

## Confessions

In 1970, while visiting the Netherlands, we attended the annual meeting of the society that governs the Free University, which was founded by the Reformed pastor, scholar and statesman, Abraham Kuyper. This meeting was crucial as its outcome changed the direction of the University. Dr. Schelhaas pleaded with the society not to abandon its Reformed confessional basis. He was convinced that with the loss of its confessional stance the university would not only cut itself off from its Reformed roots, it would eventually lose its Christian character. The well spoken Dr. Berkouwer, professor of theology at the "Free", took the opposite position. He pleaded for more openness. He said that the word Christian in the charter was more than sufficient. Regrettably Dr. Schelhaas proved to be right. The Free University has lost its Reformed Christian stance. Many different views now prevail. As a graduate of this university, it pains me to say this. But what disturbs me is that we don't seem to be too far behind the Dutch developments. More and more Christian organizations are discussing whether their reformed charter should become general Christian. Those in favour of such a change say that the Bible is a sufficient basis. Of course the Bible alone should be the very basis of every Christian organization and church. But the case is not that simple. Throughout the ages Christians have done some strange things with the Bible. Scripture twisting is not new. That is why the Church has deemed it necessary to draw up creeds and confessions. The Reformed churches have said some specific things about the Bible. So when someone says, "I want to base my faith and actions on the Bible alone," but at the same time refuses to accept the Three Forms of Unity (Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dordt, and the Belgic Confession), the nature of our confession is not understood. Our confessions are based on Scripture, point to Scripture and speak with clarity on its nature and authority. The Belgic Confession states it so beautifully: "The authority of Scripture. We receive all the books and these only (the 66 books of the Bible) as holy and canonical, for the regulating, founding, and establishing of our faith. And we believe without a doubt all things contained in them."

Why write about this? Because the record of history shows that Churches and Christian organizations became endangered when they cut their confessional ties, or when their confessions no longer function. We need Scripturally sound confessions to give us a solid basis for our faith and practice. They guard the truth. Because these creeds and confessions are so vital, we teach a course which covers all of them. Creeds and confessions can never take the place of the Bible. But they do help us understand the fullness of the Gospel and assist us in our constant battle against the multitudes of anti-Christian spirits of our time.

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