

UNDERMINING THE CONFESSIONS

On Being Reformed Today

In the editorial “Dealing with Dissent” (a) we mentioned that we, in a subsequent issue of Reformed Polemics, would continue our discussion on how “in the history of the church many attempts have been made to undermine the confession of the church, and drain it of its vitality and power of a binding consensus.” We noted that many “church members (Reformed and Presbyterian alike) have tried, in many and various ways, to find a way around being bound to the creeds and confessions. They seek and promote a lax view of confessional subscription... They want to leave latitude for their scruples and leeway for their ‘mental reservations.’” Seeing that it is still considered unacceptable to question the truth of the Word of God, and seeing that no objective evidence has been adduced that the confessions teach anything contrary to God’s Word, those who attempt to undermine the confessions of the Church have frequently resorted to the destructive tactic of trying to drive a wedge between the Divine Word and the repeated word of the confession; between Scripture and the Reformed confession of Scripture. In this way they seek to drain the confession of its vitality and power as a binding consensus.

In order for us to be better equipped “to maintain, promote and defend the truth of God’s Word as confessed by the Church in the Three Forms of Unity,” (b) it is vital that we have a good understanding of exactly why this undermining of the confessions occurs, and also how it is carried out. In J. Munneke’s “quotes” (c) we came upon examples of a number of frequently used anti-confessionalistic statements. Examining these deceptive and destructive statements hopefully gave us at least some understanding of how this undermining of the confessions is carried out. We now want to pay particular attention to exactly why this undermining occurs. Therefore we continue our “open and public discussion” on what it means to be Reformed today.

“DON’T KNOW... DON’T CARE... DON’T WANT”

The rather unusual situation in which professing church members openly question and challenge the statements of their “own” Reformed confession of Scripture ought to once more remind us of the words of Dr. Eldersveld. (d) In his commencement address given at Calvin College in 1954, the late Dr. P. Eldersveld gives us a good understanding as to why it is that church members no longer want to be bound to the Reformed confession of Scripture; why they question confessional membership. He succinctly describes the three stages of a church’s decline: “First people don’t know what they are supposed to believe; then they don’t care any more about what they should believe; and finally, they don’t want any more what they are supposed to believe. The first stage “don’t know or lack of knowledge”, [RD] is rather general now in our churches, but there is an element in some of our congregations who simply don’t want the reformed faith anymore. They have consciously and purposefully opted for something else - either a form of evangelicalism or a more liberal direction. It is a sad development. But many in leadership positions refuse to see the handwriting on the wall.” (End of quote)

Dr. Eldersveld spoke the aforementioned words to members of the Christian Reformed Churches (CRC) in 1954, but, as we already pointed out, his comments are equally applicable to and valid for the situation in the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) today. There is, indeed “an element in some of our congregations who simply “don’t know” and “don’t care” to be reformed (anymore);

they are ignorant of and indifferent to the reformed faith. This ignorance about and indifference to the reformed faith generally leads to a “don’t want” disposition or attitude; to antagonism or open hostility toward the Reformed confession of Scripture, for, as Samuel Miller rightly observed, “whenever a group of men begin to slide, with respect to orthodoxy, they generally attempt to break, if not conceal their fall, by declaiming against creeds and confessions...” (e)

Church history then teaches us that declaiming (speaking out) against creeds and confessions is more often than not the consequence of a lack of knowledge and/or an incomplete or totally wrong understanding of the reformed faith (“don’t know” / ignorance). History also has shown that this lack of knowledge and understanding will inevitably lead to the inability and/or unwillingness to discern (“don’t care” / indifference). This inability and/or unwillingness to discern frequently culminates into contempt for the careful and diligent preaching and teaching of the doctrines of the reformed faith; it ends with the rejection of the Reformed confession of Scripture (“don’t want” / antagonism and hostility). The “don’t know... don’t care... don’t want...” syndrome is always clear evidence of decline and deformation in the Church. History teaches us that it is precisely in this sad state of affairs and under these unfortunate circumstances that attempts at undermining the confession become a distinct reality and a frequent occurrence. People “consciously and purposefully” opt for something else. And, as Dr. Eldersveld observed, “many in leadership positions refuse to see the handwriting on the wall.”

LACKADAISICAL LEADERSHIP

Dr. Eldersveld’s observation that “many in leadership positions refuse to see the handwriting on the wall” might surprise us. Don’t these people know better? Are we not talking about professors, ministers, elders, deacons, school principals and teachers, etc.? Are not these people, by virtue of the fact that they are in a position of leadership, people who are well educated, very knowledgeable, and keenly discerning. That is indeed what we could and also should expect. Yet history is also very instructive here. It reminds us of the fact that “those who are well educated do not always possess the gifts needed to test the spirits and to recognize intellectual currents for what they are.” (f)

In his book, “Schilder’s Struggle for the Unity of the Church,” Rudolf Van Reest, deals specifically with the danger of scholasticism, and the fact that the “well educated” in positions of leadership in the church “simply had no spiritual defenses because they themselves were tangled up in the labyrinth of scholasticism and subjectivism.” (p.60) Speaking about ministers of the Word he writes: “I regard the improper proclamation of the Word of God - or perhaps the failure to proclaim the Word at all because the ministers were too busy laying out their own ideas and constructions - as one of the chief causes of the ecclesiastical decline that led to such deformation at the end of the eighteenth century.” (p.51) When leaders in the church get “tangled up in the labyrinth of scholasticism and subjectivism” and start “laying out their own ideas and constructions,” then they are in fact already engaged in undermining the Reformed confession of Scripture. Then it is indeed very likely that they will try “to break, if not conceal their fall, by declaiming against creeds and confessions.” (Samuel Miller)

We are time and again confronted with the fact that “those who are well educated” do not by virtue of that fact always possess the gift of discretion or discernment. At times, particularly in the realm of Christian education, quite the opposite seems to be true. Rev. P. De Jong, commenting on the “objectionable teachings” of the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship, stated that “the writers I have quoted are not ordinary members who might misunderstand...,” but “professors and speakers selected to officially promote the movement.” And, says De Jong, “they generally show little appreciation for the whole massive effort of the Christian church through the centuries under the Holy Spirit’s guidance to formulate and maintain the God-given doctrines in the form of creeds... They have worked especially to get them taken out of Christian school constitutions.” (g)

In order to better understand exactly why in the history of the church attempts to undermine the confession occur, we have quoted Dr. Eldersveld, Samuel Miller, Rudolf Van Reest, and Rev. P. De Jong. We noticed that the “don’t know... don’t care... don’t want...” syndrome of decline and deformation in the church is not exclusively attributable to a lack of education in the general sense, but very specifically a lack of knowledge of Scripture and the Reformed confession of Scripture. We are endangered because we no longer know the Word of Truth! This warning against rejection of knowledge and indifference to understanding is equally valid for all of us, but it is more crucial for those in “leadership positions.” “Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required” (Luke 12:48).

In the word of the Lord to the prophet Hosea, the “people of Israel” and especially people in leadership positions such as the priests and the prophets, are upbraided for having rejected knowledge (4:6), having neglected understanding (Hosea 4:11), having broken the covenant (8:1), and having turned away from the Lord (11:7). We read: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge... Wine and new wine take away their understanding... they have broken my covenant... My people are bent on turning away from me...” Also here we encounter again a clear example of the “don’t know... don’t care... don’t want...” syndrome of decline and deformation in the church, a decline for which the Lord holds especially the priests and prophets accountable because “you (the priests and prophets, RD) have rejected knowledge.”

FALSE INGENUITY

In “Confessional or Confused” (h) we already dealt with some of J. Munneke’s examples on the basic motif of “not doctrine but life,” namely, “Only the Apostles Creed,” and the statement that the confessions are “only the work of men” and as such infinitely inferior to the inspired Word. In these two “only” statements we encounter the recurrent minimizing and trivializing of the confessions which invariably accompanies the destructive tactic of attempts to drive a wedge between Scripture and the Reformed confession of Scripture.

This (sometimes unintentional) tactic is clearly evident in the statement that “the historical and theological value of these (Reformed, RD) confessions should not be underestimated. Nonetheless, they are incomplete and have no value apart from their faithfulness to the Bible.” (i) This statement, and others like it, remind us of the words of Rudolf Van Reest about “laying out their own ideas and construction” and his observation that “there is no end to their labyrinthine reasoning with its zigs and zags. And none of it has anything to do with the Word of God; it has

sprung from the muddy stream of their own false ingenuity.” (p 52) We certainly do not deny that the confessions are indeed “the work of men,” nor do we oppose the truism that “they have no value apart from their faithfulness to the Bible.” However, we firmly believe that the confessions are “the writings of God-fearing and faithful teachers of the true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ” (J. Trigland), and we are totally convinced that they are “trustworthy and faithful summaries of the Word of God.”

We then note that many of the anti-confessionalistic statements which we have examined and discussed are already the result or consequence of the “don’t know... don’t care... don’t want...” syndrome of decline and deformation in the Church. We also see that in the history of the church this ignorance of, and indifference to the reformed faith has frequently led to attempts to undermine the confession of the Church. Furthermore, we notice that these attempt to undermine the confessions are often characterized by questionable questions and ambiguous statements; false dilemmas or faulty distinctions; problematic differentiations and the distortion or destruction of the intricate balance of Scripture through undue or misplaced emphases. We hear in these anti-confessionalistic statements “the dialect of confessional indifference” (Rev. J. Vermeer) (j), and we encounter here the “labyrinthine reasoning” which “has sprung from the muddy stream of their own false ingenuity.” (Rudolf Van Reest) And, as Dr. Elderveld observed, “many in leadership refuse to see the handwriting on the wall.”

ON BEING REFORMED TODAY

It should therefore not come as a complete surprise when also today “many in leadership positions” begin to speak of “the need to be critical of (or “bring into question?” RD) some long-established (Reformed, RD) practices,” namely, confessional membership and close communion (a close Lord’s Supper table). The fact that these long-established Reformed practices are at times described as “unbiblical and unrealistic,” “exclusivistic,” and as Canadian Reformed “idiosyncrasies” should not catch us totally off guard, for, as we observed, history is always very instructive!

If we have not forgotten or failed to understand history then we will readily realize why it is that some people think that they can no longer maintain their signature under the Subscription Form, or why they believe they can no longer live with the fact that adherence to all the Reformed confessions is required.” This better understanding as to why all this is happening will hopefully also make us realize that we simply cannot and may not remain silent when the Reformed confession of Scripture, the confession of the Church, our confession is being undermined by the sowing of the seed of doubt and confusion. We are then obligated to speak-up because it is a matter of the truth of God’s Word; of being Reformed today.

As communicant members we have already made a public statement of our faith and conviction that everything in the Old and New Testament as summarized in our written confessions is the true and complete doctrine of salvation. Therefore let us “...hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that we may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also confute those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9). Let us prayerfully and humbly seek the restoration of those who substitute the current opinions of men for the unchangeable Word of God and the Reformed confession of that Word.

Let us do that, as the Bible puts it, “in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1).

Ron Dykstra

- (a) (e) Dealing With Dissent, Reformed Polemics, Jan 2/99.
- (b) see “Our mission,” back page of Reformed Polemics.
- © (h) Confessional or Confused, Reformed Polemics, Nov. 7/98.
- (d) To Be Or Not To Be, Reformed Polemics, Sept 12/98.
- (f) Schilder’s Struggle for the Unity of the Church, Rudolf Van Reest, p.33.
- (g) Some Questions and Answers About the AACS, P. De Jong, p.18 , p.10.
- (i) On Being Reformed: An Open Letter, Information, Nov. 28/98.
- (j) The Dialect of Confessional Indifference, Reformed Polemics, Jan. 4/97.

“For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost”. Luke 10:19

Whenever the church sets out to admonish a member, or is in the process of applying discipline, these words of the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, should be first and foremost in the mind of those charged with this difficult task. During His ministry on earth Christ set the standard for those who are now responsible, on His behalf, to shepherd the flock, “to seek the sheep that are His and to find those that have strayed”.

As soon as the churches were in the process of being organized after the Reformation one item on the agenda of many a synod was how to deal with the third mark of being a true church: “It exercises Church discipline for correcting and punishing sins” (Belgic Confession art. 29). The synod of Emden, Germany, in 1571, and later at the synod of Dordt in 1618/19, dealt extensively with the question of how the Churches would faithfully apply discipline. Already in the first church orders (before Dordt 1618/19) discipline was recognized to have the following two aspects: suspending the member from the LORD’s Supper table (which will be the main focus of this article) and excommunication, a process involving three distinct stages, resulting in the banning of the member from the kingdom of heaven.

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE

Our church order, starting with article 66, introduces Christian discipline under the heading “Nature and Purpose”: Since Church discipline is of a spiritual nature and, as one of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, has been given to the Church to shut and to open that kingdom, the consistory shall ensure that it is used to punish sins against both the purity of doctrine and the piety of conduct, in order to reconcile the sinner with the Church and with his neighbour, and to remove all offence out of the Church of Christ – which can be done only when the rule given by our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 is followed in obedience.

It is interesting to note that the very next article puts a stop to a consistory getting off to a bad start. Unless one of two conditions has been met, i.e. congregational involvement with the sinner or the public character of the sin, the consistory, as a rule, may not proceed to suspend a member from the Lord’s Table. Undoubtedly this may be cause for so-called gray areas regarding actions to be taken, or not to be taken, by the consistory. There is always the danger of the consistory or an individual office-bearer being over-zealous.

HEARSAY

What if brother A comes to the minister to inform him, as the shepherd of the flock, that secretly brother B is involved in a sinful practice? Of course the minister will know what to do, won't he? After all, he has the time and experience to make those difficult visits and no doubt he will involve the consistory to call that brother B to repentance. Wrong! As tough as it may be for a minister who gets brother A at the door and seeing that brother A is upset and genuinely concerned, the minister does not have many options. He has no choice but to point out to brother A that neither he nor the consistory has the freedom to deal with this matter, based on how things are to be done properly, as set out in article 67 of the Church Order, which is a rather accurate explanation of Matthew 18:15-17. Brother A will have to make that difficult visit himself! If the sinner persists the consistory does not come in the picture until brother A has admonished him in the presence of a witness.

Will the minister, who was informed about brother B, have to act as if he knows nothing at all about what he has been told until either the sin becomes public or brother A comes with a witness? Certainly not! He cannot close his eyes when a sheep goes astray. The words of Deut. 12:12-15 would apply to this minister as it did to the Israelites who were instructed:

"If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God gives you to dwell there, that certain base fellows have gone out among you and have drawn away the inhabitants of the city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which you have not known, then you shall inquire and make search and ask diligently; and behold, if it be true and certain that such an abominable thing has been done among you, you shall surely put the inhabitants of that city to the sword, destroying it utterly, all who are in it and its cattle, with the edge of the sword."

The two questions the minister has to deal with are these: how do I make sure that I do not interfere with brother A in doing his duty as per Matthew 18 and secondly, how do I keep an eye on brother B so that, if brother A does not follow up on his complaint, brother B does not get lost because no one cared? To answer the first question he will no doubt question brother A in the next few weeks as to whether he has admonished brother B. As for the second question, a home visit or a "casual" (?) pastoral visit may be a way to inform himself of the situation.

TWOFOLD APPROACH

The following scenario is more concrete and historical: a member shows in his lifestyle that God is not first in his life but that other gods, idols, are more important to him. Some members of the Church have noticed that his church attendance is erratic, the people he seeks for company are drawing him into the world and many activities seem to be more important than church activities. The home visit to this brother is discussed at the consistory meeting but the suggestion that discipline should be applied is countered with an appeal to article 66 of the church order: we may not deal with it until the congregation has done its task of admonishing first. Apparently several members are well aware of the ungodly lifestyle of the brother but there is no evidence that he is being admonished by any of the members of the church. Although all the elders seem to be aware of the problem with the brother, nothing can be done. Or so it seems.

Until one office-bearer points out that now the consistory has two problems to deal with. One: the members of the congregation forsake their task to admonish the sinner. Two: the consistory does

nothing apart from accusing the congregation of doing nothing. The following twofold approach was proposed and approved: the elders will admonish the brother in order to save the sinner while the minister will admonish the congregation through the preaching that it must follow Christ's commands, in particular regarding Matthew 18.

The consistory cannot sit still and watch the sheep disappear because of the inactivity of the congregation. Through good leadership and faithful preaching the consistory will have to take action and it will remain responsible for the well being of that one straying member as well as for the congregation as a whole. The first aspect of discipline, the process of suspending someone from the table, must be handled properly before the second aspect, the process of excommunication, can be considered.

Throughout the history of the church it has been recognized that it may be healthy for the congregation to temporarily suspend a member from the LORD's Supper table or that a member himself decides to abstain. In the following situations suspension or abstaining should be considered: when a member is charged and his case is before the courts he would do well to abstain, or failing that, the consistory should suspend him, so that the church may not be brought into disrepute; when a member has confessed his sin before the consistory but, due to the seriousness of the sin, the member is withheld for some time to stress the holiness of the Church and the table; when a member has expressed sorrow over his sin and has promised to lead a godly life, yet since there may be little time between the member's confession and the next celebration of the LORD's Supper, the consistory would do well to suspend the member so that the congregation may know that the consistory has not had the time to deal extensively with the brother and ascertain that the repentance is sincere; when a brother falls back into a habitual sin, even after confession of sin, the brother will have to be put to the test to see whether he is sincere in fighting against his weakness; when two members have a dispute that could not be settled and the members accuse each other, both members would do wise to abstain or, if the consistory is involved, both should be suspended; when a member is accused of causing dissension in the congregation while the consistory is convinced of his innocence, he should be suspended in order to avoid confusion in the congregation; when a member has confessed his sin but has not been able to reconcile or pay restitution he should abstain or be withheld until the matter is resolved satisfactorily.

Why should the church and its members insist on adhering to the principle of the above situations? Because the holiness of the congregation which is at stake. It is not so that only those who are perfect are allowed at the table, in that case none of us would ever be able to attend. Rather, it has to do with the required self-examination which has to result in resolving issues before celebrating the LORD's Supper. It is to keep the table holy and free from speculation: the congregation must be able to see, and be assured of, fruits of confession of sin. A promise of repentance does not necessarily mean that the brother has repented, repentance meaning a complete turnaround. It is to assure that when the church or a brother is brought into disrepute, the church and the world may see that sin is not being dealt with lightly. Any impurity or perception of impurity must be avoided, similar to Paul's reference to The Feast in the Old Testament where the Jews had to remove all leaven from their houses, thereby achieving that the house would be meticulously clean. In 1 Cor. 5:6 Paul's compares the function of leaven with the effect of sin on the congregation: "Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the

old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

In his commentary on Paul’s letter Charles Hodge writes (p86): “...the leaven is not a person, but sin. The idea therefore is that it is the nature of evil to diffuse itself. This is true with regards to individuals and communities. A single sin, however secret, when indulged, diffuses its corrupting influence over the whole soul; it depraves the conscience; it alienates from God; it strengthens all other principles of evil while it destroys the efficacy of the means of grace and the disposition to use them. It is no less true of any community that any one tolerated evil deteriorates its whole moral sense”. The holiness of the congregation as expressed in the attendance at the LORD’s Supper is a matter of serious consideration and should not be taken lightly.

Most of these situations will require much wisdom on the part of the consistory and of the member involved. What remains an important part in attending, suspending or abstaining from the table is the final authority that the consistory has in this matter. The decision to attend should not be left to the discretion of the member only but his decision should at all times have the approval of the consistory. Two important principles should always guide us in the matter of discipline. As stated in the heading, all efforts should be for the benefit of the sheep of the flock so that when Christ returns He will find His own gathered together and well cared for by the consistory. The second is that, whenever possible, the congregation is and remains active during the process leading to suspension from the table as well as during the time of discipline leading to excommunication. We hope to elaborate on that in the next issue.

J. VanderVeen, Communicant Member of the Canadian Reformed Church at Houston, BC.

To the Editors - Reformed Polemics

Concerning the Article by Br J Byl re: voting “rights and wrongs” I would like to express my concerns about the manner in which the editor allows topics to be introduced.

I am not in disagreement with Br Byl’s views on women’s involvement in the election of office bearers; but I do feel that the meaning of quoted texts (i.e. 1 Cor 1 1:7-9, 1 Cor 14:33-36, 1 Tim 2:12, Eph 5:23-24) are taken out of context when it comes to this issue.

Br Byl would have done justice to the topic if he had gone about things in a biblical way (Matt 18) and maybe contacted the Council of Cloverdale to gather some more information, rather than creating an issue based on one line in a short report (meant for the congregation) resulting in the accusation that Cloverdale’s Council had defied synodical rulings. Br Byl seems disappointed (see note 2) that Cloverdale was not admonished by Classis. (Oct 6, 1998) Is this the reformed (biblical) way?

It was the Council’s sincere desire to “hear” the whole congregation, to have its full support in the call which was extended to Rev Huiigen, and not to defy Synodical decisions as Br Byl states. If Br Byl had done some research in the procedures used by Churches in our federation with regards to extending a call and “hearing” the congregation, he would have found a variety of procedures. In some churches a call is extended if there are no lawful objections, some churches follow the precise

voting procedure as with elders and deacons, and some “hear” the congregation by a show of hands at a congregational meeting.

Cloverdale’s procedure in extending past calls (with the exception of the call to Rev Van Woudenberg) was the latter, in which all members of the congregation took part. The only change which was made was that this was now done with a yes/no ballot. Was this an election? The Council of Cloverdale felt that it was not, and relayed this in a letter to the congregation of Nov 4, 1998. Was this a defying of Synodical decisions? Definitely not!

We would do well to look at the rules which we have together adopted in our Church Order and whether the Church at Cloverdale followed these rules.

The Church Order is very specific on who is eligible for the three offices. It is also clear in article 3 that if there are at most twice as many candidates presented as there are vacancies to be filled, then the congregation shall choose (elect) as many as are needed.

The election, in Cloverdale’s case, was not needed since the Council only presented one name to the congregation. The Council was only looking for approval through lack of objections by way of a yes/no ballot. After the Council extended the call and it was accepted, the prescribed announcements were made to the congregation.

Again the congregation (including the sisters) was given the opportunity to come with valid objections (art 5 C co), and through lack of any, gave its final approval to the call. Could it be that Classis did not admonish Cloverdale on this matter because no Synodical decisions were defied as Br Byl states?

It is Cloverdale’s desire to remain faithful in all that we do. We would be remiss in this duty if we should bar our sisters in the church from any congregational activity not specifically denied to them by God’s Word.

Rick VanOene

Dear Editors

In the year-end Clarion I read an article by Rev. Dr. J. Visscher entitled “Access to the Table”. I thought it would shed some light on the discussions that are a current topic in our churches. Instead of getting some answers I was dismayed to find it an attack on the way our church, which I believe to be the church of Christ, deals with the fencing of the Table of the Lord. It distresses me that a minister in one of our congregations can write such an article in which he constantly makes himself a fence-sitter. For a minister to say, “Now I for one would have no problem with saying this and adopting this if I was convinced that this is what Scripture demands of us.” baffles me. Is it not the duty of a minister to lead and shepherd the flock of Christ? If so, should he not take scripture and search it for answers whether something is true or false and then inform the church of his findings? Raising questions creates confusion, and that is exactly what Satan is after. If we sow doubt we act contrary to the calling of all believers to confess positively the truth of the Word of God, our Father. His Word is the positive truth, even as He is truth.

So let us see if fencing the Table is necessary, and if the way we are accustomed to doing it is right or wrong. We will do this by starting with order.

In 1 Cor.14:40 we read, "...but all things should be done decently and in good order." In Col. 2:5b we read, "...rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ." In Titus 1:5 Paul directs Titus to appoint elders, but he does not say appoint men of old age, no he gives a list of requirements, he requires credentials (attestations). And, finally, in John 7:18 Christ teaches us that if one testifies for himself the outcome is always in favour of oneself.

It amazes me that ministers who know each other on a first-name basis have absolutely no problems with having to present credentials to meetings of Classis and yet will question the necessity of an attestation for people we might never have seen before. When we build a house we do not omit the door in favor of a sign reading "ENTER BY INVITATION ONLY" and expect that a thief will honor the sign, but when it comes to the Table of the Lord we are quite willing to do so. In Malachi 1:10 we find a request for one to shut the door so that no polluted food will be offered to the Lord God.

Brothers, there may not be a text that forbids entry to the Table without an attestation, but there is sufficient proof that we must guard the Table and this is a very good and proper way to do it. Nobody has presented any proof that it is wrong to do it in this manner. Under the heading "Words of Protest", I read "There will be some who feel that I am straying from the straight and narrow Canadian Reformed path on this matter." If the minister is looking for a church path he is in the wrong place, for the Canadian Reformed Churches hold the path of Christ's church, not a path fabricated to suit individuals but a path to the glory of the Most High.

A Failure to Define our Position First

The Canadian Reformed Church federation is a young federation with most members having a Dutch background. This has hindered us in the past because we sometimes use the wrong word of which some learned individual will quickly take advantage. This appears to be the case here also. It may well be true that we do not have "confessional membership" but, are we children that we have to make a play with words and so cloud the issue, knowing full well what is meant?

Sabbath-Sunday

Here we are, again, looking at confusion by word play. When it is said, "Nowhere have we officially said, 'you shall not mow your lawn on Sunday, you shall not shop on Sunday, you shall not go to the restaurant on Sunday.'" then we must even agree that these words can not be found in the Bible either. But let me refer to Exodus 20:8ff, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your man servant, or your maid servant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates." This is what we hear every Sunday morning. It is not a rule from the Canadian Reformed Churches, it is a rule from the Lord Most High, whom we serve.

In paradise Satan said, "Did God say, 'you shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'" (Gen.3:1) God said, "You may eat freely of every tree in the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." (Gen.2:16, 17) Today Satan

asks, did God say you shall not work any day of the week? In Ex.31:15 God already answered, “Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death.” Now we can argue whether the Sabbath day is Saturday or Sunday, but I don’t see any reason for that.

Martin Onderwater