation be guarded. Every congregation must have elders who hold firm to the sure Word as taught, so that they may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it (1:9). Those who are in office should be familiar with the doctrines of Scripture so that they are able to teach others concerning the riches of Scripture. Church leaders are not the only ones who are to defend and promote doctrine. Every church member must hold the mystery of the faith and speak what is fitting to sound doctrine.

The Lord holds us  
accountable for what we  
believe as well as how we  
think about the truth of  
Scripture.

### Rejecting false doctrine

A passionate love for the truth entails hatred of heresy and opposition to all false doctrine. False doctrine and heresy must be opposed because it is an affront to the living God! Some find it difficult to defend Biblical absolutes in fear of hurting or offending others. Doctrines are put into the category of "personal opinion" and looked upon as be-

ing unimportant: As long as you believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, all the rest is secondary! Thus Christians are left doing what is right in their own eyes – exactly what God forbade (Deut 12:8; Judg 17:6; 21:25).

The true and complete doctrine of salvation teaches us to know the true God, our Saviour. Immediately after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, believers devoted themselves to understanding the apostolic doctrines which had been passed on to them (Acts 2:42). The preaching of the gospel would lose its foundation if it could not stand on the doctrines of the Old and New Testaments.

Throughout the letters of the New Testament you find repeated the exhortation to build on the right foundation by upholding the right doctrines in preaching and daily living. Christ himself directs us to this foundation: it is the writings of prophets and apostles, as stated in Scripture, as repeated in the confessions and as summarized in the teachings and doctrines of the church. These doctrines must repeat what is stated in God's revelation; otherwise they must be rejected. Paul writes to the Galatians: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8). The apostle John puts it even stronger: "Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine



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of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son. If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting; for he who greets him shares his wicked work" (2 John 9-11). The Belgic Confession puts it this way: "Since it is forbidden to add to or take away anything from the Word of God (Deut 12:32), it is evident that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects."

**A church that is not firmly rooted in doctrine is like a ship without a rudder or a musical score sheet filled with notes but missing a staff.**

The Lord holds us accountable for what we believe as well as how we think about the truth of Scripture. If we profess faith in Christ we have to be able to articulate the most basic doctrines of Scripture. Doctrinal shallowness will undermine people's ability to discern. The Lord calls us to leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity (Heb 6:1). A church that is not firmly rooted in doctrine is like a ship without a rudder or a musical score sheet filled with notes but missing a staff. The best and most effective way of combatting heresy is by being thoroughly grounded in the doctrine of the Word of God. Knowing the truth of Scripture will keep us from being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Eph 4:14).

### **Adorning doctrine with proper behaviour**

The doctrines of the Bible are to be believed and applied. If we say we believe the Bible to be the holy inspired Word of God this entails that we are to submit ourselves completely to its authority as well. Knowing Jesus Christ and his love for sinners means surrendering ourselves to his Lordship. Believing God to be omnipotent necessitates learning to lean on Him throughout our whole life. What we believe with the heart must be confessed with our lips (Rom 10:9,10).

The teachings of the Word of God form the way we think and behave. Holy living is inseparable from sound doctrine. Our walk of life must be in agreement with the doctrines we con-

fess. By living in submission to the will of God revealed in the Old and New Testaments we adorn the doctrine of God. The apostle Paul speaks of this in Titus 2. In verse 1 he instructs Titus to speak about those things which are properly associated with sound doctrine. In the verses 2-10 he shows how doctrine is to form the pattern of behaviour of older men and women, of younger men and women, of employers and employees. Their actions are to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour" (Titus 2:10). To "adorn" is to make beautiful and attractive. We adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by living lives that are characterized by a deep sense of our own sinfulness and by the joy of knowing that we, who in ourselves have nothing to offer to God, receive everything in Christ.

### **Reason for doctrinal statements**

At times the church must state on paper what it believes and confesses to defend the truth and to guard what has been entrusted to it. These writings, known as confessions, are not infallible and may not be placed on the same level as Scripture itself (BC Art. 7). Yet they should not be undervalued or underestimated. The doctrinal statements that have been placed in the hands of the church are for our protection. They protect us against our own sinfulness and our tendency to be ruled by our own thoughts and opinions.

Doctrines have often been formulated in reaction to error and false teachings and we should not be too proud to think we will not fall into the same trap. The difference between truth and error is often subtle and difficult to detect since Satan cloaks false teaching



**C**HURCH NEWS

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS:**  
**Rev. B.R. Hofford**  
 Residence: 320 3rd St., Sumas, WA  
 Mail: P.O. Box 584, Sumas, WA  
 98295-0584  
 Phone: (360) 988-6044

in a beautiful garment, deceiving many by making it appear to be more acceptable than the truth (2 Cor 11:14).

What we believe and confess has been formulated very carefully in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. In this we see the love of God for his church. He has illuminated the minds of those who wrote these documents so that they were able to state clearly, for the benefit of God's people, the doctrines contained in the Old and New Testaments.

May the study of doctrine bring us to a deeper understanding and knowledge of who God is. As we are ruled and governed by the doctrine of Scripture let the words of Psalm 25:4,5 be our prayer: "Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long."

*Rev. Peter Feenstra is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Owen Sound, Ontario.*

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## PRESS RELEASE: CLASSIS PACIFIC EAST, LYNDEN, SEP 30, 1999

On behalf of the convening church of Lynden, B. Wielenga called the meeting to order. We sang from Psalm 98.1,4 and read from Isaiah 42.1-13; prayer was offered up. All were welcomed, especially the deputies of Regional Synod (brothers R. Aasman and C. VanSpronsen) and candidate brother P. Holtvluwer, who were all present for the peremptory examination requested by the church at Aldergrove for the candidate. After the credentials were reported to be in order, classis was constituted and the officers suggested by the previous classis took their seats: C.J. VanderVelde as chairman, B. Wielenga as vice-chairman, and D. Moes as clerk. The agenda was adopted.

Via an earlier letter to the convening church, the church at Aldergrove had requested the examination by classis of brother Holtvluwer. The deputies of regional synod were requested to sit at the classis table for the examination. The pertinent documents were presented and found to be in good order; classis proceeded with the examination. After hearing the candidate present a message on Luke 13.1-5, classis, with the concurring advice of the deputies, concluded in closed session that the examination could continue. This was done in open session where brother Holtvluwer was examined in areas of Old Testament exegesis, New Testament exegesis, Scripture knowledge, doctrine and creeds, church history, ethics, church polity, and diaconology. In closed session classis evaluated what it had heard from the candidate and judged, with the concurring advice of the deputies, that the brother had successfully sustained the peremptory examination. Classis then appropriated the call. In open session this decision was conveyed to brother Holtvluwer. Since the classis' form of subscription was not present to be signed, the brother orally affirmed his willingness and intention to subscribe to the form at the next classis. The archive church was charged to secure a copy of this form and the convening church for next classis was charged to provide it for that meeting. We sang from Psalm 89.1 and the chairman led in giving thanks to the Lord. The deputies were thanked for their presence and contribution to this part of the meeting. Opportunity was given to congratulate brother Holtvluwer. An invitation was received by classis from the church at Aldergrove to the ordination of brother Holtvluwer on October 24, 1999. Brother R. Schouten will be present on behalf of classis.

A report was received from the committee for needy churches with a recommendation for supporting a classis church in the amount of \$12,000 (\$6.10 per communicant member) for the year 2000. The recommendation of the committee was adopted. A church visitation report concerning the church at Abbotsford was received.

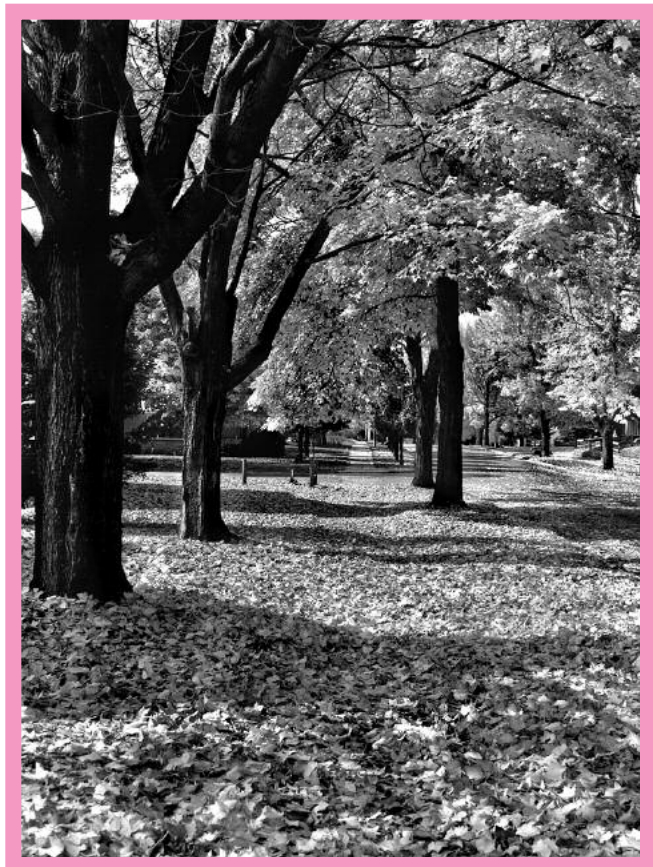
Under question period Art. 44 of the church order one church requested and was given advice in a matter pertaining to the proper government of the church.

The church at Vernon was appointed as the convening church for next classis, which is scheduled to convene in

Vernon, at 9:00 a.m. on December 9, 1999; the alternate date is March 30, 2000. Classis appointed as suggested officers for next classis the following brothers: B. Wielenga as chairman, D. Moes as vice-chairman, and M. VanLuik as clerk. The committee for examinations was reappointed with one new appointment: brother P. Holtvluwer is appointed examiner in church polity. Church visitors were reappointed; as was the church for the archives, the church for the inspection of archives, the treasurer, the church for auditing the books of the treasurer, the committee for financial aid to students for the ministry, and the committee for needy churches. As delegates to regional synod, to be convened in Taber on November 23, the following brothers were appointed: R. Schouten, M. VanLuik, and B. Wielenga as ministers – with C. VanderVelde and D. Moes as alternates in that order; G. Boeve, B. Vane, and P. VanSpronsen as elders – with P. VanWoudenberg, J. Marissen, and H. Bosscher as alternates in that order.

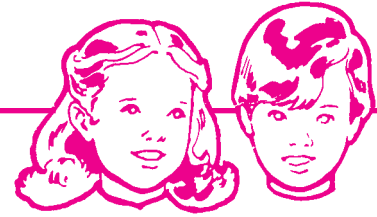
Opportunity was given for questions. The chairman noted that censure (Article 34 of the church order) was not necessary. The Acts were adopted; the press release was approved. We sang from Psalm 145.1, and the chairman led in prayer and thanksgiving. The meeting was closed.

For classis, *B. Wielenga*



# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



## Dear Busy Beavers

Do you enjoy doing the puzzles in Our Little Magazine? Have you ever had a book where it is full of puzzles to do, and even managed to do some of them? Puzzles are a real lot of fun. Many hours of hard work have been put into making these puzzles, and many hours of solving these puzzles will have to be done when you have the book.

What about jigsaw puzzles? Do you like to sit down at the table or lay down on the floor and put all the pieces together? I have just completed a puzzle that was very difficult, and I really enjoyed putting it all together. It feels so good when all the pieces are in their right place. Then you can very proudly display it somewhere, where others can see your handwork!

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

## WORD SEARCH

By Busy Beaver Chantelle Tuininga

P Y A C S I X P G I T M U Y E S J  
 Z E K Z I S U J K Y N J K L Z A B  
 K C N D C A G E J L H E I K M O Q  
 S U W P C A A C S K N S Z N B P L  
 K L N O A C R Z X Z W U L U V W S  
 X B C P E L N H S Y K S A U L Z A  
 N P Q M Z W X O P K L B N O M L M  
 B U S Y B E A V E R C L U B Z N U  
 A U Z K N O M P O E Z K L M E I E  
 I U N C E K S I S B O D L I Z H L  
 U I N K Z K U N O E P Q I N Q Z E  
 N K Z T N E N I E K G H T K N Z K  
 H A B Z B K N K N A P Y Z K H N P  
 N G B O K E Z O N H Q N C H N A E  
 T L E L K M T I P H E B R Y L C A  
 H R E L E N B T O Y N L E R O Z Y  
 G O D N T U R Z Y N Q A U Z N O K

### FIND:

Penpal	Busy Beaver Club	Aunt Betty
Jesus	Saul	Samuel
God	Isaac	Rebekah

## KINGS

Kings are influential in shaping the history of their nations. Match each king with the proper statement about him.

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Built an altar, asking that a plague end | a. Jeroboam, 1 Kings 13:4            |
| 2. Carried Judah and Jerusalem into Exile   | b. Ahaziah, 2 Kings 1:2              |
| 3. Built the Temple                         | c. Solomon, 2 Chronicles 7:11        |
| 4. Reigns three months                      | d. Darius, Ezra 6:1,8                |
| 5. Had fifteen years added to his life      | e. David, 2 Samuel 24:25             |
| 6. His hand "dried up"                      | f. Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20:5-6          |
| 7. Made a covenant before the Lord          | g. Josiah, 2 Chronicles 34:31        |
| 8. Had youngest children of Bethlehem slain | h. Saul, 1 Samuel 18:20-11           |
| 9. Fell through his upper chamber           | i. Nebuchadnezzar, 1 Chronicles 6:15 |
| 10. Gave decree to rebuild Temple           | j. Jehoiachin, 2 Kings 24:8          |
| 11. Threw a javelin at David                | k. Herod, Matthew 2:16               |

## TIE-UP!

Add a three letter word to the end of the first group and to the beginning of the second group of letters in each pair and two Biblical names will appear. To help you find the correct "tie-up" word a clue is given after each pair. What are the names concerned?

- REU \_ \_ \_ JAMIN; Scottish mountain
- ABRA \_ \_ \_ AN; meat
- NAA \_ \_ \_ ASSEH; male
- A \_ \_ \_ ASCUS; embankment to restrain water
- EST \_ \_ \_ OD; belonging to a lady
- GIL \_ \_ \_ Z; serpent
- JO \_ \_ \_ ER; tree
- SIS \_ \_ \_ STUS; period of time
- ABI \_ \_ \_ ES; pack tightly
- JEHO \_ \_ \_ AH; animal
- ABIS \_ \_ \_ GAI; ugly woman
- AHI \_ \_ \_ AL; vessel for popular bath

