

# The Covenant Question

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## IV. Principles For Our Discussion: (continued)

5. In our study of the Scriptural doctrine of the covenant are we bound by any other principles than those in the Word of God?

This question serves to bring out that there are no other principles than those of the written Word of God which are binding for us. The Word of God always remains our only infallible guide.

It also serves to point us to an expression of the principles of the Word of God. The Church has absorbed the Word of God by the Holy Spirit and has expressed the teachings of the Word in Confessions which she has written down as her faith which must be believed unto salvation. Our Heidelberg Catechism has expressed itself in answer to its 22nd question, which is, “What is then necessary for a Christian to believe?” with this answer, “All things promised us in the gospel, which the articles of our catholic undoubted Christian faith briefly teach us.” It is evident that it does not tolerate any other faith which is contrary to the Apostolic Confession. We as Reformed churches have further adopted the three forms of unity as an expression of our faith to which we voluntarily bind ourselves as an expression of our personal faith, that which we also believe to be necessary unto salvation.

The confessions have derivative authority. So far these confessions have proven sufficiently clear to unite the true believers to see the heresies, which were contrary to the Bible. It was not our Protestant Reformed churches which saw the necessity of adding to the confessions in 1924, but the Christian Reformed Church felt the need of interpretation which we rejected as clearly contradictory to the confessions themselves as well as the Scriptures.

Moreover; we do not feel that there is ever liberty in our churches to teach private opinions. To say that there is nothing binding beyond our confessions, as if there are large areas of the truth which the confessions do not touch and in which field we have the “liberty” to teach as we please, is revolutionary. We may only teach what we feel is the teaching of Scripture and as we have bound ourselves in the confessions. In a true reformation we always declare ourselves free from the bondage of men’s opinions and decisions and bound only to the Word.

6. Are there Confessions which have much to say in regard to the debates about the covenant?

The Canons of Dort certainly are principles that give us much to determine the direction of our discussion. Our Baptism Form also has something about the covenant. Especially which statements of the form are often topics of debate?

7. Do we need another, a fourth form or statement to settle matters about the debate on the covenant?

There is no need at all for another form, but a real need to understand and be convinced of the present forms we do have. Heretical teaching can be judged in the light of the present confessions. About the differences within the Reformed framework we should be allowed to have full and free discussion until the truth rises in the minds of the people of God and the inadequate and false becomes evident to all.

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