

## **CONFESSION AND CONFIRMATION**

Over the last number of weeks and months we have had opportunity to discuss the matters of confessional membership and the marks of the true church. As we now come to the time in the church calendar when young people make public profession of their faith and new officers sign subscription forms we see some reality of the ideas we have been discussing.

Throughout the year Christian believers regularly make public profession of their faith. The attendance of the true church in the area in which we live speaks of submission to the true doctrine that is taught there in that Christian Church. Beyond that, at least once each Lord's Day unspoken agreement to the recited version, or communal singing of the Apostle's Creed are regular confessions of faith in the complete doctrine of salvation as presented in Holy Scripture and taught in the Christian Church of which we are members.

Each Sunday as the congregation comes together for worship the focus of the worship is the proclamation of the Word of God. In the mornings the theme of the sermon is based on a portion of Holy Scripture. The doctrine taught there is explained and applied. In the afternoon service the focus is again on the worship of God by means of a sermon. Then the topic of the sermon is one of the Lord's Days from the Heidelberg Catechism. Of course, such a sermon is not in contrast to the sermon in the morning, but is supplementary to it. The church fathers who agreed that this should be a custom in the true church wanted to ensure that the whole doctrine of Scripture would be presented to the believers on a regular basis. They were afraid that a bias of the minister might prevent some of the doctrines from being delivered to the congregation, or that some doctrines might be emphasized too much, thereby destroying the balance in which they are found in the Word of God.

Each week the youth of the Church is instructed in the doctrine of Holy Scripture by following courses in the Heidelberg Catechism. Also during the week several study meetings are held to discuss the Word of God. During those discussions the Confessions are often used to remind one another of what the Bible teaches. From time to time believers are involved in discussion about their faith with fellow workers or others they meet in the course of daily living. During these discussions, in preparation for them, or as a result of them, the Confessions are often consulted.

It is therefore not out of the ordinary when young people come to the point of professing their faith. It is in line with what the believers do all the time. We profess and confess regularly. As a matter of fact that is what our lives as Christians is all about. It becomes clear that the terms church member and confessing member are somewhat synonymous. Of course, there are non-confessing members, but they are only that because they are still learning what it is that believers confess. Believers, Church members, are constantly busy with the doctrine, the teaching, of Holy Scripture. Seeing this constant interaction with the doctrine of God's Word it is very reasonable to expect that some conclusions are made about what the teachings of Scripture are. Still it is remarkable that the summaries that have been made only came into existence as response to concerted efforts to conclude wrong things from Scripture.

Considering the importance placed by believers on the teachings of God's Word, it is understandable that they teach their children the truths of that Word as it has been summarized in

the Confessions of the Church. Nor is it surprising that the children want to publicly profess that they, too, have embraced what the Church has come to confess over time. It is in this same light that we must view the confirmation by new officers when they sign a subscription form. Christian believers consider the teachings of Holy Scripture so important that they require their leaders to confirm their agreement with the Confessions of the Church when they are installed into the office of elder and deacon.

These are not ritual confessions and confirmations, but rather sincere responses to the work of our heavenly Father in our lives as individuals and as Church. Therefore, when these events are being prepared let those involved not take a light-hearted approach of mundane regularity. Rather let the elders who examine those wishing to publicly profess their faith take their task seriously. The public profession of faith involves the knowledge of the doctrines of Holy Scripture. But faith is more than knowledge. It also includes an acceptance and application of what is taught and known. To grant approval to young people to publicly profess their faith involves more than a fifteen minute examination and a question or two about why someone wishes to do it. It involves their life style, their commitment to worship, service in the congregation, as well as their knowledge. These things can not be determined in a few weeks before the event is to occur, but must be measured over the passage of time.

It has been suggested that when a person expresses their desire to publicly profess their faith they should immediately receive a visit from the elders. While they continue to improve their knowledge of God's Word by diligently reading it and studying the Confessions that are derived directly from it, their life-style should visibly be in line with what they are learning and desire to profess. Only then can a final confirmation of what they believe be determined in an examination of knowledge and belief just prior to their public profession of faith.

In the same manner when new elders and deacons are installed their signing of the subscription form should not be considered a mundane habit, but an important annual event. The habit that some consistories have undertaken of having newly installed officers sign the subscription form in front of the congregation (after the service) is a good one. It should be of importance to all the believers that the men in special office are truly in agreement with God's Word. They confirm this by signing the subscription form. In this form there is also mention made of the Confessions of the Church. In this way the congregation is assured that the men installed in their special offices will not lead the Church astray from the teachings of God's Word, but rather maintain those teachings that have been formulated and upheld in the struggles against error and heresy in years gone by. This confirmation is a happy event for the whole congregation.

The Church of God is identified by its marks. Its members confess and profess the teachings of the Word of God. They uphold the summaries formed by the Church in response to error and heresy. These are not merely academic discussion points but ongoing realities in the lives of all Christian believers, of all Church members. When our heavenly Father brings His youth to the maturity of understanding and believing these realities it is appropriate that they respond with a public profession of their faith in Him and what He has taught them. When that same heavenly Father calls men to take up special offices in His Church it is appropriate that they confirm their faith in what He has taught them.

## The Sinews of the Church 3

### The responsibility of the congregation with regard to church discipline

In the first two segments we dealt with the process of Church Discipline as it leads to the final step of excommunication. We conclude our treatment of the process given to us by our heavenly Father to bring straying believers back to the fold by continuing to turn to His Word for direction. Let us take a look at 1 Cor. 5. We shall see that this Scripture passage further confirms our exegesis of Matt. 18:17. Paul has just admonished the congregation for not removing someone who practices incest from the congregation. He explains to them how they must associate with such an erring brother; and, at the same time, he clears up a misunderstanding.

“I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men; not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But rather I wrote to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber—not even to eat with such a one.” (1 Cor. 5:9-11)

You will notice that we are not dealing here with sinful people outside of the Church, but exactly those brothers who think that they can live in sin. They are the ones we must shun, not even eat with them. With the words “not even to eat with such a one” Paul points to the common translation in his day of Psalm 101:5 - “With the man of haughty looks and arrogant heart I will not eat!”. This command is not an exception, compare 2 Thess.3:14, 15.

“If any one refuses to obey what we say in this letter, note that man, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not look on him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”

In this text we also see a couple of additional elements that are truly important when we are dealing with someone who comes under church discipline. In the first place, even when someone is placed outside of the communion of the church a certain brotherly bond remains. Paul says, “warn him as a brother.” The sinner who is placed outside of the church is not dealt with as all other heathen. He has been baptized. He has been subject to the preaching of the gospel in the midst of the communion of Christ’s church. This separates him from all other people in the world. He is not an object for evangelism, but for brotherly love.

In the second place, the fact that we must shun such a brother or sister does not mean that further contact is absolutely forbidden. We may direct him in the right way, we may attempt to convince him of his sinful way. A preparedness to discuss faith life and his/her sin must remain the prerequisite for ongoing contact.

In the third place the shunning of the brother or sister ought to bring him or her to shame. This third element also brings us to our final point.

*The Anticipated Result*

The Lord has given us this procedure of church discipline in order to try to reach the sinner. In Matt. 18:12-14 Jesus tells us the parable of the lost sheep. The shepherd stops at nothing to try to bring back that one lost sheep to the fold. The procedure for church discipline that follows has this same focus. First the straying sheep is admonished by several different persons. Finally, if, in spite of the many admonitions, the sheep does not repent, it is cut off. But even this action has as its purpose to convince the sinner to return. In 1 Cor. 5:5 Paul lets the sinner be delivered to Satan “for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” By ignoring the sinner in our social activities (e.g. birthday parties, weddings, etc.) we cause him to become ashamed. In this way the eternal consequences of his actions become clear. The pain that is felt by the church members, who must discontinue contact, as well as the sinner, who is eliminated from the social circle can not be compared to the eternal separation. This is a fact that must truly sink in!! For in this manner we still try to call the sinner back to salvation in Christ and to the communion with His Church. By the social shunning the sinner receives a foretaste of the eternal separation that will take place if he does not repent. It is never pleasant to consider such matters, but the Lord does give this demonstrative warning as the last weapon with which to call someone back. This is the method which the Lord Himself has prescribed. However it can only work effectively if a number of factors are kept in mind.

In the first place we, ourselves, must be motivated by true brotherly love for the sinner. Such a sinner must also be aware of this love and should be able to notice it. He may also be(come) aware of the difficulty for us to follow the direction of our Lord in this matter, especially if a close friendship or family relationship is involved. We certainly do not ‘shun’ a person because we take so much pleasure in it, or because we think it is such a suitable thing to do. No, we ‘shun’ him or her because Christ has commanded us to do so and we have learned that above all we must love our Saviour and Redeemer and follow Him. No matter how difficult it is, we trust that He will bless His own established procedure if we put them into practice to His glory. But we do not have to hide the pain that this causes us, more strongly put, the sinner must notice that we miss him and continue to love him. This means that we will try to explain our behaviour and “shunning” to the sinner in a very humble and loving manner. It is with purpose that I have placed the term “shunning” in quotation marks. It is indeed true that such a sinner can no longer participate in the social activities of the other congregational members. But contact with this brother or sister must continue to be sought. He must understand that there is real love and concern for him as a fellow brother. Wisdom will dictate that when we visit such a brother/sister or have them over for a coffee, we do not always speak about exactly the same subject. Still the discussion must make clear that there continues to be fraternal love in spite of the social restraint. So we can not responsibly refrain from speaking about the Lord and His Church - although we do not have to hit him over the head with the same heavy reprimand every time.

Secondly it is important that the relationship with the brother or sister is supported by the whole church community. Only when he notices that all his brothers and sisters in Christ feel and deal the same way with him will he begin to understand what the love for Christ in the lives of the true believers must mean. Only then can he begin to comprehend that the matter deals with eternal consequences.

In the third place earnest prayer must be made by the congregation that this brother or sister may repent, that the Lord will bless His own prescriptions regarding church discipline and that he will let it take effect in the heart of the concerned person.

There is, in conclusion, still one more purpose for excommunication from the Church of Christ and the consequent social shunning. It is, as Paul states in 1 Cor.5:6-8, the purification of the congregation of Christ. When we deal with discipline in this manner we all come to the realization how holy God is and how important His salvation is for our lives. Church discipline is also a sober warning for all of us about the hellish consequences of unforgiven sins. It makes us shrink in humility when we realize that we are granted permission to appear before God's holy presence only because Christ has taken our punishment upon Himself. We continue to grow in our awe of God's grace.

To God alone belongs the glory for the wonderful salvation He has given to us through the blood of His Son. May He restrain us from ever being unthankful for this marvelous gift.

Dr. R. D. Anderson

*Additional Reading*

J. Kamphuis, Om de Heiligheid van de Gemeente: De Kerkelijke Tucht (Kampen: Van den Berg) 3de druk, 1986.

**UNITY DISCUSSIONS IN THE BULKLEY VALLEY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

On March 22, 1999 the consistories of the Canadian Reformed Churches at Smithers and Houston together with the United Reformed Churches at Smithers and Telkwa organized a public meeting for their members. The purpose was to inform them about the progress of local "unity talks" between the two federations. Although there is no official press release of this meeting, it may be informative and helpful to pass on personal impressions and observations.

Rev. J. Klaazinga of the URC Telkwa, as the moderator for the evening, expressed his joy at being able to welcome about 150 members from all 4 churches to the meeting, held in the building of the Can. Ref. Church at Smithers. After a Christian opening of the meeting Rev. J. Louwense of the CanRC Houston gave an historical overview of the reformed churches. He emphasized that in the process of getting to know each other better, we must realize that we share the same foundation and we have a common confessional history. He referred to the roots we have in common: the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Secession of 1834 and the Doleantie of 1886. With the Union in 1892, uniting the churches of the Secession and the Doleantie. The basis for that Union was the command and the desire to be one and to bind each other to nothing but the Scripture and the Confessions.

With the wave of immigrants coming to North America after WW II, reformed believers who had freed themselves from the synodical yoke in 1944, found themselves having to choose between the Prot. Ref. Church and the CRC. The former would bind its members to a doctrine over and above the scriptures and confessions while the latter clearly sided with the synodical churches from which

the immigrants had just liberated themselves; hence the institution of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Now that 50 years that have gone by, several divergences are noticeable between, on the one hand, the CanRC and on the other hand the URC and the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church who left the CRC 15 years earlier. The 4 local consistories in the Bulkley Valley have had meetings of delegates in the past several years and, while there is a sense of trust and recognition of one another, some issues are still on the table; the most notorious one being the guarding of the Lord's Supper Table. Rev. Louwse concluded his presentation with the observation that, although we should not act too hastily in pursuing unity, at the same time we must be determined to go forward on the road to union between the two federations.

Rev. B. Beukema of the URC Smithers presented his observations and enlightened the hearers with some more information on the URC. He referred to the position paper, published by the combined committees, appointed by the respective synods, in which they stated to aim for full ecclesiastical unity in 2004, which would mean pulpit exchange and an unrestricted acceptance of each other's members.

When we accept that we have a unity based on the confession, we must, according to Rev. Beukema, accept the consequence that federative unity is the next step. As a result of the local meetings he has come to realize that: "...both federations basically have the same understanding of the Three Forms of Unity; we share the same biblical, reformed view of the covenant and baptism; there is no "presumption" when dealing with God's promises; we share the same form of government although the CanRC Church Order is closer to the original text of the church order of Dordt than the one accepted in the URC; both churches have similar liturgical forms, based on the originals from the synod of Dordt 1618-1619". He envisions a current confessional unity to be followed by a federative unity in which we bind each other only to the scriptures and the confessions but not to a 4<sup>th</sup> form of unity in which non-essential local or national practices are made binding. He concluded his presentation with the conviction that Christ will gather His Church in the Unity of the true faith, Lord's Day 21.

### *Question Period*

Several written questions were handed in after the presentations. Some of them were selected and all three ministers responded to some or all of these questions. There was unanimous agreement that the local goal is to establish full unity. That would mean one church, one federation. A difference was noted in the process of establishing federative sister-church relationships. In the CanRC the synod, after due process, makes the decision; while in the URC such decision has to be ratified by the churches before it will take effect.

In response to the matter of compromising on issues such as women's right to vote and Lord's Supper practices it was mentioned that discussions continue about these matters. Advice is also

sought from the deputies appointed by synod in dealing with these matters. The URC is currently discussing unity with the OCRC but also with them, according to Rev. Beukema, "non-essential and/or non-confessional matters may not keep us apart, we have to keep discussing these issues, and, local practices may remain different".

Some in the URC are of the opinion that, in view of what we confess in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 30, the strict character of guarding in the CanRC is extra-biblical and that access to the table is unnecessarily restricted. Rev. Beukema stated that: "...he personally now has a better understanding of the CanRC practice and the reason behind it. While both churches hold to the same principle, they are differently applied. Both practices are acceptable, one is more agreeable. The question is which one best reflects the purpose of the Supper and the role of the consistory therein". Rev. Louwse stated that "...we will have to come to some understanding before federative unity. We'll have to keep talking". Position papers from both churches are available for the members to be studied.

The URC are in the process of determining whether the denomination should adopt its own psalter or keep using the CRC Psalter Hymnal. During this process advice will be sought from other reformed churches, including the CanRC who use their own Book of Praise. The URC holds to the principle that the Psalms are to dominate in the choice of songs in the worship services.

One question that has lived with many in the CanRC is: why did the concerned members from the CRC not join the CanRC? Rev. Beukema explained at length that there was a strong bond among the concerned members and a sense of responsibility to stay together and support each other in the process of calling the CRC to repentance. At the meetings of the Alliance of Reformed Churches, the delegates from the CanRC also gave the advice to those who left the CRC to first federate and then aim for unity. There was hesitation and concern in the independent churches to join the CanRC, there were questions about the CanRC Church Order; in the past harsh words had been said which caused many people to shy away from joining the CanRC at that moment.

Rev. Louwse compared the present situation with the events in 1886-1892. "The Doleantie took place in '86 and it took the two federations six years to come to federative unity. Historically we are in good company and the course of action taken then will be for us a guideline on how to proceed now".

Unfortunately no opportunity was given for questions or comments from the floor. Several questions were not answered but these can be addressed to the respective consistories. The atmosphere at the meeting was relaxed and all three ministers strongly expressed their desire to reach the goal: unity of the two federations, based on the scriptures and the confessions, in obedience to God's command for unity among true believers. Talks among delegates from the four churches will continue, perhaps more public discussions will also be held in order to help all the members understand the issues, study them, and pray for progress in the struggle for unity.

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## Letter to the Editor of Reformed Polemics

Dear Editor:

Undoubtedly Dr. N. H. Gootjes is correct in his article: The Articles of the Christian Faith, published in the February 20, 1999 issue of Reformed Polemics, when he says that the expression; “articles of the Christian faith” refers to the Apostles’ Creed. The Apostles’ Creed was also meant when this expression was used in the forms for baptism and public profession of faith before Synod 1983 changed it. However, before any change was made to these forms, the second question of the Form for Infant Baptisma said more. Let me quote this question in its entirety: “Do you acknowledge the doctrine which is contained in the Old and the New Testament, and in the articles of the Christian faith, and which is taught here in this Christian church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?” The words: ... which is taught here in this Christian church... mean that those who answer positively to this question acknowledge (or, as is stated more clearly in the present Form - confess) the doctrine as taught in the church in which this question is answered. When speaking of a Reformed Church this question must refer to the Apostles’ Creed, which is expanded upon and maintained in the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and the Canon’s of Dort.

That the words which are taught here in this Christian church refer to how the articles of the Christian faith — namely, the Apostles’ Creed — are upheld by the other adopted Confessions is, according to Dr. B. Wielinga, historically proven. He refers to the history of the Remonstrant conflict and how, at that time, an unofficial edition of the forms was published which had deleted the word here and thus read: as taught in the Christian church. This change made it possible for those with Remonstrant views to answer this question and have their children baptized in congregations which rejected the Remonstrant teachings. However, after the Remonstrant conflict was settled the churches insisted on returning to the adopted formulation of this question including the word here. The argument was that those who answer this question agree with the doctrine of Scripture, confessed in the Apostles’ Creed, not as it was distorted by Rome, the Mennonites, Remonstrants or anyone else, but as confessionally maintained in the Reformed Churches. Dr. Wielinga writes: “In a study of J. W. Gobius du Sart entitled: The History of Liturgical Literature, it has been indisputably demonstrated that with the words this doctrine the whole Reformed teaching is meant. He proves this, among other arguments, from the baptismal practice in the oldest Netherlands fugitive church (usually known as the Church of Alasco) where it was determined that only parents who held to the Reformed Confessions of the church of which they were members could have their children baptized.”<sup>b</sup> Dr. H. Bouwman, referring to this same history, says that the churches finding the necessity to more precisely define this doctrine confessed in the Apostles’ Creed had added the words which is taught here in this Christian Church. He concludes that “The parents testify at the administration of baptism their agreement with Holy Scripture and the confessions of the church as this is taught in the Reformed Church.”<sup>c</sup>

Perhaps Dr. Gootjes overlooked that in his article, br. Dijkstra, in agreement with J. Munneke to whom he refers, does mention the phrase: taught here in this Christian Church. He writes: “The

phrase following, ‘taught here in this Christian Church,’ (my italics for emphasis) however, makes it clear that our fathers intended the articles of the Christian faith to mean The Three Forms of Unity for they are taught in the Christian Church.” The only mistake that br. Dijkstra may have taken over from J. Munneke is to say that the articles of the Christian faith mean The Three Forms of Unity instead of saying that the phrase taught here in this Christian Church means The Three Forms of Unity. It strikes me as strange that Dr. Gootjes overlooks this reference to the second phrase and does not mention it at all.

Br. Dijkstra may have taken over a mistake from J. Munneke in his formulation. In practice it makes no difference in which way it is said, the end result is that those who answer to the second question of the Baptismal Form express agreement with the Reformed Confessions which is, the three forms of unity. However, when reading Dr. H. J. Schilder in a series of articles both br. Dijkstra and Munneke may have been more correct than they themselves knew. Dr. Schilder argues that all those who truthfully express agreement with the doctrine of the Word of God as confessed in the Apostles’ Creed must also express agreement with the confession in which this doctrine is upheld.

In view of all the above, Synod 1986 Burlington was correct in how it responded to appeals objecting to the change in wording made in the forms. The wording of these forms was changed from the articles of the Christian faith into summarized in the confessions. Those who appealed, among other things, argued that the new formulation is “‘in conflict with reality’ because ‘it is questionable whether every believer must, or even is able to give allegiance to ALL formulations used in the confessions in order to be admitted to the sacraments.’” Synod had denied this request when it considered, among other things, that: “It is historically correct that the formulation ‘articles of the Christian faith’ has been used. However, by removing this phrase from its context, the brs. overlook that the questions asked never excluded the allegiance to all the confessions which are maintained by the Canadian Reformed Churches. The statement ‘... *as is taught here in this Christian Church* (my italics for emphasis PKA dB) means one gives allegiance to all the confessions of the church.” Synod 1986 did not object to but maintained the statement of Synod 1983 which said that “the Creeds as taught here in this Christian Church” means, “the confessions as they are taught in here in this Christian church.”

This brings me, Mr. Editor, to one more point unrelated to the article of Dr. Gootjes but related to this question in the Liturgical forms. Dr. J. Visscher recently wrote in his article “Inter-Church Relations: Where Are we Heading?” published in Clarion: “...then I ask, where do we as Canadian Reformed Churches confessionally bind our members? In various Forms we ask them whether or not they ‘...confess that the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian church, (and whether it) is the true and complete doctrine of salvation?’ If you go by the actual words of this question you are forced to conclude that all that our churches ask of members is that they agree that ‘the doctrine of the Old and New Testament’ is ‘summarized in the confessions.’ There is no reference here to whether we consider them binding. (Indeed, that has always been one of my objections against the change in our Form ... It is weak and merely descriptive. If we want our members to express publicly that they adhere to the confessions then we should have adopted a different wording.)” Is Dr. Visscher’s exegesis of this question really correct? Is it only descriptive? If so, why does he not overture to a synod a change

in the wording so that the members do clearly express binding commitment to the adopted confessions? After all, from the considerations of Synod 1983 and 1986 it is clear enough that this was the intention of those synods. From the context of his article and the reason for referring to this question and giving his own (strange) exegesis of it, it appears that Dr. Visscher does not want the members to be confessionally bound for it may hinder ecclesiastical relations.

Without claiming to be an expert in English grammar, the explanation which Dr. Visscher gives is strange because it is proper English to list modifiers in a coordinating manner. For example, one may ask: “Do you agree to read this form, think it over and then sign it? Should one answer positively, one decides three things:

- 1) Agrees to read the form
- 2) Agrees to think it over and
- 3) Then agrees to sign it.

Likewise in the present wording of this question, three things are asked:

- 1) Do you confess that the doctrine of the Old and New Testament ... is the true and complete doctrine of salvation?
- 2) Do you confess that the doctrine ... summarized in the confessions ... is the true and complete doctrine of salvation?
- 3) Do you confess that the doctrine ... taught here in this Christian church, is the true and complete doctrine of salvation?”

That the wording of this question clearly enough binds a person to these confessions was shown some years ago when a number of lawyers considered it as proof that the Canadian Reformed Church members are bound to these confessions. The context was, a request to be exempted from membership in a ungodly labour union. The Manitoba law requires proof that the members of the church are bound to a confession from which it can be shown that members are excluded from membership in such labour unions. At a special hearing, and there was a team of lawyers representing the labour union(s) present, no one questioned whether this question of the form actually binds the members of the Canadian Reformed churches to their confessions. It was accepted proof that they are bound to the confessions. This hearing was held at the Manitoba Labour Relations Board on May 11, 1997.

Dr. Visscher’s (mis)interpretation of this question of the Form(s) reminds me of what Dr. B. Wielinga says about an attempt among some in the past to interpret the words as taught here in this Christian church as referring only to the Form for Baptism This interpretation was, in part, based on exactly where the word here (Dutch *alhier*) is placed in the sentence. After having emphasized that the Form is to be interpreted as it was intended by those writing it and the synod’s approving it, he writes: “One again sees behind this apparently irrelevant difference in wording the question of confessions lurking. No matter how small a word difference — we would almost have said: childish — this is an attempt to escape the ecclesiastical ordinances!”<sup>e</sup>

In conclusion, much more evidence can be brought forward to prove that from the early days of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, by answering to the Forms for Baptism and Public Profession of Faith the members bound themselves to the doctrine of the Old and New Testament as it is maintained in the Confessions. It only helps to be straight-forward about this whole matter: the question is whether the churches are willing to maintain this practice of confessional binding (or call it confessional membership), or are willing to sacrifice it for the sake of ecclesiastical unity with those who will not be bound to the true confession of God's Word.

P.K.A. de Boer

Notes:

- a) See the fourth question of the Form for Adult Baptism and the first question of the Form for Public Profession of Faith.
- b) Dr.B.Wielenga, *Ons Doopsformulier* (J.H.Kok, Kampen) pp.802-803. My translation of: In een studie van J.W.Gobius de Sart, getiteld: *De geschiedenis van de Liturgische Schriften*, is echter onwedersprekelijk aangetoond, dat met de woorden deze leer bedoeld is op de geheele Gereformeerde leer. Hij bewijst dit o.a. door de doopspraktijk in de oudste Nedelandse vluchtelingenkerk (kortweg gewoonlijk de Kerk van Alasco genaamd), waar bepaald was, dat allen kinderen van ouders, die de Gereformeerde confessie beleden en lidmaten der Kerk waren, in die Kerk konden gedoopt worden.
- c) Dr.H.Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht* (De Grote Goudriaan, Kampen, 1985) p.302. My translation of: De doopouders betuigen dus bij de doopsbediening steeds hunne instemming met de H.Schrift en met de belijdenis der kerk, zoals deze in de Gereformeerde kerk geleerd wordt.
- d) H.J.Schilder, *Belijdenisschat: Alles in Hem, De Reformatie*, Vol.37, No.10 and following vol. beginning on p.74.
- e) Dr.B.Wielenga op.cit.p.802. My translation of: Men ziet, achter een schijnbaar onbeduidend woordverschil, schoon weer een kwestie van belijdenis. Maar hoe klein u we zouden hass gezegd hebben: kinderactig u is de poging, om aldus de kerklijke ordinationen te ontduiken.