

DEALING WITH DISSENT

On Being Reformed Today

In our ongoing “open and public” discussion we have presented our Reformed Polemics readers with a series of articles/editorials about “Being Reformed Today” (a): To Be Or Not To Be (Sept. 12th), Confessional and Constructive (Oct. 10th), and Confessional or Confused (Nov. 7th). The impetus for these articles/editorials was the fact that there are “among us” those who no longer seem to know, understand, or appreciate what it means to be Reformed. They don’t “know what the word ‘reformed’ means,” and as far as the confessions of the Church are concerned, “they want little or nothing to do with them.” This apparent lack of knowledge and seeming disinterest is not so much a matter of an inability to comprehend or understand what it means to be Reformed, rather, more often than not it’s a matter of “that 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...” (Samuel Miller paraphrase). (b)

What that really means is that these people, as professing church members, no longer “wholeheartedly believe the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian Church.” They disagree with what they, at their public profession of faith have already agreed upon. They claim to be Reformed, but they disagree with the Reformed confession of Scripture. These people are therefore “dissent” members, and the fact that they fully expect to remain members clearly indicates that they anticipate that their dissent (disagreement with the confession) will be given ready status in the Church. Some have even been so bold as to suggest that there should indeed be room for such disagreement or dissent. This rather unusual and perplexing suggestion presents us with a very timely and relevant question: How should we, as “reformed, Biblically based believers” deal with such flagrant and impertinent dissent? Our quest for an answer to that question forms the subject matter of our current “open and public” discussion.

A SERIOUS BUSINESS

If we maintain a proper Reformed perspective on the matter of dissent, (disagreement with what our confessions say) then we will certainly know and readily understand that dissent is a serious business. When we dissent (disagree) we no longer agree with what we agreed upon. We put aside “the true and authentic survey of the confessed doctrine of the church,” and we regard (esteem) our own (often subjective) opinions and views to be of greater importance and significance than what our confessions (based on Scripture) have said on the matters under discussion. If we also keep in mind that we are discussing dissent in the context of what we professed “before God and His holy Church” when we made public profession of faith, then we should at least have some awareness of how serious dissent really is. Dissent creates dissension, disagreement, discord, disunity, disharmony, strife and conflict in the church. Therefore we should leave very little room for dissent in the church.

Sometimes we are left with the impression that some church members consider dissent (or disagreement) to be a somewhat normal occurrence. Dissent is deemed to be a fact of everyday life, including church life. We are then asked not to be so rigid, so inflexible or uncompromising, but rather to be a bit more realistic, charitable, pastoral, loving, and to leave at least some room for

a difference of opinion. It is taken for granted that we will not always agree. In the general context there is some truth in these statements. We do not always need to agree with everyone about absolutely every issue on which an opinion can be expressed. There is, fortunately, some room for a difference of opinion among church members. However, when these sentiments are expressed in the context of our Reformed confession of Scripture, and we are then expected to leave latitude for scruples and "mental reservations" or leeway for disagreement, then we must be resolute and firm; inflexible and unyielding. We must unequivocally point people back to the norm of "we all believe" and "we confess" (Belgic Confession). To no longer believe what we confess is, to say the least, odd and unusual. To disagree with what we have already agreed upon is peculiar and abnormal. Disagreement is definitely not the norm in the church. Dissent is certainly not the rule. Dissent is a very serious business.

GETTING RID OF THE CONFESSION

In our previous discussions we already noted that in the history of the church many attempts have been made to get rid of the confession of the church. We have heard slogans such as: No creed but Christ... Doctrine divides, service unites... Not form, but spirit, not confession but experience. And, as we observed, we currently have our own variations on that same basic motif: Let us not bind ourselves or each other to anything beyond Scriptures... I honestly feel we'd be better off viewing the Confessions simply as some sort of 'Coles Notes' on the Bible...etc., etc. There is no need to now again spend a lot of time refuting such sentiments. Most of us will readily acknowledge that creeds and confessions are necessary. We will understand that the confession fulfills an important function in the preservation of the church. Without the confession there cannot be a unity of faith.

In his book "Doctrinal Integrity," Samuel Miller writes: "Without a creed explicitly adopted, it is not easy to see how the ministers and members of any particular church, and more especially a large denomination of Christians, can maintain unity among themselves... 'How can two walk together unless they be agreed?'" (Amos 3:3). He notes that "a church, in order to maintain the 'unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and love,' must have a creed - a written creed - to which she has formally given her assent, and to a conformity to which her ministrations are pledged. As long as such a test is faithfully applied, she cannot fail of being in some good degree united and harmonious. And when nothing of the kind is employed, I see not how she can be expected, without a miracle, to escape all the evils of discord and corruption." (c)

Furthermore, Samuel Miller observes that "we shall find, with few exceptions, that whenever a group of men began to slide, with respect to orthodoxy, they generally attempted to break, if not to conceal, their fall, by declaiming against creeds and confessions... Men are seldom opposed to creeds, until creeds have become opposed to them. That they should dislike or oppose them, in these circumstances, is just as natural as that a culprit arraigned before a civil tribunal, should equally dislike the law, its officer, and its sanction." (p.25) (d)

LOOKING FOR LOOPHOLES

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. 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 are always busy looking for loopholes. The dictionary defines a loophole as a “means of evading a rule without breaking it.” These people want to subscribe to the confession of the church (of course!), but on their own terms. They want to be free to disagree. They want to leave latitude for their scruples and leeway for their “mental reservations.”

We then get into the realm of a “strict or less strict” subscription to the confession, and we also encounter such false dilemmas and faulty distinctions as “major or minor issues”, and “doctrinal or peripheral issues” in the confession. We should clearly recognize this kind of language for what it is, namely an attempt to undermine the confession of the church; to find a way around being bound to creeds and confessions. *

MAINTAINING THE NORM

It is essential that we recognize the importance of our confessions in a time when they are being attacked both from outside of and from within the Church. In our confession we are professing our faith in God’s truth. We profess that what we find in our confession is the truth. “What we therefore profess to be true, is not true because it is in the confession, but because it is in God’s Word. Professing our faith is naturally always tantamount to repeating what the Lord has previously said to us.” (e)

“All confessional statements of the Reformed churches are examinable, that is, subject to inquiry, investigation and scrutiny. Their authority is derived from the Word of God alone and may be invoked only because the church is convinced that they accurately reproduce on specific points what the Bible clearly teaches. They are subject to revision, as soon as objective evidence is adduced that they teach anything contrary to God’s Word. As long as this cannot be demonstrated, they retain their authority.” (f)

“If her (the church’s, RD) public ‘Standards’ have not been hitherto correct, let them be openly and frankly altered. But as long she professes to maintain them, let them be maintained in sincerity and good faith.” (g)

THE CHURCH ORDERLY WAY

A professing church member who holds views contrary to the Reformed confession of Scripture is obligated (because he has promised) to first go to his Consistory (ecclesiastical assembly) and explain why he no longer believes (can believe) what he has already publicly professed to be the truth of the Word of God’s as the church has summarized it. He may never begin with publicly propagating and disseminating his contrary views, but must first “submit willingly to the admonition and discipline (instruction, RD) of the church.” He has promised to do that if or when he “becomes delinquent either in doctrine or in conduct” (Form for the Public Profession of Faith, fourth question). Therefore such a person is obligated to follow the church orderly way (“the way through the assemblies”) if he is convinced that the confession of the church contradicts the Word of God or is not in agreement with Scripture. The church orderly way is not simply a feasible or usable option in case of dissent; it is an ethical or moral obligation.

When such a person makes his contrary views known to the Consistory it is indeed possible that the Consistory is not able to (fully) convince the dissident member that he is in error, and therefore it

must remind him of his obligation to honor (live up to) his promise to “submit willingly” or else follow the church orderly way. The status quo is not an option. He cannot publicly profess one thing and privately express and (possibly) propagate another. The matter must be submitted to the broader assemblies. If such a person cannot convince the broader ecclesiastical assemblies of the scriptural validity or legitimacy of his contrary views then he must either “submit willingly” or be forthwith excommunicated. “As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him” (Titus 3: 10).

It should be kept in mind that in the course of the entire process of appeal, of “following the church orderly way” through the assemblies, it is the responsibility and duty (obligation) of the dissident member to irrefutably demonstrate and conclusively prove that the Reformed confession of Scripture contradicts the Word of God. However, as P.Y. De Jong stated, as long as this cannot be clearly demonstrated, the confessions retain their authority in the church. The norm that “we all believe” and “we confess” must be categorically maintained.

IN CONCLUSION

It is good to remind ourselves that in the context of our Reformed confession of Scripture our “liturgical year” does not include a “season of dissent” or a time for disagreement. We are members of the body of Christ, not members of the “scruple of the month” club. Therefore dissent should not be given ready status in the church. Disagreement may never be the norm in the church. However, when dissent or disagreement occurs it must be dealt with in the church orderly way, namely, through the ecclesiastical assemblies.

The norm is that at all times the confessions “be maintained in sincerity and good faith.” (Samuel Miller). We are not called to compromise the truth, but rather to confess it. We are not asked to dissent, but to agree. That is what “being Reformed today” is all about. It is a matter of the truth of God’s Word, and of His honour and glory.

The church is “one body in Christ,” and all who compose it, “members one of another.” Church members are to carefully maintain “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). They are exhorted to “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind.” They are commanded to all “speak the same thing,” and to be “of one accord, of one mind” (Phil 1:27). The unity of the church is always a unity born out of a mutual submission to the one Word of God as this is expressed in terms of a common confession. Let us then, as “reformed, Biblically based believers,” indeed believe what we confess, and also “wholeheartedly” confess what we believe.

RD

More about this matter, the Lord willing, in a subsequent issue.

- (a) Being Reformed Today, Rev. J. Visscher, Clarion, Sept18/98.
- (b) (c) (d) (g) Doctrinal Integrity, Samuel Miller.
- (e) We Believe - Outlines on the Belgic Confession, Part One, Rev. J.A. Vink.
- (f) The Church’s Witness to the World, Peter Y. De Jong.

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR CONFESSIONS

In the ecumenical spirit of our age, it is natural that the creeds and confessions are perceived as a nuisance and a hindrance. As congregations of differing denominations become increasingly aware of each other and the common ground that they share, a strong desire grows to remove the obstacles which prevent common membership and worship. This desire, that all who name Christ as their Saviour should be one body, is Biblical. Like all Biblical mandates and teachings, however, it must be considered in the light of the entire Scriptures. When a single teaching is elevated above others or given too much emphasis, then the wonderful and intricate balance of Scripture is undone. In our age of Ecumenism, the temptation is great to minimize our confessions or do away with them all together. They are an obstacle to fellowship with others who call themselves Christian. The confessions are an invention of man, some say. We should maintain the Word of God as the only source of unity in the Churches and not “put the bar to high” by resorting to man-made constructions. Unity is a Biblical mandate; confessions are constructions of men. How can we let man-made devices stand in the way of a Biblical command? In this way the confessions are attacked and their importance is minimized. To understand the bias that leads to such wrong headed thinking, we must restore the balance of the teachings in Scripture. God does command His believers to be one body, but this command must be considered in the light of all Scripture.

To support attacks against the confessions, a false dilemma is made between Biblical preaching and confessional preaching as if the two were somehow different. We are supposed to believe the Word of God alone. The confessions are not the Word of God, so they cannot be made a condition for church membership. For many centuries, however, it has not been enough to say simply, “I believe in the Word of God.” Such a statement has little meaning in a world where there are hundreds of denominations who all profess to believe the Word of God yet who all believe different things. What does a person believe when he asserts that he believes the Word of God? Does he believe what the Anglican says is the Word of God? Or what the Catholic says? Or the Greek Orthodox? The Pentecostal? There is one truth which every believer is to seek and know as a basis and foundation of his faith. But the Devil, the Father of Lies, has successfully muddled the entire picture. What should be a picture drawn in black in white has become a blurred and cloudy set of grays. The confessions are a thick black line drawn across the muddled picture. They state clearly, “This is what I believe because this is what the Word of God really says.” Arius confessed, “I believe the Word of God” when he asserted that Christ was not the divine Son of God. The creed says to Arius, “No, you do not believe the Word of God. This is what it teaches, that Christ is the Son of God.” The confessions are man-made constructions, but they do not add to the teachings of Scripture or take away from them. On the contrary, they prevent additions to and subtractions from Scripture.

The confessions contain the teachings of Scripture, summarized and condensed. True, the contents of the confessions are based on the interpretations of men. So are the sermons which give “Biblical preaching”. There is no such thing as uninterrupted understanding of Scripture or preaching which does not involve interpretation. The truth is given to us in the Word of God, but is always understood through interpretations. In the confessions we have inherited hundreds of years of

thoughtful interpretation. The confessions are the teachings of Scripture set out in the best way that men can understand them. If anyone asks what it is that sets the interpretations of our confessions apart and above the interpretations of other confessions, we can only reply from our faith. There is no way to judge between the interpretations of men except on faith that through the history of the church God has preserved the truth of Scripture in the creeds and confessions of His church. The contents of the confessions depend on the interpretations of men. This is true and cannot be denied. For this reason, the contents of the confessions, however highly esteemed, are never above criticism. They must constantly be matched against the Scriptures. The idea of the confessions, however, cannot be criticized, for it is a Biblical idea.

In his editorial Confessional & Constructive, Ron Dykstra quoted six goals achieved in the confessions. Confessions achieve the following: 1) The true and authentic survey of the confessed doctrines of the church, so that all slander of the opposition can be denied. 2) To witness publicly against the world and to the honor of God. 3) To preserve unity among the churches of the same confession. 4) To preserve the purity of faith and to prevent the spread of heresies. 5) To pass on the true religion to the next generation, so that they can propagate and develop it. 6) To show what in history has been held as the truth. That such an item, a confession, would exist to accomplish these goals is, without a doubt, a Biblical and not a human idea. Consider Joshua. When the LORD parted the waters of the Jordan so that Israel could enter into the promised land of Canaan, He gave Joshua specific instruction for setting up a monument of twelve stones both in the river and on the bank at Gilgal. The LORD said to Joshua, "When your children ask in time to come, 'what do those stones mean to you?' Then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of covenant of the LORD; when it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever."

Joshua further explained to the people of Israel when they set up the memorial at Gilgal, "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, 'what do these stones mean?' Then you shall let your children know, 'Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.'" For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty; that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

This monument of Joshua was an Old Testament confession. It gave a survey of the doctrines of Scripture, namely that God is mighty and that He accomplished certain mighty deeds for the people of Israel. It testified publicly to the world concerning the honour of God. It stood at Gilgal to unite the tribes of Israel in their knowledge of God. It prevented the spread of false stories (heresies) concerning the events at Gilgal. It served for transferring saving knowledge from one generation to another. And it also testified to what was the truth throughout the history of Israel. In other words, it performs all the tasks which Prof Bijsterveld assigned to confessions. The monument of Joshua, operating in addition to the revealed Word of God as the people of Israel had it in its incomplete form, was a confession, and there are many more examples of such confessions in the pages of Scripture. Think of Jericho. With its walls in ruins and its inhabitants defenseless, Jericho stood for

centuries as a confession of God's might and protecting power. When Hiel of Bethel rebuilt the walls of Jericho, he denied the truth of God's Word. He denied the confession, the public profession of faith which every Israelite was required to make and affirm by leaving the walls of Jericho un-restored.

The idea of creeds and confessions is not a human idea. The altars and wells of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the stones at Gilgal, the stone under the oak at Shechem, the ruins at Jericho, and many other such monuments in the pages of the Old Testament all stood as confessions for the Israelite church. Now, in our days, we have ancient documents full of carefully articulated doctrines which bear no resemblance to a pile of stones or a heap of ruins. Nevertheless, the idea is the same. The churches use such devices to protect the truth and to convey it to future generations.

The Biblical notion of confessions cannot be dismissed on account of the Biblical notion of unity. The two must be considered together in the balance of Scripture. One teaching cannot be raised out of its place in Scripture so that the balance of all the teachings is affected. The confession is not a Word of God; neither were the ruins of Jericho. Yet to dismiss either is to dismiss the truth of the Word. That is not to say that the words of the confession are the Words of God. They are words of men, and they are not above examination or criticism. Still, such words ought to exist and we ought constantly to be defending and developing them.

In the light of the Biblical mandate for confession, what is to be made of the Biblical mandate for unity? Can the two be reconciled? Of course they can. Where is the unity of the believers and of the church if not in the confession? In her confession of the Word of God, the church is unified. By knowing the teachings of the shepherd the sheep are able to discern his voice and follow Him into the safe confines of the sheepfold. If they do not know his teachings and learn to have an eye for false teachings, how do the sheep know that they follow the right shepherd?

1. The quote from J. Munneke's book *Het Historisch Fundament* (The Church and the Confession), was in turn a quote from Prof. P Bijsterveld.

THE JEALOUS HUSBAND - NUM. 5:11-31

By Rev. Dr. R. D. Anderson

This law does not, on the surface, seem very attractive. A husband who suspects his wife of adultery, even if he has no evidence, may bring her to the tabernacle and have her undergo this seemingly degrading ritual whereby she asks the Lord to curse her if she is not telling the truth. What is more, the wife has no right to make her husband undergo the same ritual. That some people are left with questions concerning the passage is understandable. For that reason it is worthwhile thinking about the situation around which this law is based. Understanding this law will also help us to understand our Lord and Father - and, dare I say, even His mercy towards His people!

Let me take the most difficult verse of this law as my point of departure, verse 31: Moreover, the man shall be free from guilt, but that woman shall bear her guilt.

What is meant here? It is clear that it cannot be the intention to say that men are allowed to commit adultery while women are not! The rest of God's law makes that clear. If there was evidence for adultery, then both men and women had the right to appear before the elders at the gate to bring charges. Both men and women were to be punished for this sin. The possible guilt of the man here, is the guilt of wrongly being jealous of his wife, accusing her of adultery when she had, in fact, been faithful. If, after completion of this ritual, it becomes clear that the woman is accepted by God, and thus not an adulteress, there is no punishment for the wrongful accusation of her husband. If the woman dared to come before the Lord when she was guilty (of adultery), then there is a certain punishment for her - not the death penalty, but physical punishment from the Lord which results in inability to bear any more children. The blessing of children is taken away from her. This fact will have meant that in practice very few guilty women would have dared to undergo the ritual. Would someone really dare to personally appear before the Lord in His temple and ask to be cursed? This law will have been used for women who were wrongly accused by their husbands of unfaithfulness, women who could use this ritual to ask the Lord for justification of their faithfulness.

Why isn't the husband punished if it appears that he was wrongly jealous? The answer to this question has to do with the reason for this law. The law is given to provide protection to a woman when she encounters the social dangers of a jealous husband. This law is not concerned with marriages where there is only suspicion of adultery. If there is suspicion, the matter should be talked over. If need be, counseling should be asked for. This law is concerned with a situation where the husband has become jealous of his wife because of such suspicions. The husband is convinced that his wife has been unfaithful even though there is no hard evidence, and despite his wife's protestations to the contrary. This law does not tackle the problem (sin) involved with such jealousy itself. It tackles the problem of the social danger which such a wife encounters. For this reason a wrongly jealous man is not punished. And that is why a woman equally jealous of her husband does not have the right to bring him to the tabernacle for such a ritual. The law concerns the protection of the socially weak in society. This does not mean that such jealousy is not wrong! At the very least it shows that there is a definite breakdown of communication in the marriage relationship. But that problem is not addressed in this law. The law intends to provide help and protection to the

unjustly accused wife. If the law provided for a punishment against a jealous husband, then many husbands would never have dared to bring their wives to the tabernacle. The law would obviate its very purpose, because then such women would remain imprisoned in their homes living with the unbearable consequences of a jealous husband.

It was, especially in those times and in that culture, very easy for a husband - possessed with jealousy - to imprison his wife in a corner of the house (the women's section) and let her stay there. She would be forbidden to have any contact with the outside world. She also ran the risk of diminished food and clothing (cf. Exod. 21:10 which shows that such treatment, though not condoned by the Lord, was a real possibility). What was her escape? If she found a chance get out of the house, where would she go? Where would she earn an income? Some women could, perhaps, have found their way home to their parents, but that will not always have been possible. The social problems for a runaway wife were enormous. In this law, the Lord provides a way that not only can remove the enormous jealousy of the husband, but also create the possibility that the marriage can continue and be restored. And all of this works in the favour of the wife. No law is provided for the jealous wife to bring her husband to the tabernacle for the simple reason that a husband was under no great social danger from the punishment of a tyrannous and jealous wife.

Just as will appear from many laws of the Lord, it is clear that He is concerned for the socially weak in society, the orphan, the widow, the stranger and the Levite, but also the wife who becomes the butt of a husband's wrongful jealousy. God calls upon all of us to mirror his mercy in our lives and to live the life of love for Him and for our neighbour which He so concretely provides for in His law.

Valkenburg, The Netherlands October, 1997

(Translated from the Dutch by the author, October 1998)

Salvation - Why?

A prison! Most major towns have one: a gray drab building with barred windows. You don't know what's going on behind the thick walls. What's worse: those inside cannot see the outside world. The inmates would love to go outside and be free; but there is a power that prevents them - irresistible, and for some for the rest of their life.

Being a prisoner - regardless of the reason is bad news. Being under someone else's control, having lost your freedom is terrible.

But it is something that can happen even outside a prison - you can be made captive even without knowing or feeling it. Have you ever realized that all men are in that position? I am a prisoner, you are a prisonerunless....

Without exception, we are all prisoners of Satan by nature. Satan is the great opponent of God. His password is: Sin- revolt against God.

"By one man (Adam) sin entered tile world..." (Romans 5:12). You can read the story of the Fall in Genesis 3. God had said that Man would die if he ate of the tree knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). The penalty for eating the forbidden fruit would be death. Not just a physical death

- our bodies decomposing until they “return to dust”; but above all a spiritual death by which the bond with God is broken. The consequence is eternal death, to be forever forsaken of God, and to be in hellish torment. That punishment came because the first man ate. Adam was the “head” of the coming human race. In his choice for obedience or disobedience he would determine his descendants’ destiny. His fall became our fall.

Thus sin became an inherent quality to us all; and with it the penalty - death. Our bond with God was broken, and we became prisoners of Satan. He would use us now, and he has, repeatedly. Since sin, by our own fault, came into our lives, we cannot get rid of it. Our lives, our work, our dedication towards our families are all affected and depraved. Death is the impending consequence; and then eternal death, when we will forever be separate from God, surrendered to Satan.

Is there no chance to be saved? Can’t we free ourselves from Satan’s grasp? Many people have asked this. All sorts of solutions have been suggested by which man might liberate himself. Paganism has self-preservation as its highest ideal. Many others seek their salvation through good works. We insist: we can never do it ourselves (Psalm. 14:3). Why? In the first place, because our hearts are totally depraved and we can never do the “good” which God expects. In the second place, each day we only increase our debt - without having any means to repay God - by sinning against Him.

But, you might ask, doesn’t God turn a blind eye to sin? While He originally threatened with death, didn’t He show mercy? Didn’t He, like an earthly judge, but with the much greater love that He surely has, commute the death sentence?

If God said that man would die, He committed Himself. God is truth; He does not say one thing today and another tomorrow. He was man’s Creator, He had sole rights; but man rejected God and followed Satan. This had to bring God’s wrath. His right had to be maintained. Sin demanded payment (Isaiah 1:27).

Don’t protest: where is the God of Love? What strength could you derive from a God who wouldn’t keep His Word? What guarantee would you have of His promises?

However, God’s love for His Creation is everlasting. He had to demand satisfaction for the violation of His rights. But He gave the means of escape: if the debt of sin was paid, His wrath would be stilled. He would again look upon the condemned in love. He would grant forgiveness. Paid - fallen man could never pay; he couldn’t even stop sinning. But a miracle occurred. God sent a man to stand in our place.

Who is that man?

His coming was announced repeatedly in the Old Testament, as in Genesis 3 and Isaiah 53. And John 3:16 tells us, “For God so loved the world, that He sent His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (NIV) Jesus Christ, who was - and remained God, became human, by the birth out of a woman - the virgin Mary through the working of the Holy Spirit. Son of God and Son of Man! Incomprehensible!

He became human, because the very human nature that had sinned had to pay. He was God, because no mere man could endure God’s wrath.

The Lord Jesus had to suffer deeply to redeem us. Read the first four books of the New Testament, and even then you won't truly understand how Christ could be both God and Man. But in that mystery lies the wonder of our redemption. How He suffered!! He even died the accursed death of the cross. He experienced the full hell of God forsakenness. He bore it all - in our place.

Would we refuse such a Saviour? Could anyone look the other way, and remain in Satan's grasp? But can we be sure that Christ really obtained complete salvation? He died, didn't He; Just as we must? Surely Satan was the victor?

No, for Christ didn't remain dead. He rose from the grave and ascended to heaven. His Father received Him into His glory. With that the Father can CANCEL the debt we owed.

Our salvation is with Christ and with Him alone. We can go to Him with our burden of sin. God calls us, urges us, so that we will come for our life's sake. Read you're Bible and study it, so you will know yourself truly, and understand your need. Seek the Lord in your prayers, so that you will come to faith; then you will be freed from Satan's power. "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (John 8:36) And thus you will be blessed, in this life, and in the life to come.

Read. Romans 3: 23, 24. 1 John 5: 11, 12